

A NEW ZEALAND LITERARY ANNUAL.

THE 'DOMINICAN STAR.'

We are in receipt of the *Dominican Star*, a literary annual edited at the Dominican Priory, Dunedin, and printed and published at the office of the N.Z. TABLET. The success of the first number of this interesting and welcome annual last year has encouraged the Dominican Nuns to issue it this year in an enlarged and improved form. As a result the *Dominican Star* for 1900 contains 200 pages of reading matter—an increase of 50 pages on last year's initial issue; the illustrations—some 30 in number—are larger and more numerous than before; the feast of literary good things is more varied and abundant, and of even a higher order of merit than the excellent *pabulum* supplied for 1899; the annual appears in a very handsome dark-green crocodile cloth-binding, heavily gilt; and the price of the new issue remains the same as last year, 3s 6d. The *Dominican Star* reflects credit alike on the editor and on the Institute which has had the pluck and brains to put so excellent a publication upon the market. Paper, binding, letterpress, and illustrations do credit to the N.Z. TABLET Company's Office, which has succeeded in producing one of the best specimens of book-work that have appeared in this Colony for some time.

The *Dominican Star* is not a school annual. It is, as its title-page states, a literary annual for the Catholic home, and as such appeals to a wider range of interests than those that are purely or chiefly local or personal. This is true even of the literary contributions from the pens of the youthful competitors in its columns. There is a singular lack in them of local flavour; they come from places as far apart as Adelaide and Caversham; and they deal with subjects which would retain much of their fresh interest even if transferred to the Children's Column of, say, the *Milwaukee Catholic Citizen* or of the *South African Catholic Magazine*. The aim of the annual is distinctly high—not to say ambitious. And we are glad to say that it has hit the mark pretty squarely. Both by reason of its unique scope and real excellence in the field of Australasian Catholic periodical literature, it deserves a more than ordinarily detailed criticism at our hands.

Imprimis and in general terms: the *Dominican Star* offers 'a charmin' variety' of subjects. They embrace six stories; a like number of essays; four lengthy and interesting correspondences from places so widely separated as the North Island of New Zealand, London, India, and South Africa; five pieces of poetry; 'Chats in the Library'; timely biographical sketches; all the pleasant chatter of the children to the 'G.O.M.' and of the 'G.O.M.' to the children—and a few other items besides. It is needless to say that the contributions are all original; and those who perused last year's *Dominican Star* will be prepared to learn that they are in the main of a high standard of literary merit. Some of them are, in fact, from the pens of writers who, like Father Finn, S.J., and Lady Mulholland Gilbert, have already made their mark in the world's literature. Others are the work of skilled and cultivated writers, most of whom tantalise our legitimate curiosity by either giving no clue to their identity, or by concealing it behind the *domino noir* of a pen-name.

The annual opens with a well-told story entitled 'Herbert Howenden.' It is a tale of America, Ireland, and New Zealand. It enforces the gospel of work, of resignation under affliction, contains a powerful description of 'that curse of the land, an Irish eviction,' some bits of practical life wisdom, and so sweet, though brief, an appreciation of child thought and child philosophy that we confess to a wish to meet little Ethna again in a sequel to 'Herbert Howenden.' A capital short story—'Detective Burke'—is contributed by Father Finn, S.J., the well-known writer of tales for boys. It will be very much enjoyed by every reader, the drollery of the whole situation created by the imaginative Father being greatly enhanced by its humorous and altogether unexpected *dénouement*. 'Will and I' (by Emily Moreton) is a simple and straightforward, but singularly sweet-tempered and charmingly told tale of brotherly and sisterly affection. We do not know who wrote 'The Experiences of Uncle Paul Pry,' for he—we presume it is he—leaves a blank where his name should appear. But his tale is singularly well sketched in, with all the fresh directness, too, of a personal experience, and with a quiet drollery and an occasional suggestion of *naïveté* that are very winning. It is, briefly, a story of the Dunedin University students, their 'studies,' their manners, and their ways. Of the two other short stories in the annual, we are very much taken with that of 'The Old Violin.' It is told by Mr. P. J. Nolan, and is handsomely illustrated. The scene of the story is laid chiefly in Wellington, and it tells of the hopes, struggles, trials, fears, disappointments, and successes of a poor young lady violinist. The plot is well constructed, and the development of the leading characters in the story and of their mutual action and reaction upon each other is marked with a tenderness and truth and skill which stamp Mr. Nolan as a really clever writer of short tales. The last story in the annual is entitled 'A Practical Joke with Practical Results.' Queensland and New Zealand are the scenes of this well-told tale of squatter life. It is the story of the marriage of an excellent Catholic girl to an Agnostic, and of his chance conversion to faith in God as the result of a practical and almost fatal joke played by him upon his wife with a poisonous snake. Snakes proceed to bite in a much more direct and business-like way than the author describes; but that is an unimportant detail. The tale is a decidedly interesting one and is ably presented to the reader. We are much mistaken if most readers will not thoroughly enjoy the airs put on by the New Zealand maid who contrives to make such an amusing display of her ignorance in the endeavour to establish, at the expense of others, a reputation for being better educated than they. A notice of other articles, etc., in the *Dominican Star* is unavoidably held over till next week.

SCHOOL CONCERT AT MILTON.

