

For several centuries the Popes have ceased to use it on solemn feasts, principally, no doubt, because use would wear out or damage a relic too precious to be lost. But anybody who likes may still see a copy of it in the Vatican Sacristy. It is made of wood and richly decorated with ornaments in gold and ivory, executed with a perfection which enables us to date its origin to the best days of Roman art—that is, to the age of Augustus or Claudius.

The little ivory sculptures which adorn it represent the labors of Hercules, and prove that it is of pagan origin. A glance serves to show that this chair was originally used for carrying a distinguished personage from one place to another.

St. Peter came to Rome in the reign of Claudius, and received hospitality from the Senator Pudens, whom he converted to Christianity. In the house of this Roman noble were held the first meetings of the faithful, and here doubtless

The Prince of the Apostles

was presented with the chair from which he taught them. The chair in those days was an emblem of authority, the chair of state being eminently so and reserved for the emperor and the great functionaries of the empire. Hence the pagan ornaments which decorate the chair now held in veneration throughout the whole world.

From the purely archaeological point of view it is interesting to find a chair made of wood which has been preserved practically intact for over 18 centuries. Even the veneration due to precious relics can hardly be regarded as an adequate explanation of the phenomenon in the case of the Chair of St. Peter. All the chairs of other apostles have perished either by the hands or by the negligence of men, while that of the Roman Pontiff has been preserved in a providential way. During the four centuries between Alaric and Totila

The Eternal City was Sacked Four Times.

An unworthy heir of the Great Constantine put himself at the head of barbarian kings to destroy the Imperial City, and then bade adieu forever to the Eternal City, carrying with him an immense quantity of booty, ranging from precious Greek statues to the bronze tiles of the Pantheon. In the eleventh century the Emperor, Henry IV., had just ravaged the part of the city known as the Leonine Borough, which contained the Basilica of St. Peter, when the army of Robert Guiscard, which came to expel him, wrought even greater havoc. The sack of Rome by the Lutheran hosts under the Constable of Bourbon destroyed an immense number of religious treasures which had escaped preceding invaders. During these disastrous epochs Rome saw her sacred treasures pillaged, her sacred relics scattered to the winds, her columns of granite lying broken in the dust—and yet the fragile seat in which St. Peter taught the infallible truths of the Catholic Church has come down to us through all the ages to represent Catholic truth.

Before the time of Alexander VII., who transported the chair to its present position, it was venerated in the chapel which is now used as the baptistry of St. Peter's. Previous to this it had been in the Chapel of Relics in the old sacristy; and there are documents to show that Pope Adrian I., in the eighth century, had it placed in the chapel dedicated to his patron St. Adrian. In early centuries

The Pope Always Sat in the Chair of Peter

during the solemn services celebrated on the Feast of the Chair in January and February. Peter Manilius, in the thirteenth century, relates having read in an earlier author how the Chair of Peter had been respected during a fire in the Basilica. From chronicles belonging to the eighth and ninth centuries we learn that a newly-elected Pope was first conducted to the Lateran Basilica, where he occupied the Pontifical throne, and that on the following Sunday he proceeded to the Vatican Basilica robed in the Papal mantle and accompanied by sacred chants, and that there he took his place on 'the Apostolic and Most Holy Chair of Peter.' In still earlier times the neophytes, robed in their white baptismal robes used to assemble before the chair to venerate it and the Prince of the Apostles. In short, we have authentic documents referring to the chair, dating from the fourth century down to our own time.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the custom of attaching importance to a chair as an emblem of authority is confined to the Chair of St. Peter. From the very beginning of Christianity the bishops occupied special seats as a mark of honor and a token of authority. At their death their chairs were sometimes placed in their tombs. The early Christians entertained the highest respect for the chairs of the Apostles, which were carefully preserved by them. In the second century Tertullian wrote: 'Go through the Apostolic churches in which the very chairs of the Apostles preside in their place, and where their authentic epistles are read aloud.' Eusebius tells us that in his time the Chair of St. James the Less was still to be seen in Jerusalem, and had been preserved by the Christians through all the disasters which overwhelmed the Holy City. We know also that the Church of Alexandria preserved for long ages the chair of its first bishop, St. Mark. The Church of Rome naturally was very anxious to retain intact the Chair of the Prince of the Apostles, and in the catacombs they had a safe hiding place during the ages of persecution for this and other precious relics.

Faith is the key that unlocks the cabinet of God's treasures; the King's messenger from the celestial world, to bring all the supplies we need out of the fulness that there is in Christ.

Purity and simplicity are the two wings with which man soars above the earth and all temporary nature. Simplicity is in the intention, purity in the affection; simplicity turns to God: purity unites with and enjoys Him. If thou hast simplicity and purity thou wouldst be able to comprehend all things without error, and behold them without danger. The pure heart safely pervades not only Heaven but hell.

