

The Stoke Orphanage.

We beg to acknowledge the following sums entrusted to us for the Stoke Orphanage:—

	£	s	d.
Previously acknowledged ...	74	13	6
Mr. J. McCarthy (Hawea Flat) ...	1	0	0
Mrs. J. Card. Sen. (Featherston) ...	1	0	0
Mr. Edward Hart (Roxburgh) ...	10	10	0
A Friend (Queenstown) ...	0	10	0

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'To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the way of Truth and Peace.'

LEO XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET.

THURSDAY, JULY 23, 1903

ST. MALACHY AND THE POPES



WHO has not heard of the 'prophecies' of the mythical or half-mythical Mother Shipton? A few halting and tentative 'sayings' attributed to her were first issued by enterprising publishers in 1611—nearly a century after her supposed death. They found favor with the British public of the time. Fresh editions were therefore

brought out, garnished by editors or authors with such additions as to them seemed good, and at last the doubtful old lady's posthumous 'predictions' culminated in the production and publication, in the name of this antiquated 'Mrs. Harris,' of the wretched doggerel verses which have become famous through their description of sundry modern inventions and discoveries and their declaration that 'the world to an end will come in 1881.' This strange volume of uncouth and splay-foot rhymes appeared in 1862 and attracted great attention. It was at first allowed to have been taken from a certain 'old book,' and afterwards from 'an old manuscript,' in the British Museum Library. But neither the book nor the manuscript referred to could be found there. Eleven years later, in 'Notes and Queries' of April 26, 1873, one Charles Hendley owned the sort impeachment of being the author of those strange rhymed 'prophecies.' Yet, despite this disclaimer of their genuineness, tens of thousands of persons expected momentarily to hear the blast of Gabriel's trumpet in 1881, and felt a sense of strong relief when New Year's Day of 1882 saw the world spinning as gaily through space as it had done on the previous day.

There were heroes before Agamemnon, and there were literary practical jesters before Charles Hendley. Ciacconi appears to have been one of these. He lived, moved, and had his being in the sixteenth century and in all probability devised the strangely cryptic 'prophecies' which profess to detail the succession of the crack o'doom St. Malachy, the great twelfth-century archbishop of Armagh and friend of St. Bernard, was, in his day, blessed by God with prophetic vision. Ciacconi made the sainted prelate's name the vehicle for the diffusion of his sorry jest—turned the 'clarum et venerabile nomen' into an earlier Mother Shipton. The true inwardness of Ciacconi's 'predictions' is sufficiently well known to Catholic historians. In 1896, for instance, the 'Irish

Ecclesiastical Record' threw grave doubts upon the authenticity of the alleged prophecies. The Abbe Maistre wrote a book on the subject in 1901; Father Thurston, S.J., has dealt learnedly and exhaustively with it during the past few years; and the last illness and lamented death of the great Pontiff Leo XIII. has once more brought it into the arena of speculation and discussion, even in the columns of the New Zealand secular press.

St. Malachy died at Clairvaux, in France, in the arms of his illustrious friend, St. Bernard, on November 2, 1148. An account of his life was written by St. Bernard. But neither in that nor in any other original account of the great Irish saint was any mention made of these papal predictions, nor is any extract given from them. They first appear in a volume entitled 'Lignum Vitae,' which saw the light in Venice in 1595, 447 years after the death of St. Malachy. The compiler of this book was a Benedictine named Arnold Wion. He is described as 'a man of extreme simplicity, who gathered into his disorderly pages any sort of historical gossip' which suited the purpose of his compilation. The prophecies which he attributes to St. Malachy consist of one hundred and eleven mottoes, with the names of the corresponding Popes down to his day, including Clement VIII., who was then reigning. All these were 'interpreted' by Ciacconi, and the whole series are, in the opinion of Father Thurston, a mere jeu d'esprit—a joke played off upon the simple-minded Wion by his friend. The 'predictions' regarding the Popes that followed the then reigning Pontiff, Clement VIII., are, significantly enough, left without any names or interpretations. The fount of Ciacconi's inspiration gave out at this point. 'If,' says Father Thurston, 'we count on in due order, we find that the 101st motto—"Crux de Cruce" ("A Cross from a Cross")—corresponds with the pontificate of Pius IX.; the next—"Lumen in Coelo" ("A Light in the Sky")—belongs to Leo XIII.; the 103rd—"Ignis Ardens" ("A Burning Fire")—is supposed to designate his successor; while after this come only eight more mottoes, beginning with 104—"Religio Depopulata" ("Religion laid waste")—and ending with 111—"De Gloria Olivae" ("From the Glory of the Olive"). The list concludes with an announcement of a final persecution in which another Peter shall be Bishop of Rome, after whose time the seven-hilled city (Rome) shall be destroyed and the son of Man shall come to judge the world.' By a manifest mistranslation the name of Cardinal Svampa has been made to fit the cryptic designation 'Ignis Ardens.' And it was, indeed, a daring, not to say irreverent flight of fancy that presumed to fix the time of 'the day of wrath, that dreadful day,' which 'shall the whole world in ashes lay.' God made man 'a little less than the angels.' But the author of this strange jumble of meaningless mottoes claims, in this matter, a knowledge of the divine counsels far superior to that of the spirits who are for ever before the great White Throne. For does not the Savior in the Scriptures (Matt. xxiv, 36) say: 'Of that day and hour no one knoweth; no, not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone'?

It would be about as impossible to marshal within the limits of a brief editorial article the many and overwhelming reasons which tell against the genuineness of the alleged St. Malachy prophecies as it would be to manoeuvre an army-corps within the four walls of a drill-room. The chief reasons against them may, however, be briefly summed up as follows: (1) Even the older critics of these pseudo-prophecies noted the extremely suspicious circumstances under which the document was first published—447 years after the death of its reputed author, and then in the gossipy collection or scrap-book of a credulous and simple-minded man, and without the slightest indication of the manuscript in which it was found or of the source from which it was taken. Moreover, (2) it was and is rightly deemed ab-

RIDE "ANGLO SPECIAL" CYCLES.