

Correspondence.

(We are not responsible for the opinions of our Correspondents.)

To the Editor of the NEW ZEALAND TABLET.

SIR,—I see by the TABLET of the 17th ult., you had some correspondence from the Thames, evidently from a new chum as he takes all credit for what has been done in Catholic affairs, and leaves none to the credit of the old chums, he either forgets, or perhaps never heard of what was done in the Rev. Father Nevana's time; but I will not quarrel with him. All honor to him and his new chums to do what they can in a good cause, although it may be over a good old road well metalled with Thames quarts, and Church and School allotments payed for with Thames gold years ago. My object is to give your readers some idea of the progress of Catholicity in this part of her Majesty's dominions. I suppose you will call it very slow progress when I tell you we have only Mass once a month. The French priest that pays us a visit is one of the most zealous I have seen, for from the time he comes till he leaves, he gives us Mass every day. So if we are not good Christians it is no fault of his.

We had a meeting here about two months ago, and passed resolutions requesting his Lordship the Bishop to send us a resident priest. I am not aware that anything further has been done in the matter up to the present. We have a neat little church with a large piece of ground, quite large enough to build a clergyman's residence on. One of our body will undertake to build a six-roomed house on this fine property for a resident clergyman till they can find cash to pay him. Long life to him, say I. I have been sorry to see the children of Catholic parents running about the streets daily, or going to Protestant schools. This want is about to be supplied, as I have been informed that a very accomplished young lady is about to open a Catholic school in a central position. I hope, as I have no doubt, it will be well supported from the number of good Catholics I see in the district. We have a Sunday School every Sunday well attended by the children, and well looked after by the teachers; one gentleman in particular gives it all his spare time. We had a Catholic concert here at the new year, a number of friends, nearly if not all Catholic, from Napier, together with some local talent, that would have done credit to any stage. It was well supported by all classes of the community, and was a financial success. I might state in passing that it was held in the newly erected Oddfellow's Hall, which, if I am rightly informed, was given, if not free, for merely the expense of lighting. It is one of the neatest halls I have seen in New Zealand.

We established a branch of the now far famed Hibernian Society about three months ago. They hold their meetings monthly. I see they are increasing in numbers, although it is a very scattered district, I think they will succeed, as I see some good old stagers among them. In Society matters I see the South Island has made a move, if not in the right direction, at least in one that will secure them representation at the A. M. in Melbourne; one that will enable them to keep the funeral funds in New Zealand, one that will entitle the members to pay less quarterage, together with many other benefits embodied in the general rules. Seeing that the North Island has made no move in the matter up to the present, it is very natural to suppose they want no representation at the A. M., that they do not want the handling of their own funds, although they are obliged by the Friendly Society's Act to keep them in the Colony. I suppose the reduction of quarterage is a thing quite below their notice. Wishing your little Catholic TABLET every success.—I am, &c.

Waipawa, January 27, 1877.

P. G.

FATHER KELLY'S LECTURE ON MARY STUART.

AMONG all the great names of romance or history there is, perhaps, none more deathless, or one around which more undying interest centres, than that of Mary Stuart, the last, the loveliest, and most ill-fated queen that ever reigned in Scotland. She, whose life promised so fair at the dawn, and closed in such deep tragic gloom. As her beauty, her grace, and accomplishments were once the theme of every poet's song, so, even at this distant day, does the story of her wrongs and her untimely death awaken the chord of chivalry in every generous heart. Dark shadows have always surrounded her name, and though these may never be entirely cleared away, yet much has been done to free her memory from the guilt of that worst crime imputed to her by many historians, that of having been an accomplice in the murder of her second husband, Lord Henry Darnley.

This was the point upon which the lecture of the Rev. Father Kelly, delivered in the Temperance Hall on Monday evening last, turned. Those who were present and heard the conclusive arguments of that learned theologian, must have felt that if, three hundred years ago, Mary Stuart had had such an advocate to plead her cause, that deep, dark stain would never have rested upon her name. The rev. gentleman premised his lecture, by stating that he had no intention of appealing to the sympathies or feelings of his audience; he would simply lay before them the result of careful historical investigation. It might be asked, knowing who and what he was, could he be supposed to take a fair and impartial view of any circumstance concerning the guilt or innocence of the Scottish queen. To that he would simply say that, were he not fully persuaded of her guiltlessness, her name or life would never have been chosen as the subject of a lecture by him. He then proceeded briefly to sketch the events which led Mary and Darnley to reside in the place near Edinburgh, known as Kirk o' Fields. These circumstances are so well known as to render recapitulation unnecessary. On the evening of the 9th February Mary was absent from the house in which her husband lay ill, in order to attend a ball in Edinburgh, given in honor of the marriage of one of the royal household, during which time the house in Kirk o' Fields was blown up by gunpowder, and the unfortunate Lord Darnley was killed. Bothwell was suspected and brought to trial; but in consequence of no

one coming forward to give evidence against him, he was acquitted. The abduction of Mary by Bothwell shortly after, and her marriage with him, together with other circumstances, had been adduced by historians as tending to establish a *prima facie* case of guilt against Mary. He denied that Mary's marriage with Bothwell was through her love for him but in compliance with the request of the Scottish lords, and not in accordance with her own inclination. Upon the day of her marriage with Bothwell, the French Ambassador, who, through Mary's relations with the French Court, entertained a warm interest in all her affairs, visited her, and found her in tears. Now it was very unlikely that if Mary had plotted so long to bring about this marriage then when her schemes were about to be crowned with success she would betray such signs of unhappiness and distress.