Diocesan News

ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON.

(From our own correspondent.)

March 29.

Rev. Father Ainsworth returned to town on Monday night. His collecting tour up to the present time has been most successful.

The doll-dressing and cushion competitions in connection with the ex-pupils' stall at the coming bazaar were decided at St. Mary's Convent on Wednesday afternoon. Quite a large number of entries were received, and the competitions were very keenly contested. In the cushion competition Miss Stafford was awarded first prize and Miss McDonald second. In the doll-dressing competition Miss Reston carried off the first prize and Miss Rose the second. A separate prize was given for the neatest-dressed doll from the convent pupils, and was won by Miss Eileen Ward.

The Sisters of Mercy and the staff of St. Joseph's Orphanage presented Mr L. W. Loveday, late secretary of the Charitable Aid Board, with a dressing-case on Tuesday last. His many acts of kindness during his term of office, which extended over a period of seven years, have been greatly appreciated by the Sisters.

Feeling reference to the death of Trooper A. Devine in South Africa was made at the meeting of the City Council here on Monday evening. While moving a motion that a vote of condolence be placed on the minutes of the Council and a copy sent to Councillor and Mrs. Devine, his Worship the Mayor said 'He went out to fight the battles of the Empire, that is, your battles and mine, and the least we can do is to pass some slight token of respect to his memory, and of our recognition of the loss his parents have sustained.'

The interior of the Skating Rink has undergone a change during the last week, and everything is in a forward state for the opening of the Empire Bazaar on Easter Monday night. The stage has been enlarged for the production of the operas 'Les Cloches de Corneville' and the 'Pirates of Penzance.' The first-named will be given at the opening and the three following nights, and the latter will be produced on the following Monday. Three nights are set apart as national nights. The appearance of such well-known artists as Misses Shoen, Birch, White, Hyde, and others is looked forward to with interest, and crowded houses are confidently anticipated. Sir Joseph Ward will perform the opening ceremony at 7 p.m. on Monday next.

At the Church of the Sacred Heart on Palm Sunday a Missa Cantata was sung by Rev. Father Holley. The Passion was sung by Rev. Fathers Holley, Hills, and Moloney. On Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday evenings the Office of Tenebrae was sung by the priests, assisted by the Marist Brothers and Mr. Loughnan. On Thursday morning High Mass was celebrated at 10 o'clock by his Grace the Archbishop, Father Hills being deacon, and Father Moloney sub-deacon. A sermon on the Blessed Eucharist was preached in the evening by the Ven. Archdeacon Devoy. On Good Friday morning his Grace the Archbishop was the celebrant of the Mass, and delivered an eloquent discourse on the ceremony of the Adoration of the Cross. In the afternoon the Stations of the Cross were said by the Very Rev. Father Lewis, and in the evening Tenebrae was repeated, the sermon being preached on the Passion by Rev. Father Maples, of the Hutt. Mass was celebrated on Saturday morning by the Very Rev. Father Lewis. Father Herbert acted as master of ceremonies throughout the services.

The Office of Tenebrae was sung at St. Joseph's Church on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday evenings. Father Mahoney preached on Wednesday evening. On Thursday morning Solemn High Mass was sung by Rev. Father Keogh, Father Hills being deacon and Father Taylor sub-deacon. After Mass a procession took place to the Altar of Repose. In the evening the Rev. Father Keogh preached on the Blessed Eucharist. On Good Friday morning the Mass of the Presanctified was celebrated at nine o'clock. Father Keogh was celebrant, Father O'Reilly deacon, and Father Taylor sub-deacon. The Passion was sung by Fathers Ainsworth, Moloney, and Hills. In the evening the sermon was preached by Father Ainsworth.

The decorations on the Altar of Repose at the Church of the Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's reflected great credit on the ladies who did the work. Miss M. Manaway was responsible for the former, and the Te Aro Altar Society for the latter.

PALMERSTON NORTH.

(From an occasional correspondent.)

March 22.

St. Patrick's Day was ushered in here with high winds and clouds of dust. This somewhat marred the pleasure of spectators and contestants at the first meeting of the Manawatu Amateur Athletic and Cycling Club's sports held in the afternoon, but they nevertheless proved a decided success. The meeting was well attended, and all were unanimous in voting the sports provided as most excellent.

In the evening a social was given in the Theatre Royal, and was a great success. The Rev. Father Tymons, who was most assiduous in promoting the enjoyment of all, and the energetic committee, are to be congratulated on the success attending their efforts. The Rev. Father Ainsworth, of Wellington, was also present, and favoured the audience with two vocal items, which were much appreciated and deservedly encored. The following were the items of the concert:—Overture, Mr. P. Tomb; 'Dear little shamrock,' Mr. V. Dallow; 'May morning,' Miss Scanlon;