

the opulent family of Mansour St. John rose to science and sanctity and scattered anew over this Eastern land, long before lit by the learning and virtues and eloquence of Chrysostom and Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, the bright rays of Christian life, deep learning, apostolic eloquence, and heroic sanctity. Poet, philosopher, Christian protagonist, deep theologian, fearless preacher of the Word, all but martyr, St. John Damascene ended his saintly life in a monastery in Judea, where the lonely Cedron flows beneath steep ravines from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea.

The Bazaars of Damascus, filled with busy crowds, and glittering in every kind of Eastern ware, are an attraction of the uncommon order—silks, tapestry, filigree work, carpets, furniture inlaid with mother of pearl, gorgeous semitars, and comestibles of all kinds, cooked under your eye, attract the wayfarer, and fabulous prices, at first blush sprung upon you, melt into shadowy nothings under the influence of coffee sips and chaffering so dear to the heart of the Eastern—yet 'mid the deafening din, a pious believer will rise, and facing towards Mecca chant his passages from the Koran and beg of Allah to bless his little enterprises. Public writers—at the call of the illiterate—sit at the corners of the bazaars and vicariously transact the correspondence of their patrons. Here too on low stools, muffled and bespectacled, are the money-changers, just as away in the centuries past.

A HOUSE IN THE CHRISTIAN QUARTER.

A visit to a private house in the Christian quarter was a revelation of the magnificence and luxurious style affected by the wealthy. Outside nothing is visible but lofty walls, and a narrow, tiny window or two. Just knock. The custodian conducts you through a narrow passage, then across a strip of garden to a larger gate. This opened, you file along a corridor abutting on an open quadrangle, fresh, and clear, and lightesome. In the centre a fountain is playing, and lilies and narcissus and bright, fresh flowers bloom all round. Orange trees deck the court, glistening in mosaic or tessellated pavement of various colors. A broad verandah or colonnade runs round the four sides of the court, and off this court lie the living rooms, rich in marbles, frescoes, mouldings, mosaics, chandeliers, and inlaid furniture. One room there was bordered with sumptuous couches, or divans, and open to the colonnade running round. This is the common sitting room. The master of the household and his son—a youth of 17—came to welcome us to their home and lay it open for inspection, and spoke to us, through our dragoman, in Syrian or Arabic. The young fellow, however, spoke a little French, and English scarcely at all. Their manner was easy, courtly, soft, smiling, and gentle.

SOME OF THE NIGHTS.

The Mosque Omazade is worth more than a passing look, for here in better days stood a church to St. John the Baptist, and signs are not wanting to prove in marbles, ceiling, carving that it was a rich sanctuary. Even now the dome, pillars, capitals, lamps, pavement show the magnificence of the building. Indeed, on the upper beam of the gate is a well-preserved Greek inscription which, being interpreted, runs: 'Thy Kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting Kingdom, and Thy Dominion endureth throughout all generations.' Proof, incontestable, that the ancient church was appropriated by the Moslems.

A characteristic of Damascus, in common with most Oriental cities, is the houseless, masterless dog, brown, white, black, and decidedly mongrel, still protected by universal suffrage as the public scavenger of the unlovely, malodorous streets. Each pack would seem to lord it over its own particular beat; nor is intrusion of neighborly packs or individuals tolerated. Eight or ten were located near our hotel, and with famished jaws devoured the crusts of bread we gave them. Quiet and harmless they are, but seeing we provided occasional tit-bits, a neighbor dog crossed the dividing line to share the good things. In a twinkle our dogs' bristles rose, the ugly snarl of attack was heard as a war whoop, the fangs were bared, and they rushed *en masse* on the hapless intruder, and all would be have fared had he not entrenched himself, 'quick as a glancing star,' within the fastnesses of his own lines. Then peace reigned in dogdom.

There were fireworks one night—for was it not the Sultan's birthday?—and rockets and wheels and many colored lights blazed fast and furious round the grand square called 'Seraï.' But towards eight o'clock the show was over, and troops of swart saces, turbaned and veiled, vanished into the darkness and silence of night. It is not sweet nor healthy for a would-be long liver to stroll about on Eastern City after night-fall, unless with military guard, for the ways of the Orienta are silent and quick and dark. We, too, vanished with the crowds and entrenched ourselves, too, within the spacious retreat of the 'grand Besaroni Hotel,' under whose windows rushes the clear-flowing Barada.

Not an idle hour had we in Damascus. After four days exploiting we climbed the hill Jebel-Kasgun—whither Abraham pursued his enemies—towards sunset, and from its heights looked down on the spreading city beneath, encircled even in winter time by its broad green belt of rich vegetation. Closed in on the north by the Anti-Libanus, flanked towards the west by snowy ranges of Mount Herson, girt on four sides by a rust-red sea of sand, this oasis of Damascus, bathed in the lurid waters of its rushing rivers, basking now in the fleeting rays of the sun, hugging to its bosom the richest and choicest vegetation, would seem to establish its claim as 'Paradise of the East.' The tinkling of bells, as we return, tells us of a line of camels winding in from the hills 'with measured beat and slow,' bringing into the busy bazaars, as in time past, with never a change, the products of the country. And fierce Bedouins, with heads swathed in many cloths, plot their way all indifferent to the changes wrought in other climes by the rolling of years.

