

THE ROMAN CATACOMBS

The soil under the city of Rome is for the most part of volcanic origin (says *Benziger's Magazine*). Three strata appear. The uppermost is called *pozzolano*; the next, composed of earth and stone, is a stratum of tufa; the lowest is of stone, which has been quarried from earliest times and which, as a result, is intersected by irregular galleries. The Catacombs are found in the stratum of tufa, and are almost entirely of Christian construction. Generally a passage-way leads from the surface to a depth of thirty-three feet or more, and diverges into galleries which are from ten to thirteen feet in height and of sufficient width to permit grave-diggers to bear through them the remains of the dead. From the main galleries side branches have been constructed, which extend to other passages. In this way the galleries form a labyrinth; and if they were placed in a straight line, it has been asserted, they would extend the length of Italy. In the walls of these passages burial-chambers have been hewn out of the tufa rock. These extend in tiers from the floor to the ceiling, and are estimated to number about two million. The body to be entombed was wrapped in clothes and laid in the excavated chamber, which was afterwards closed by a large slab or by large tiles set in mortar. The greater number of these graves are now found open. The slabs which once sealed them have disappeared, and nothing remains even of the ashes and bones. Here great numbers of the faithful were accustomed to visit the graves of their departed and to attend during times of persecution the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and other religious services. In order to obtain light and air, shafts were cut through the rock and soil to the surface of the earth. These chambers served as burial places for the Jews before Christianity appeared in Rome, and also, until the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus (A.D. 70), the Christians were regarded as a sect of Jews, they had no separate place with them. In regard to the walls of the Catacombs are many splendid and beautiful frescoes and paintings, which afford very interesting and important testimony regarding the belief and practices of the early Christians. These make manifest the belief in the Church in the various scenes of the life and death of Jesus, the primacy of Peter, as also in the Sacrament of Baptism, the forgiveness of sins, the Holy Eucharist, the veneration of martyrs and saints, and especially of the Holy Mother of God, etc. Hence they are considered as monuments, giving unmistakable evidence that the Catholic Church of to-day is the same as the Church of the first century. Great results have been accomplished during many years in the discovery and exploration of the Catacombs. To encourage and assist this work, the Pope is now under the superintendence of a special commission (the Commission of Sacred Archaeology) the Holy See expends much money annually.

Temuka

(From our own correspondent.)

A meeting of parishioners is to be held on Sunday next to form a Church Committee.

The ordinary meeting of the local branch of the H.A.C.B. Society was held on Thursday evening, the president (Bro. J. Scott) presiding. The balance sheet for the past quarter was presented and adopted.

The ceremonies of Holy Week were carried out in St. Joseph's Church. On Thursday Mass was celebrated at 9 a.m., and was followed by the procession to the Altar of Repose; and in the evening there was rosary and sermon. On Good Friday Mass of the Presanctified was celebrated at 9 a.m., after which there was the Adoration of the Cross and the procession from the Altar of Repose to the High Altar. The Stations of the Cross at 3 p.m. were also well attended. On Easter Sunday Masses were celebrated at the usual hours—8 and 10 o'clock. At the first Mass it was a gratifying sight to see the large number who approached the Holy Table.

CATHOLIC FEDERATION

CHRISTCHURCH DIOCESAN COUNCIL.

(From our own correspondent.)

March 30.

At a meeting of the Addington branch committee, held last week, the following executive officers were elected:—President, Mr. George Getson; vice-presidents, Mrs. M. O'Leary and Mr. J. Dunn; treasurer, Miss B. M. Sloan; secretary, Mr. J. Courtney.

On last Sunday week Mr. Getson and Mr. Dunn visited Halswell, and after Mass attended what is described as being a splendid meeting; in fact, one of the best ever held in that district. Practically the whole congregation attended, and displayed a most encouraging and enthusiastic interest in the work of Catholic Federation. The following sub-committee was formed:—Messrs. Moyua, McGough (2), O'Shaughnessy, McDrury, and Moloney. Mr. Moyua was elected chairman, and Mr. O'Shaughnessy secretary, these two being also elected representatives of the local committee on the Addington branch committee. The branch is working hard in the interests of Miss Dorothy Nottingham, a popular young Catholic candidate for the position of 'Queen of the Carnival' in the harvest festival now being promoted in aid of the Belgian relief fund, and trusts that Federationists generally will assist in placing Miss Nottingham first in the competition.

CATHOLIC GIRLS' CLUB, CHRISTCHURCH

About six months ago a proposal to start a Catholic Girls' Club met with the hearty approval of the Catholic Federation, and at once means were taken to put the proposed scheme into execution. A strong committee of ladies, with Mrs. G. Harper as president, was formed. The membership rapidly increased until very soon the numbered members of the young club reached forty. Rooms were hired from Mr. Tynons, and these did good service for the club in its initial stage, but something more commodious was needed, and the time seemed ripe for new premises, where not only the young women might enjoy the privileges, but where others visiting the city from any part of the Dominion might receive every attention and have a suitable residence. A large and commodious building, situated at No. 31 Cranmer square, was recently leased at a reasonable figure, and Miss L. Johnson was unanimously elected matron.

At present the club has received the names of ten members applying for board, and everything augurs well for the rapid progress of this great movement, which supplies a long-felt want in the city. The club-room is to be formally opened on next Saturday afternoon at 3 o'clock, and the public are cordially invited to attend the function.

THE LATE BISHOP GRIMES

The Month's Mind of the late Bishop Grimes will take place on the 20th inst. at the Cathedral, Barbadoes street, Christchurch.

M. Henri Sienkiewicz (the novelist, author of *Quo Vadis?*) and M. Ignace Paderewski (the pianist) give publicity to the appeal of a general committee which has been formed in Switzerland, as a neutral country, for the purpose of succoring the inhabitants of Poland ravaged by war.

Lost, stolen, strayed—gone none knows where,
'Twas with me yesterday, I do declare.
It racked my chest, my head was sore;
It's gone, I'll never see it more.
What? Not a cough? Yes, yes, for sure;
Lost when I used Woods' Peppermint Cure.