

LECTURE BY FATHER KELLY, S.J.

THE TRANSIT OF VENUS.

THE Rev. Father Kelly, S.J., the celebrated lecturer, delivered a lecture at Bonalla lately, taking for his subject the "Transit of Venus."

Father Kelly on coming forward was greeted with much applause. He spoke on that event which is now creating so much interest in the scientific world—viz., the transit of Venus. This star is one of the most glorious objects in the heavens, sometimes rising in the morning and sometimes in the evening, and attention was at a very early period called to its movements. In ancient times it was observed that the larger number of the stars appeared at all times to maintain their relative positions unaltered, while a few wandered about in the heavens, and hence they were called planets or wandering stars. Venus was one of these, and it was one of the earliest discoveries in astronomy that the star which rose in the morning and that which rose in the evening were one and the same star, viz., this planet Venus.

The importance of the coming transit of Venus across the sun's disc might be concluded from the fact that the principal governments of the world were about to fit out expeditions for the purpose of observing it, and even Victoria had been called on to lend its aid in the enterprise. The object to be attained was the ascertaining of the sun's distance from the earth; at present it was known to be somewhere between 92,000,000 and 95,000,000 miles, and in an astronomical point of view it was highly important that it should be accurately ascertained. A transit of Venus was an event of rare occurrence, because this planet moved round the sun inside the orbit of the earth, but not in the same plane, and hence it passed between the earth and sun at irregular intervals. There was one in 1761, another in 1769; the next one would occur in 1874; the next, eight years latter, and there would not be another till the year 2005. In order to ascertain the distance of a heavenly body from the earth, it was necessary that its parallax should be taken; that was to say that observations of it should be taken from distant parts of the earth's surface, and calculations made of the angle of sight. Where the distance was very great this method could not be depended on, and in the case of the sun the refraction of light was an additional source of error. But the difficulty would be overcome if observations were taken from different parts of the earth's surface of the coming transit of Venus across the face of the sun; the distances between the points of observation would be known, and calculations could then be made of its size and distance. In the course of his lecture the Rev. Father Kelly referred to other interesting astronomical facts, but we have not space to detail them. He referred to the observations of Jupiter's moons, which led to the discovery of the velocity of light; to the number and order of the planets and to the discovery of the asteroids which were supposed to be fragments of a planet which had been disrupted by volcanic action, and finally brought a most interesting lecture to a close by referring to the remarkable circumstances under which the planet Neptune was discovered.

A vote of thanks was given to the lecturer.

The Rev. Father Egan then moved a vote of thanks to the chair; and in doing so took occasion to remark that the fact that such a large audience had attended a lecture in Bonalla for the benefit of the Wanganui hospital was a proof to him of the goodwill which the people of Bonalla had towards those of Wanganui.

The chairman returned thanks, and the audience then dispersed, apparently much edified with the lecture which the Rev. Father Kelly had delivered.

STATISTICS OF CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN THE CITY OF AUCKLAND.

SISTERS OF MERCY'S SCHOOLS FOR GIRLS.

1. SELECT, St. Joseph's, and Infant Schools. Number of pupils, 200. These three schools stand within enclosed ground adjoining St. Patrick's Cathedral, and in a central situation.

2. St. Mary's Boarding School, 21; Select do, 22; Orphan (girls) do, 41; Day do, 26; total, 110. These are situated within the extensive and well laid out Convent grounds (15 acres), and surrounded by a substantial fence. The convent itself stands on high open ground, commanding a splendid view of the harbour, city, and surrounding country.

3. Parnell Convent School (Select) and St. Joseph's, 80. These schools adjoin St. John the Baptist's Church on a main thoroughfare. Boys of tender age are also admitted into all these schools.

BOYS' SCHOOLS.

4. St. Patrick's (select), 40. Teacher, J. Plunkett, Esq. The schoolroom is a spacious well finished hall. It stands on a main street at a little distance from St. Patrick's Cathedral.

5. St. Peter's, 65. Teacher, Mr. B. Hamill. Stands enclosed in an eligible situation at the junction of three of the main streets of the town, and is surrounded by a spacious play ground. This property was the gift of a Catholic gentleman, lately deceased.

6. Watfield Street School, 55. Teacher, Mrs. Colzan.

7. Newton School, 49. Dr. J. Wood. Opposite to what is at present the Government Common School.

8. Scaffold View School, 25. Teacher, Miss Frazz.

9. Mr. Hamill's Night School, 20. All these school rooms are dry, clean, suitably lighted, and ventilated, and well furnished with school requisites. The teachers are all duly qualified for their duty, are of unexceptionable moral character, and are under the supervision of Bishop Croke and his clergy, the Bishop himself having had much practical experience in the business of tuition at a former period of his life, and it is mainly due to his Lordship's exertions that these schools are now on so efficient a footing.

