

His Grace From the Priests' Viewpoint

(By MONSIGNOR POWER.)

The eyes of the whole Catholic world will be centered upon the city of Wellington during the closing days of this month, for then the Archbishop, the Dean of the world's Episcopate, will be celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his consecration. It has, no doubt, been given to some, if not to many bishops to bear the crozier for fifty years, but that the jubilarian should be at the same time the world's senior Bishop, must be all but unique. His Grace, though not perhaps the oldest in years, has now for some time held the rank of seniority by appointment and consecration. Thus it happens that the Catholics of the Metropolitan See are not the only ones who will be rejoicing, nor the Catholics of New Zealand, nor those of Australasia, almost all of whose bishops will be in Wellington for the occasion with the Apostolic Delegate at their head. The whole Church is interested and will be with us in spirit, and will eagerly look forward to the report of the proceedings.

It was to be expected that our gallant little Catholic paper, which recently kept its own golden jubilee, should endeavor to make his Grace's jubilee number worthy of the great occasion, and that the Editor should invite a group of friends to write upon the event from various points of view.

Invited by the Editor to write for the priests of the Archdiocese, I must say that among all those whom the celebrations will gather together, none have greater reason to rejoice, and none will more heartily congratulate his Grace than the priests who have been his fellow-workers. We have been laboring under a kindly rule, we have had practical and constant experience of his nobility of character, and the lustre which that nobility has shed upon his long Episcopate has been to us a source of joy and a light guiding our footsteps.

SCHOLARLY ATTAINMENTS.

His varied learning in classical and modern languages, his skill in social, historical, philosophical and theological studies, and his culture, acquired from many sources, have ever been to us an incentive to become more efficient for the works of our ministry; and the tolerant, broad-minded character, which had become his through education and experience of men and movements in many lands, has taught us to have considerate sympathy not with our own only, but with those also who do not see eye to eye with us in many things. He has never minimised the truth for mere expediency, but his eloquent voice and pen have ever expressed that humanity which his religion and his character dictated.

This is not the time, nor am I the person qualified, to recount his achievements in many fields, but those who have read his *Reminiscences*, studied his great pulpit orations in Australasia, America, and Europe, and have mastered the long line of Lenten Pastorals that run through his episcopate like a golden thread, will have reason to be proud of him as his priests have. We hope that he or some one else will collect these pastorals into several volumes that they may be a light and a guidance to bishops, priests, and people throughout the English-speaking world.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF HALF A CENTURY.

His fifty years of rule have not been without trials and sorrow, but the manner in which he has met those trials, endured them, and countered them, has been a potent example to us. He has had to meet the evils of secularism. He has seen the schools of his country wrested from religion, and the children of the country robbed of their divine birthright, given over to a godless system of education; to a system that sets before the child as its highest ideal, mere temporal success. The warning of the Redeemer—Not in bread alone doth man live—is repudiated, and success in money-making, success in advancing to place and power, success in making the best of materialism and the fashions of this passing show, are made the child's best incentive to labor. This is to flatter vanity, to stimulate pride, to pander to the baser inclinations, and to put obstacles in the way of the deeper needs of human life.

This is to set aside Christ's revelation and give loose rein to the passions of men. And as a logical result of this the Archbishop has seen the Sacrament of Marriage outraged,

this Heaven-made bond of social and national life degraded, Government declaring it to be a mere secular thing, to be dissolved at the whim of every wicked impulse. He has seen successive governments repudiating the rights of God in their enactments. These cast their shadows on his life; but he has seen in them only the shadows on the dial that mark the bright hours of day, and through them he has shown by his voice, pen, and achievements the glory and the value to the nation of the Church over which he rules in New Zealand. He has met secularism with a galaxy of Christian schools, and he has taught his priests to uphold society and religion by a fearless and Apostolic defence of marriage in defiance of statutory threats and penalties. He has set forth lucid principles that reach into the fibre of the soul, arresting the nation in its downward course, and leading the people, affrighted by gaping chasms, to recognise in the Catholic Church the house of spiritual strength, and of spiritual health not for the individual only, but for the nation and social life also. Thus out of evil, his endurance, his keen spiritual insight, and his skill have wrought good. He has taught the people of his country to look to the Church in their hour of need.

But with all this and much more that could be written, the real life of the Archbishop has been hidden from men and their sight. It has been a mystical life in the best sense, known only to a few, and to these only partially. The public knows only the surface; its depth is known only where he would wish it to be known, and that it may meet with its full reward there, is the heart prayer of all his priests.

THE PRIESTS' CONGRATULATIONS.

His Grace's graciousness is co-related with his title. We offer him our congratulations, we share in his joy to-day, and we thank Old Time for the tenderness with which he has surrounded his five and eighty years. Many an artist, with glowing pigment and inspired brush, has depicted Youth and Age on the one canvas, delighting us with the contrast, but in his Grace's case, Old Time, forgetting his pangs of unappeased hunger, has turned artist, and has shown his skill in a new vocation. He makes no contrast here between Youth and Age, but gives us in one whom we love and revere an exquisite and harmonious blend. He has not set the accustomed seal of age upon the brow, he has not cast the gloomy shades of night upon the clear lustre of the eye, he has put no staff into a trembling hand to lift up a bent form or steady a faltering step. Discarding the usual paraphernalia of the studio, he sets a glowing heart of youth in the breast of age, and for bodily and mental vigor, makes our Metropolitan own brother to the young-eyed Cherubim. Thus has he led him through Tir-na-Nog, the land of perpetual youth, the land of which the Irish love to sing, and I like to think that this is in great measure a reward for the great love and defence of the Irish shown by him throughout the years of his long episcopate.

HIS GRACE AND IRELAND.

From boyhood I have been reading the great orations of the Archbishop on the Irish question. The speech at the meeting of the Redmond Brothers in 1880 was a peculiarly able and sympathetic exposition of the Irish question, and was published in many Irish, American, and Continental journals. There has been no movement in New Zealand in behalf of Ireland during the past fifty years in which he has not been leader, and during that time Ireland has had no more eloquent friend and advocate in any part of the world. An Englishman by birth, he is proud of his country, and his country has reason to be proud of him; but in all that the Irish consider great, and noble, and good, he is *Hibernicis hibernior*—more Irish than the Irish themselves. He has made good his title to a place in Tir-na-Nog, and in his regard Old Time has been just as well as kind. May it be thus for many years to come, and when at length Time releases him from his kindly care, may his garnered merits, supported by the prayers of his people and the Masses of his priests, secure him a place not far removed from the bright youth of the Seraphim.

As for ourselves, we thank the Lord of Heaven, and we praise Him for the love and grace and good works shown in the life of our chief during fifty years of soul-service; and we pray that we may walk worthy of his teaching and example; for such teaching and example will save our souls and serve the true life and prosperity of our country. Without religion no nation has ever grown or retained its health and strength.