

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR CATHOLICS.

We see the Catholic Hierarchy, both in England and Ireland, are now making strenuous efforts to provide not merely primary schools, but high schools, or universities, for Catholic youth. The difficulties in the way are many and great—immense, in fact; but with the loyal and generous co-operation of the laity these difficulties are being conquered. The recent and unexpected addition of wealthy English noblemen to the ranks of the English Catholic laity will greatly contribute to the success of the efforts now being made in England to found a suitable Catholic educational establishment for the higher studies in the metropolis. In this Colony we have great difficulties in keeping up suitable Catholic schools even for primary education; yet, with the willing aid of the laity, the clergy do succeed in that object. The difficulty in maintaining schools for higher education is greater here still. Government have many advantages over us in that respect; yet, in the face of all difficulties, Catholic schools for higher education are kept up in the Colony. Catholic parents should reflect that it is an incumbent duty on them to make an effort, and even some little sacrifice, to support them. If the teacher be competent, and certified by a Government Board to be so, why should Catholics take their children away from their own and place them at a Government high school? Is it acting a consistent and loyal part to the Church to do this? Yet we see it often done. If the Catholic teacher of a high school be notoriously incompetent, and without a Government certificate of qualification, then of course the case would be different. But even then Catholic parents should, in concert with their clergy, endeavor to place the school on a proper footing.

The difficulty of keeping up a good Catholic high school is very great here, owing to the paucity of our numbers and comparative poverty. But that difficulty is greatly increased, and may be rendered insuperable by parents, without sufficient reason, withdrawing their children from it and sending them to Government grammar schools.

The commissions lately appointed by Government to examine into the state of the Dunedin and Auckland high schools show that these schools are not always immaculate or perfect, with all their money advantages. If the Catholic laity of these Colonies were as zealous in the cause of education as their co-religionists at home, we should have less difficulty in keeping up good high schools, as well as primary schools; yet, considering what they do actually perform in that way, perhaps there is but little cause to complain against them. Still they may do more, and no doubt will do more when they come to reflect upon the necessity of doing it for the honor of their religion. There is no reason whatever why our Catholic schools should not take first rank. The Inspector of Schools for the Province of Auckland is a Catholic, and taught a school in Auckland before he was raised to the dignity of Inspector. See, then, what can be done, and what ought to be done, by Catholics if they were true to themselves in the matter of schools. A correspondent in one of the Auckland evening papers, I see, states that the Farnell Government District School, under Mr. Leonard, is the first in the Province, and Mr. Leonard, I believe, is a Catholic. The Catholic High School in Auckland, kept by Mr. B. Hamill, is well managed. He holds a first-class certificate from the Irish Board of Education, and he is enthusiastically devoted to his profession. He is well supported, and merits all the support he gets, and more too. There is noticeable among many Catholics a disposition to run down or undervalue everything connected with their own community, and to run up whatever belongs to "the other side"—not a very amiable trait in their character. The other day a Catholic teacher offered his services to his own people, but in vain. He was forthwith engaged as a Government teacher for a district school. The Inspector was ready to catch him up. Yet Irish Catholics will whimper and complain against their schoolmasters as inefficient, and starve them. They show little self-respect in this. English and Scotch Catholics would not act so shabbily a part, saving Paddy's presence, and he is always blowing about his Catholic zeal.

Considering the lavish expenditure of public money on Government grammar schools, it would be a shame to them if they did not have many more "hands," as a manufacturer would say, than private Catholic schools can afford to supply. The teachers may be more numerous and as good, or in some cases even better than are to be found in Catholic high schools. Still, if the teacher in the Catholic school be sufficient for the number of pupils attending it, and if competent for his duty in all other respects, what more can be required? It would be unreasonable to expect more. It is no fault of the Catholic school masters that the number attending his school is small compared with the pupils in Government grammar schools; or that they belong to the humbler classes in society. Besides, is it the correct thing for Catholic parents to place their children at high schools in which the masters and the bulk of the pupils are the avowed enemies to the Catholic faith. In many cases no harm to their religious interests may come from this; but in some cases great harm may, and no doubt does, arise from it; and it is acting in direct opposition to the mind and positive injunctions of the Church. History is one of the most important branches of higher education, and will any one pretend that history in Protestant or Government schools will be fully and fairly taught? The most important parts of it will either be slurred over, omitted, or misrepresented. What sort of Catholic must that be who would be satisfied to have his child taught so, or say it is of little moment whether his mind is poisoned by erroneous and garbled history or not. The confiding and unsuspecting mind of youth soon acquires a wrong bias in important questions, which can never afterwards be effectually rectified. The seeds of heresy or even infidelity may thus be easily sown, and the Catholic parent may discover too late that he himself has been accessory to sowing them by sending his child to an unsafe school, for an imaginary advantage of a purely worldly kind.

AUCKLAND.

OPENING OF ST. MARY'S BRANCH, H.A.C.B.S., NELSON.

