

ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL, LYTTELTON

FOUNDATION STONE CEREMONY.

(From our Christchurch correspondent.)

There was a large gathering of parishioners on last Sunday afternoon week at the laying of the foundation stone of the new St. Joseph's day school at Lyttelton, which is being erected at the back of St. Joseph's Church. The stone was blessed and laid by his Lordship the Right Rev. Bishop Brodie. Among those present were the Mayor of Lyttelton (Mr. W. T. Lester), Councillors F. G. Norton and J. Elliott, Very Rev. Dr. Kennedy, Adm., and Fathers Long, Stewart, and Cooney.

Addressing the gathering, his Lordship Bishop Brodie said:—There are certain features of to-day's ceremony which open the pages of New Zealand history, to recall the pioneering days of Catholic education in the Dominion. The school now in course of construction will be controlled by the Sisters of Mercy, and adjoins the Lyttelton Catholic church, the material structure of which is the oldest church building in New Zealand. In these days, when churches and schools are now so plentiful in the land, we are inclined to forget the beginnings of the work of both Church and school. The pioneer of Catholic faith in this country was Bishop Pompallier, whose parish and diocese were the whole of New Zealand; he had already spent 10 years in this southern land when he returned to Europe to seek new priests for his missions and teachers for his schools. In his search for teachers he visited Ireland, and placed the wants of his diocese before the Sisters of Mercy of St. Leo's Convent in Carlow. Mother Cecilia and seven others immediately volunteered, but their own Bishop had yet to be consulted; his words showed that he, like Bishop Pompallier, had the true missionary spirit; he spoke thus: "My dear children, I am sorry to part with any Sister of my diocese, but God's glory demands that all should make this great sacrifice. Are we to stay in our comfortable homes and know that by going or permitting others to go we should save innumerable souls? You have learnt from this great and learned Bishop what he has been able to effect in 12 years; how much more will he not be able to do when his efforts are seconded by the nuns teaching school, instructing the natives, and visiting the sick? Were I a young man I would set out on this glorious mission without delay. If St. Patrick, St. Augustine, and many others of whom we read had stayed at home, how would our holy faith have been transmitted to us?" These words banished all doubt, and Mother Cecilia and her seven companions started on their long and arduous voyage on August 8, 1849; for six weary months their voyage lasted, until April 7, 1850, when they sighted Auckland, their future home. The story of their work is the story of the early years of our faith in New Zealand; in their schools Catholics and non-Catholics alike were educated, and the work of the Sisters was recognised and paid for out of public funds. Remember, these Sisters, these voluntary exiles in the cause of religion and education, loved their home, their native land, with a passionate, undying love, and yet they said farewell to all, to devote their lives to their sacred, self-imposed task in this distant land. Our pioneer settlers of 70 years ago can recount the hardships of the early days, and these Sisters willingly shared these trials and braved the dangers associated with their work. Little wonder is it that the Sisters are held in veneration not only by Catholics, but even by non-Catholics, whose generous appreciation is worthy of all praise. Again, when the special wants of this diocese demanded that more teachers should be secured, the late Dean Martin, of Hokitika, appealed to the Sisters of Mercy, and from their Convent of Eunis came a generous response of 10 Sisters, who have inaugurated the work of the Sisters of Mercy in this diocese, and whose communities at the present day are directing no less than 14 schools in the diocese of Christchurch. The Lyttelton community was established 30 years ago, and can still rejoice in the fact that the Mother Superior is one of the noble band of Sisters who came to the diocese forty-two years ago. This fact has to be remembered, that before the advent of the second community of Sisters of Mercy a great and important change had taken place: State aid had been withdrawn from denominational schools, and the Sisters had to work under new difficulties. But earthly reward and financial gain were never an objective in the lives of these zealous souls; the success of God's work was their only aim, the triumph of Catholic education their fixed purpose. That their work has succeeded is beyond all doubt, and they have helped to write the brightest page of the history of the Catholic Church in New Zealand, the page which records the continuous and uninterrupted growth of the work of Catholic education. While speaking

of the triumph of Catholic education, a feeling of regret obtrudes itself when it is remembered that New Zealand and Australia are the only parts of the British Empire where religious education is not recognised by the State. England, Scotland, and Ireland, Canada, South Africa, and India do not penalise denominations for conducting their own schools. We are engaged in the great work of nation-building, and there is grave reason to fear that the national edifice is not on solid foundations when obstacles are placed in the way of the religious education of children, and parents are penalised for their conscientious efforts to see that their children are trained with a knowledge of their faith. To-day's ceremony is an occasion of gladness and joy; it affords us an opportunity of showing our attachment to the sacred cause of education, of assuring our devoted Sisters that their work of the past, their bravery under trials and difficulties, will ever entitle them to the generosity and gratitude, not only of Catholics, but also of non-Catholics, who appreciate the work so capably done and so essential to the national well-being. I congratulate Father Cooney on the work inaugurated to-day, and compliment him on his success in getting the requisite funds to start this work, and feel assured that any deficit will be supplied by his generous people. I declare this foundation stone truly laid, and pray that God's blessing may continue to enrich the work to be done in the parish for the sacred cause of Catholic education.

Very Rev. Father Cooney, pastor of the district, said he was proud of the assistance he had received from the parishioners and Sisters of Mercy, and, as had been stated, he hoped that by the time the school was ready for opening he would have sufficient money in hand to pay off the small balance of the debt.

THE PROCESSION OF NATIONS.

(For the *N.Z. Tablet*.)

I saw a procession of nations
At dawn come over the hills—
Aurora was flinging her silver
To shine in thousands of rills.

Came England, a lady majestic,
Minerva-like was her face—
Her form in a robe of red velvet
Bespoke to all of her race.

Came France, with a bouquet of lilies,
A queen to love and admire—
They sang as she waved them her greeting,
Hearts burned in bosoms like fire.

Came Russia, gaunt, gloomy, and wild-eyed,
Blood stained the blade of his knife—
He scowled as he fought his way onward,
Dark deeds had shadow'd his life.

Came Scotland, a rugged old chieftain,
In Scotch cap, kilties, and all—
With bagpipes whose wild strains were sounding
A mighty, national call.

Came Ireland! I knelt to adore her!
I kissed her soft robe of green!
In silence our hearts we all gave her!
Vowed faith to Dark Rosaleen!

No more did I see of that cortege—
My eyes went after my heart—
Wrapped up in the folds of her mantle—
And Rosaleen keeps my heart.

—ANGELA HASTINGS.

THE MOST OBSTINATE

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Into the crowded streets I go,
Wending my way each day,
To watch the throng pass to and fro,
And hear what people say.
The sporty sort just talk of sport,
Some talk of literature;
But the principle thought of the sensible sort
Is of Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.

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