The above 634 Catholic children attending these various schools are receiving a solid education, religious and secular, such as is fitted to make them good Christians and useful members of society; yet, the just Government, under which we have the happiness to live, repudiate all these schools, refuse to give one penny of the public money towards their support, though they levy upon the Catholics a tax to support

other schools not more efficient, and to which from conscientious motives we cannot send our children. A so-called liberal press, and even some men professing to be ministers of the Gospel, commend this glaring injustice. It may not be amiss here to mention that the last report of the Committee of Education of Her Majesty's Privy Council, laid before the Imperial Parliament, shews that the Government aided Catholic schools in England (under ecclesiastical control), and Government inspection were not only abreast, but actually far ahead of the other Government schools of the same class, even as regards secular knowledge. There is no reason why the Catholic schools in this Colony should not attain a like preeminence ere many years elapse.

JOHN WOOD, Surgeon, late H.M.S.

Pitt street, 14th July, 1873.

RELIGIOUS ZEAL IN AUCKLAND.

AUCKLAND, to its credit be it said, is a very religious place. We see advertised every week a notice of the subjects to be "expounded and explained" on the coming Sabbath by certain popular Protestant preachers. I notice by the papers of this week that the "pulpit drum ecclesiastic" is about to be beat by the Rev. Mr. Wallis, a Presbyterian minister, against popery next Sunday. The old stereotyped fallacies and misrepresentations will of course be repeated, and poured into the "greedy ears" of willing listeners and denouncers of "popish superstition." Yet this is a healthy sign. It shows that our opponents—I will not say our enemies—are alarmed at the "Papal aggressions"—in other words, at the numerous conversions to the Catholic faith which are taking place on every hand, and even in the land of John Knox. Horrible to tell, it is even reported that a society of Kirk ministers in Scotland are engaged in studying and preparing for publication the lives of the old fathers of the Catholic Church. Now, this is a most dangerous work for any honest and truly devout Protestant to take in hand. He is almost sure to catch the Catholic spirit by reading what the old fathers said and did. The late learned Bishop Hay, who by his popular writings has done so much to advance the Catholic cause, was once a Kirk minister, or Presbyterian at least. No doubt he once on a time used to thunder against "popery," as Mr. Wallis and other honest Kirk ministers now do, and as Dr. Newman and his friends used to do also, while the eyes of their understanding were blind to Catholic truth. The time may not be far off when the eyes of Mr. Wallis and his good friends too may be opened by the same divine hand which caused Bishop Hay to see. It is a significant fact that a complete edition of Bishop Hay's works is advertised to be published by one of the most respectable and oldest established Protestant publishers in Edinburgh. This "canny" bibliopole must see how the wind now sits in Scotland as to popery, and would not be likely to bring out a word of the kind unless he saw a prospect of remuneration, that is a large sale for it. No wonder Mr. Wallis and other sincere Presbyterians beat the tocsin of war, and cry *aux armes* (to arms) against the Papists under such circumstances. They must see that the times for them are critical in the extreme. But we must all respect their zeal and sincerity, however we may regret their invincible ignorance of Catholic truth. Far better an honest though mistaken Protestant bigot than a Christian so "liberal" that he regards truth and error on religious subjects with a philosophic indifference. We have even not a few Protestants among us who in spirit are far more Catholic than many nominal Catholics themselves. It is from the ranks of such devout and sincere Protestants as these that converts to the Catholic Church now come in such numbers.

Auckland.

J. W.

THE AUCKLAND CHRISTIAN YOUNG MEN'S SOCIETY: THE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE SOCIETY.

(By J. W.)

IN Auckland, the Corinth of New Zealand, we have many societies devoted to the cultivation of literature and science. Two of these—the Protestant Christian Young Men's Society (unsectarian), and its young brother the Christian Doctrine Society (Catholic)—are both meant to encourage the study and practice of the Christian religion, and are very likely to be useful. They have each attached to them a library of useful and entertaining books. In connection with the Christian Young Men's Society is a "discussion class." On a recent occasion the subject under discussion was "The Massacre of St. Bartholomew." One of our best Protestant schoolmasters had the courage or manliness to refer to Dr. Lingard's history in the course of the discussion, with a view to a more full and impartial elucidation of the subject. For his temerity in adopting such a course he was attacked and abused anonymously in the public press by some party. The idea of attaching any importance to what a "Romish" historian, and he a "Priest," said on such a topic seemed to the newspaper assailant to be the height of absurdity. It is a hopeful sign, however, to see an able Protestant schoolmaster, like Mr. Brabazon, making use of Lingard's history for any purpose. Hitherto the minds of Protestant students of history have been poisoned and perverted by such romancing and untruthful histories as Hume's, of which there is a Protestant school edition recently published. This is a great practical evil, and we may have to thank Mr. Brabazon and the Auckland Christian Young Men's Society for helping to put an end to the evil. We need not despair of seeing the Auckland Protestant Young Men's Society yet instrumental in vindicating the Catholic cause, by exposing the ignorance or malice of the enemies of the Catholic Church. This is no doubt quite foreign to the purpose for which the above respectable society was established, or, rather, is directly opposed to that purpose. But truth will out, wherever fair and free and manly controversy is encouraged. We may be pretty sure that any discussion in which Mr. Brabazon takes a part will be of that character—so far as he is concerned. When we get our opponents to bear testimony in our favor, it is a good sign. We have no enemies, properly speaking, in this place. Those opposed to us are so only because they have been misled, and do not know our real tenets, or a true and full history of the Church. They are to be pitied, rather than censured.