He then referred to the celebrated letter said to have been found in the silver casket, and said to have been written by Mary to Bothwell prior to Darnley's murder, and in which she minutely detailed every circumstance of the plot. Upon that letter and the confession of Mary's page, French Paris, all real evidence of her guilt rested; the rest was only suspicion and might easily be explained. He admitted that if that letter was written by her, and if the page's confession was true Mary's guilt was unquestionable; but it was impossible, he said, viewing the matter without prejudice, to arrive at the conclusion that she should have written a letter to Bothwell, fully revealing her crimes, and, in the unsettled state of the times, entrust it to the care of French Paris to be carried throughout the breadth of Scotland, when he might at any moment fall into the hands of the Scottish lords. It was quite unnecessary that she should do so, she could easily have made herself understood by Bothwell without going into details. Considering all the circumstances connected with this letter, they had a right to demand the clearest proofs before accepting it as genuine. It should be viewed with the greatest suspicion. The casket had fallen into the hands of Mary's enemies, and the letter came through the hands of one of the most unscrupulous, the Earl of Morton. Again, as a most convincing proof that Bothwell had never received such a letter from Mary, Morton, in his dying confession, stated that he was cognisant before hand of the plot to murder Darnley, and would have taken part in it if Bothwell could have shown him any writing of Mary's, containing her acquiescence in the proposed assassination. Bothwell was most anxious that Morton should become a participator in the crime, yet he produced no such writing, and if he ever received that letter from Mary, it must at that time have been in his possession. This fact alone went far to prove that the letter was never written by her but was a fabrication and an after invention of her enemies. Neither was there any evidence to show that even if such a letter ever had been written by her that it came from the hands of Morton unaltered. This letter was one great point upon which Mary's guilt rested, the other was the confession of French Paris. He dwelt at great length upon the unreliability of the page's testimony, and showed it to be untrustworthy and deserving very little consideration. His evidence was not given voluntarily but under the influence of fear. Between his first and second statements there were great discrepancies; in the first he implicated Bothwell alone, in the second both him and Mary. It was extremely improbable that Bothwell would entrust such a message to a page as to send him to Mary for the keys of her chamber for the express purpose of blowing up her husband. The confession of French Paris was signed by George Buchanan, one of the highest names in Scottish literature, who was a most bitter enemy of Mary's; yet in all his writings against her he never once mentioned the confession. Therefore it was clear that he attached no importance to it. He (the lecturer) felt disposed to regard the confession as an entire fabrication, and came to the conclusion that Buchanan never signed it. Having disposed of the casket letters, and the confession of French Paris, he next proceeded to answer questions of minor importance, which he did in the most satisfactory and conclusive manner. He concluded by saying that, though dear to him as were the name and fame of Mary Stuart, truth was dearer still, and it was only after the fullest historical research that he asked for a verdict of not guilty in regard to the Scottish queen.

The subject was most fairly considered with Froude and Robertson as authorities on one side, and Hosack and Lingard on the other. At the conclusion of the lecture, which was a brilliant specimen of argumentative oratory, the rev. gentleman was loudly applauded.

A vote of thanks was proposed to the lecturer by Mr. Scanlan, in a neat speech, expressive of his pleasure at what he had just heard, which vote was seconded by Mr. John Callan—a gentleman who is a member of the Victorian bar, and who is preparing himself for the exercise of his profession in New Zealand. He said:—Your Lordship, ladies and gentlemen,—Father Kelly has so delighted me with the lecture he has just finished, that I have great pleasure indeed in seconding the vote of thanks just proposed. The lecture has been, I may truly say, so fascinating that the time of its delivery has seemed to me—to use a common expression—"to pass away in no time," but though the time may have seemed short, the eloquence and erudition lavished upon us by the rev. lecturer have been, by no means, small. After hearing Father Kelly I cannot help thinking that if it had been his fate to have lived some centuries ago—in the rude times when, in the absence of all settled law, it was the custom to redress the wrongs of injured ladies by the sword and spear, he would have been the most valiant and chivalrous of Knights errant. Certainly if the defenders of female honor did their work in those times as effectually with the sword as the rev. gentleman has defended the memory of Mary Stuart to-night with his brains then, all I can say is, they must have been stout warriors. To my mind, Father Kelly has most effectually "blown up" with his arguments, the idea that Mary Stuart ever "blew up" with gunpowder her husband. It seems that none responded to Bothwell's challenge of an appeal to the sword when charged with Darnley's murder. I have an idea