On Tuesday, November 28, in St. George's Hall, Milton, an excellent entertainment was given before a packed house. The proceedings opened with an orchestral selection, 'Memories of Erin,' in which three pianos were used. The Convent pupils had assiduously practised for this and the other concerted items, and during the rehearsals had given a good account of themselves. Unfortunately the influenza epidemic made it impossible for a few of them to appear on the evening of the concert, but their close application and the excellence attained by them give them a right to special commendation. The young ladies who were entrusted with the pianoforte arrangements were the Misses Scanlan, Iza Leslie, Elsie and Edith Sparrow, C. Wyber, T. O'Neill, and W. McTigue. The other instrumentalists were Mr. H. Marryatt and members of his family, together with Miss Mason, Messrs. Brown, Bryce, and Walsh. The orchestral arrangements were under the direction of Mr. H. Marryatt, whose readiness to give his services on all occasions is well known. Another item by the same performers at the beginning of the second part of the entertainment was 'A Highland wreath,' which was given with equal success and heartily applauded. The school children contributed an action song, 'The court of the Empress Shan.' The scene was Japanese, the children being dressed in Japanese costumes, with fans in hand. The effect was very picturesque, the performers using their fans to good purpose in various attitudes. A piano duet, 'Linden leaves,' on three pianos, was well received. Mr. J. MacDonald gave a Scottish recitation, 'Boo! aboot,' and in response to an encore gave an amusing piece, 'O'Grady's goat.' A piano selection followed, in which the Convent pupils scored well. The children of St. Joseph's School sang the chorus 'I saw from the beach,' in which the parts were very well sustained. The next item consisted of a cantata by the school children, 'Little Red Riding Hood's Rescue,' the part of Red Riding Hood being taken by a little girl, Nellie Coleman, who possesses a sweet and sympathetic voice, the other soloists being Nellie and Josie Lynch, Bridgid Hanify, and Mary Coleman. The accompaniments were played by Michael Scanlan in a manner that indicated careful tuition, a juvenile violinist, Willie Casserly, giving efficient assistance. By way of variety Master Powley treated the audience to an Irish jig, which he executed in excellent time and with considerable grace. The final part of the programme was a farce by ex-pupils, 'Cool as a Cucumber,' in which Masters Keogh, McTigue, and Gibson, assisted by Misses Moloney and Lynch, took the several parts. The piece went with a good swing from start to finish and provoked considerable mirth: Songs by Miss M. Lynch, Messrs. Scott and J. Orbell, together with a piano solo by Miss Scanlan and a duet by the Convent pupils, which were down on the programme, were unavoidably omitted, partly owing to the influenza epidemic, and partly to a desire that the entertainment should not be unduly prolonged. During an interval the Very Rev. Father O'Neill thanked the audience and the performers, the former for their generous support to a deserving cause, and the latter for a very pleasing entertainment.

THE LONGEVITY OF THE POPES.

The Archpriest Pietro Piacenza, Missionary Apostolic, has contributed to a Roman paper some interesting facts concerning the longevity of the Popes. The following are some of the results of his researches:—

His Holiness Leo XIII was born on March 2, 1810, and he was elected Pope on February 20, 1878; thus, on October 18, 1899, he had reached the age of 89 years 7 months 16 days, and 21 years 7 months and 28 days of Pontificate.

Now the following is the place he occupies in the order of the longest-lived Popes:—

1. St. Agatho, died in 682, age 107 years.
2. Gregory IX, died in 1241, aged 99.
3. Celestine III, died in 1198, aged 92.
4. Gregory XII, died in 1471, aged 91.
5. John XXII, died in 1334, aged 90.
6. Leo XIII, on October 18, 1899, counts, 89 years 7 months and 16 days.

It may be noted here that Pius IX, whose days seemed very long, died in 1878, at the age of 85 years 8 months and 24 days.

Proceeding in this study the author finds that 3 Popes lived to the age of 83; 5 to 81; 5 to 80; 2 to 78; 1 to 77; 1 to 76; 1 to 74; and 1 to 70 years of age. The others lived from 50 to 70 years.

With regard to the duration of Pontificate Leo XIII has gained a high position. The longest reigns are:—

1. St. Peter, who from A.D. 33 to 68 reigned 34 years and 6 months.
2. Pius IX (1846-1878) reigned 31 years 7 months and 22 days.
3. Pius VI (1775-1799) reigned 24 years 7 months and 14 days.
4. Adrian I (771-795) reigned 23 years 10 months and 17 days.
5. Pius VII (1800-1823) reigned 23 years 5 months and 6 days.
6. Alexander XIII (1151-1181) reigned 21 years, 11 months and 23 days.
7. St. Silvestro I (314-335) reigned 21 years 10 months and 27 days.

8. Leo XIII (up to October 18, 1899) has reigned 21 years 7 months and 28 days.

Another fact in this respect is, that being consecrated Archbishop of Damietta on January 27, 1843, at the age of 33, he is at present the most ancient of all the bishops of Christendom, and the only one living promoted to the episcopate by Gregory XVI. He is also the most ancient of the Cardinalate, having been elected by Pius IX on December 19, 1853. The bishop who follows next the Pope in the order of time is Mgr. Joseph George Strossmayer, Archbishop of Sirmio.