MONDAY, the 8th inst., was the day fixed for the formal opening of this Branch. The Catholic school-room was tastefully decorated for the occasion with flags and banners. Punctually at 7 p.m. the presiding officer, Mr. Chas. E. Bunny, took his seat on the raised platform at the north end of the school-room. On his right was the Rev. Father Garin, and Mr. C. E. Haughton, President of the Wellington Branch, on his left; the Rev. Father Bensfield and Mr. Broad, R.M. were present, and also many members of the congregation. The business of the meeting was opened with the usual prayer by the Rev. Father Garin, after which the presiding officer rose and read the usual address, at the conclusion of which he declared the Branch duly opened. The candidates were then initiated, and the following gentlemen were elected office-bearers:—President, Bro. A. Bunny; vice-President, Bro. J. Armstrong; Secretary, Bro. C. Bunny; Treasurer, Bro. J. Bolton; Warden, Bro. C. Seymour; Guardian, Bro. A. Frank. The following gentlemen were elected Trustees:—Bros. Chas. McGee, John James, and Robt. W. Stewart. The President and vice-President then returned thanks for the high and responsible positions in which they had respectively been placed. Mr. Haughton also, in a few well-chosen remarks, said it afforded him great pleasure to be present on the occasion. The "Angelus" was then said by the Rev. Father Garin and the meeting closed. The members then adjourned to the Nelson Hotel where dinner was provided in Host McGee's best style; the room was nicely decorated and well lighted. The President of the newly formed Branch was in the chair, supported by Father Garin, and Mr. Symmonds, head-master of the Nelson College, on his right, and Mr. McLean, M.P.C., and Mr. L. Broad on his left. The vice-chair was occupied by the vice-President.

The following toasts were then proposed by the chairman:—The Pope (Band: "God save the Pope.") the Queen, the Governor, the Superintendent and Provincial Council, coupled with the name of Mr. McLean. Mr. McLean responded.

The President in proposing the next toast—that of Bishop and the clergy of the diocese, coupled with the name of the gentleman on his right, the Rev. Father Garin—said he was sure it was one to which all present would respond in a most hearty manner; that that gentleman was known to all of them as an old friend, revered pastor, and an excellent member of society; he had been in the Colony for a period extending over thirty-five years, twenty-five of which have been spent amongst them in Nelson. All who knew the duties which his vocation called upon him to perform, perfectly understood the toils, fatigue, privations and dangers he must have undergone during that time, more especially in the early days of the colony. Any words of his (Mr. Bunny's) could in no way express his sentiments or the feelings of respect and veneration which he entertained towards him. He would also take this opportunity of expressing his regret at the loss they were about to sustain in the person of the Rev. Father Bensfield. This gentleman, he was sorry to say, was, in consequence of ill health, and acting under medical advice, obliged to leave them, at all events for some time, and all would join him (Mr. Bunny) in hoping that he might soon return completely restored to health. The toast was drunk with cheers and applause.

Father Garin in reply said that it gave him great pleasure to respond to this toast, more so when he had to respond on behalf of the Most Rev. Dr. Redwood, who, in his early youth was under his care; he also referred to the approaching departure of Father Bensfield who, through ill health, was about to retire from all work for at least six months.

Mr. James then rose and said it was his pleasing duty to propose the toast of the evening, and in doing so he wished to state that it was owing to the efforts of Mr. Chas. Bunny that they were there that night; that it was owing to the steps Mr. Bunny had taken that they had had a Branch of the Society opened in Nelson. He had great pleasure in proposing the toast of "The Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society," coupled with the name of Mr. Chas. E. Bunny.—(Applause.)

Mr. C. E. Bunny said he thanked them sincerely for the very kind manner this toast had been proposed and responded to. He had that day had the honor of opening a Branch of this Society, the objects of which are to promote the religious and social welfare of its members, and composed solely of Catholics without party and political feelings, and without secrets. He stated that it was only in the year 1871 that this Society was formed by amalgamating two or three Catholic Societies in Melbourne; that since that time it had steadily progressed and now there were over 80 Branches and between five and six thousand members. He thanked Mr. James for the kind remarks he made in reference to himself, he (Mr. Bunny) assured those present that what little he had done in promoting the interests of the Society in Nelson, or the assistance he had given, had been to him a great pleasure. He took this opportunity to return his thanks to the Rev. Fathers Garin and Bensfield for the kind assistance they had given; to the Executive Directory for the willing manner in which they had granted his requests, and to the Charleston Branch for their kindness in offering to lend their regalia. In conclusion he had to state that whether in Nelson or elsewhere he should look back with pleasure and pride to the 8th February, 1875, the day he had the honor of opening St. Mary's Branch at Nelson.—(Loud Applause.)

The next toast was proposed by the vice-Chairman, which was "Kindred Societies." Mr. John Wigzell responded.

Mr. C. E. Bunny proposed "Visiting Brethren," coupled with the name of Mr. C. E. Houghton.

Mr. Houghton in acknowledging the toast expressed the gratification it afforded him to be present on this occasion; he had confidence in the success of the good works which it was the aim of the Society to carry out, and he felt sure that when its principles and practices were more fully known and understood the number of brethren would be greatly augmented, and that by the anni-