

I can remember the time when Dunedin did not boast of the splendid edifices which it now possesses. I can remember the time when the city was very much smaller in dimensions and character. I can remember the time when there was not that settled condition in its affairs that there now is. I can remember the time when it had not attained to that position amongst the cities of New Zealand: which it now holds, and which it has not got to assert, but has readily conceded difficulties which the Government remained under—in the absence of an to it. . . . Since the last session of the Assembly, one of the greatest opportunity of making public utterances such as I am now able to make—has been the misrepresentations which have gone forth upon the subject of the indebtedness of the Colony. Now, I shall state very briefly the actual facts. Probably I shall state them so briefly that you will not catch the items as I state them, but if they find their way into print they will be of great use outside.—(Hear, hear.) Well, gentlemen, the amount of indebtedness of the Colony on the 30th June last was £6 466 000, and Provincial indebtedness £3,156,000, which would make a total of £9,622,000, after deducting the amount invested in New Zealand securities on account of the sinking fund. As far as Provincial indebtedness was concerned, it is no doubt primarily a Colonial liability—but at the same time, it is secured primarily also upon the land revenue of the colony. And of the immense nature of that revenue, you may perhaps gain an adequate idea, when I tell you that from the 1st July, 1872, to 20th December, 1873, exclusive of gold, the land revenue of the colony amounted to £1,370,000; and when you come to know that in a year and a-half £1,370,000 was returned as a land revenue of the Colony, you need not, I think, be very fearful of a liability of between £3,000,000 and £4,000,000 on account of the provinces with such a security as the land revenue at its back. Well, there remained on the 30th June, 1872, to be negotiated for £2,352,000 of loans already authorised, making altogether, with all the loans authorised up to date, which are negotiated, a liability of £11,974,000. Gentlemen, beyond that amount authorised to be raised, there was required to complete the railways authorised up to the end of the session of 1872—some 766 miles of railway—in addition to the amount already named, £1,886,000. Adding to that the previous liability, we have a total of £13,860,000; not by any means as the present debt, but as the debt which will exist when the 766 miles of railway are made and some millions of money have been spent on works, £200,000 spent on Native lands, £400,000 on roads in the North Island, and £300,000 on works on goldfields. When these amounts are expended, and when you have 766 miles of railway made, then your total liabilities may be estimated at £13,860,000.

#### NASEBY.

THE half-yearly meeting of St. Patrick's Branch, No. 74, was held in the Roman Catholic Church, Naseby, on Friday, 26th December.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed. The books and accounts, etc. of the Branch were audited by Bros. A. O'Connell, and J. Clancy. The auditors have found the books and accounts, etc. correct. The Secretary read the balance sheet, which shows £22 5s. to the credit of the Branch in Bank. The following sums were passed for payment:—

	£	s.	d.
Bonus to Secretary for keeping his accounts correct	1	0	0
Executive Directory	0	11	2
Secretary, for stamps	0	2	6
Total	£1	13	8

#### NASEBY, MOUNT IDA.

December 31st, 1873.

MR EDITOR, as a correspondent, I must confess I am very slow. In future I think I will take a lesson from the spider, and "drop a line by every post." It is not at all times one can get interesting matter. This time I have to write about dead men feasting.

On Sunday last, I happened to be near the cemetery, and perceiving a party of Chinamen coming towards me, some of them having baskets heavily loaded, curiosity caused me to wait and see what they were about. They made their entrance into the cemetery and marched towards the Chinese portion of it, and there presented to their dead countrymen the contents of the baskets. The baskets were charged with roast pork, beef, mutton, and boiled fowls, together with a bottle of gin for each dead Chinaman, and also rice, apples, nuts, and cakes and an opium pipe. Another of the Chinamen carried a large parcel of candles. The lighting of the candles was the first of the proceedings. Around each grave they lit twelve candles, and beside each grave they burnt a large pile of paper carefully laid over each other, each piece of paper differently colored, the persons in charge of the paper were most careful that none of it should escape without being consumed. I thought they would throw the ashes on the graves, no they left it where it was. They next placed two pieces of paper neatly in the form of a cross at the head and feet of each dead Chinaman. But I observed before any of them took any part in distributing the good things of the table, they had a little ceremony to perform. It was done in this way, he would place the fingers of one hand between the fingers of the other hand, and perform a sort of swinging motion with both in the direction of his head and feet. Next came the carving part, there were seven plates carefully arranged with a spoon laid on each plate, and the carver was most punctilious in placing a foot, or a bill, or a wing on each, sometimes he used to cut the head in two. The plates in rotation were also served most carefully with a little of the pork, beef, mutton, rice, apples, cakes, nuts, and a glass of gin, the contents of the plates were thrown on the graves, and after that they were presented with a large opium pipe. I observed the carver when dividing the good things, putting a large quantity of pork on one plate in particular, and my suspicions being aroused, I thought to myself that either the carver must be a friend of his, or he must have a greater appetite than the others; and my suspicions were well founded, as one of the Chinamen informed me that particular Chinamen was very fond of pork, big man big appetite too." And the same

happened when presenting the pipe, it was left longer to one than to the other, I also inquired the reason of this and my friend told me "he very fond of opium," I was anxious to know what they intended to do with what was left, and I was informed they were to have a feast on it when they would go home. And what is the reason, said I, you brought so much when you did not intend to give it to your friends, when he quickly replied "brought it to worship." And now to give John his due, when he had done the honors of the table towards his dead friends, he did not forget the live ones, he also invited me and my companion to a share of the feast, and if we did not help ourselves it was not John's fault. As some of your readers may have seen a similar ceremony before, this may not interest all, however, I venture to say, some of them have not seen any such thing, for these I write.