We take leave of the fair oasis of Damascus with the prayer that the saintly souls that erstwhile lived and toiled and preached and suffered will yet ensure that 'the scales may fall from the eyes' of the unbelievers, and that the word of Divine truth may no longer be 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness.'

Diocesan News.

ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON.

(From our own correspondent.)

March 16.

The Hibernian Society is enjoying perfect weather for its St. Patrick's Day celebration sports meeting which is being held on the Rotorua Reserve to-day.

At a meeting of the ladies on Thursday afternoon it was decided that the forthcoming bazaar should be held in November. The stalls were all arranged for.

Mr. P. McGrath, who, 12 months ago, left his studies for the priesthood at Meanees Seminary to join the teaching staff of St. Patrick's College, has, on the advice of his medical attendant, left that institution for his home at Waimate. Mr. McGrath has been far from well for some time, and it is hoped that the cessation of work and a change of climate will speedily restore him to health and enable him to resume studying for high calling.

A social function took place in the Thorndon schoolroom on Wednesday evening, when Miss Blake, a member of the Children of Mary, was presented with two volumes of valuable books from her *confrères* on the occasion of her leaving the Association to join the Sisters of Mercy. The presentation was made by Rev. Father Holley. During the evening songs were given by some of the members, and with various other forms of amusement a most enjoyable time was spent. Light refreshments were handed round, after which the gathering dispersed with many a good wish for Miss Blake's happiness in her new sphere of life.

Miss Connell was accorded an enthusiastic reception at her concert on Thursday evening. A splendid house greeted the young soprano, who was well supported by such artists as Miss Tansley, Messrs. Prouse, Hill, and Herr Max Hoppe. Miss Connell's first item, Bishop's 'Tell me my heart,' was sung with taste and delicacy, while her encore number 'Robin Adair' was excellently given. In the operatic piece, 'Les Jours de Mon Enfance,' a most difficult number, the flexibility of her voice and careful training were in evidence throughout. Securing a well-merited encore she gave a sweet little 'Lullaby.' In Solvejg's song she fairly excelled herself, and this number was undoubtedly her best effort. In response she gave 'Home, sweet home' in her usual finished manner. The other members of the company were well received, each securing an encore. Misses Prouse and Winnie Connell acted as accompanists. There was only a fair attendance at her Friday night's concert, which, from a musical point of view, was as successful as the first.

The question of improvements in the city tramway service is likely to play an important part in the municipal elections shortly to be held. The Council a few weeks ago abolished the wards so that the councillors will be elected by the burgesses as a whole. The Tramways Committee of the Council brought down its report on electric tramway traction at last night's meeting. Among the proposals contained therein were the following:—To relay and equip the existing line between Thorndon and Newtown, the whole to be laid as a double track. To construct extensions to Island Bay, Oriental Bay, Upper Willis street, and along Webb street to Taranaki street, north end of Thorndon quay, and along Molesworth street and Tinakori road to the Botanic Gardens. The estimated cost of these works with 10 per cent. for contingencies, is £221,345. The proposals are to be discussed by the citizens at a public meeting to be held at once and the poll of ratepayers will be taken as soon as possible after that meeting.

PRESENTATION TO FATHER COSTELLO, WESTPORT.

(From an occasional correspondent.)

A presentation of an address and a purse of sovereigns was made to the Rev. Father Costello on Monday, March 11, in St. Canice's Schoolroom, Westport. The building was crowded to excess, an evidence of the unity of priests and people. The Ven. Archpriest Walshe was unanimously voted to the chair. The venerable chairman said it was gratifying not only to good Father Costello but to himself to see so many present. They had assembled to pay a tribute to one who for the last four years had labored incessantly for their spiritual and temporal advancement. To him (Archpriest Walshe) he would be an irreparable loss and to the parish a much greater. Father Costello's services could not be too highly valued; he had ever found him of the greatest possible assistance. They were now about to testify in a very practical form their high appreciation of Father Costello, who was about to sever his connection with the parish in consequence of his projected visit to dear old Ireland, a trip which all hoped would strengthen and invigorate him, and thus enable him on his return to continue his good work. The venerable chairman then called upon Mr. H. Pain to read the following address:—

Reverend and dear Sir,—On behalf of the Catholics of Westport we the undersigned members of St. Canice's congregation beg in view of your near departure from amongst us to tender our appreciation of that zeal and self-sacrifice which have been the general characteristics of your labors in our midst, and which have earned for you throughout the whole parish the deepest sentiments of gratitude, affection and esteem. Our regret at your departure is the more keenly felt since hearing that your future arrangements make the prospect of your return to this district rather remote. We shall, however, consider ourselves somewhat recompensed for our loss during your much needed holiday, if you are completely restored to health, and wherever may be the scene of your future labors we sincerely trust you will find a bountiful return for that