I am, Sir, yours truly.

(Correspondent.)

#### AUCKLAND.

(From Auckland papers.)

THE annual examinations of St. Peter's and St. Patrick's Select School took place on last Wednesday. His Lordship the Right Rev. Dr. Croke presided. There were also present the Rev. Fathers Walter McDonald and J. Golden, and a number of the parents of the children. The teacher of St. Peter's is Mr B. Hamill. The attendance in this school is regular and good—numbering about 70. During the examinations, which afforded much satisfaction, Master M. Kirby recited a piece from Mr. Shiel, which drew forth considerable applause, more especially from his fellow-pupils. The pronunciation was good, and the emphasis correct. One of the gentlemen present was so well pleased with the manner in which the boy acquitted himself that he presented him with a valuable book as a mark of his appreciation. The boys were examined in catechism, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography, &c.—St. Patrick's Select School, teacher Mr. J. Plunkett, was afterwards examined in the higher branches of education. The pupils gave satisfaction in the manner in which they answered. The teacher read a very detailed account of the school duties during the year. At intervals some songs and hymns were sung, with an excellent effect, both in this and St. Peter's school. At the conclusion of the examination the Bishop spoke strongly on the necessity of children attending regularly to school, and congratulated Mr Plunkett on the marked improvement in his school since last examination. The school buildings looked admirably.—The Newton School (teacher Mr Griffin), and Miss Frass's school (Seafield View), were also examined. In the latter, notwithstanding that many children are of tender years, the result of the examination was satisfactory. On Thursday the prizes were delivered to the young ladies attending the select school of the Sisters of Mercy in Auckland by the Right Rev. Dr. Croke. A large company of ladies and gentlemen were present on the occasion, among whom were the Revs. Fathers W. Macdonald, and Paul, and Messrs, Joseph A. Tole, Horman, J. Plunkett, Bloom, W. G. Connolly, A. Moyle, B. Hamill, W. Clifton, and Drs. Wood and Grey. Previous to the distribution of the prizes, some of which were valuable and handsome, two dramatic pieces were performed by the young ladies. The first founded on some well known romantic incidents in the life of Alfred the Great; the other was a laughable farce; both pieces were well performed, and gave satisfaction. The dresses and scenery were really good. From the spirit with which the several parts were gone through, the young ladies seemed to enjoy the fun quite as much as their audience. At the conclusion of the proceedings the Bishop expressed himself much pleased with what he had witnessed on the occasion.

#### RECOLLECTIONS OF ROME.

NO IV.

My first feeling on seeing the Basilica of St. Peter, was not wonder nor admiration, I think it was something more like disappointment. It may seem incredible in these days of photography when the aspect of the great buildings and great men of the world are almost as familiar to us as our parish churches and the faces of our dearest friends; but nevertheless it is a fact that my ideal St. Peter had no definite form; I had often pictured it to myself, but always differently according to what I had been reading or thinking most of. Sometimes I imagined an ecclesiastical Aladdin's Palace gleaming with gold, silver, and precious stones; sometimes I dreamed of a stately building of fair white marble, round which were to hover angel forms, which were to be so beautiful as to almost make the beholder believe that they had flown down from Heaven to guard the world's cathedral; and sometimes I liked best to think that St. Peter's would resemble some of the ivy-grown churches of my native land, and that its best riches would be the faithful worshippers who would throng its aisles. For a moment the great Dome which, standing on the Pinion Hill I saw in the distance, did not entirely satisfy me; but this feeling did not last long, and as I gazed its beauty grew on me till I could not tell what I had expected or wished for that had not been realized. And when I came near and stood in the Piazza San Pietro, with its sparkling fountains and magnificent colonnades, and looked up at the most sublime edifice ever raised by man for the worship of his Creator, I was more than content to give up my misty, intangible ideal, for the marvellous reality which stood before me. Well may Michael Angelo, whose genius planned this church of churches, have exclaimed with the Psalmist:—"The beauty of thy house I have loved, O Lord, and the place where thy glory dwelleth."

I dare not attempt to describe in a technical way the noble facade, nor the colossal statues of the Saviour and the Apostles, which from the topmost story keep watch over the city, lest I should lose myself in a string of architectural terms, which I only half understand. My memory for details is very faulty, and I can only tell you of what I best recollected. Perhaps, however, this is not altogether to be regretted, as the treasures of St. Peter's are so inexhaustible that, supposing I succeeded in getting through the entrance (which would take a considerable time if the immense exterior were to be first described)