

RANDOM NOTES.

"A chiel's amang ye takin' notes,
And faith he'll pront 'em."

It would appear that there are other "Random" notes besides those appearing in those columns, a fact which has been somewhat disagreeably brought under the notice of Mr Robert Stout. That imaginative gentleman is evidently one of those who believe that facts, like physis, should be thrown to the dogs, and that such inconvenient and stubborn commodities should be altogether eschewed when they cast a shade across an otherwise pleasing picture. At a recent gathering of his admiring but credulous fellow-islanders, Mr Stout, in speaking of the early history of that portion of her Majesty's dominions, allowed his love of country to take a license with historical facts more creditable to his patriotism than his propriety. In glowing words and soul-inspiring language were the glories of his countrymen dwelt upon, and his audience were advised of the fact that the Shetland Isles was the cradle of Christianity, and that its natal year was somewhere about 810. Unfortunately, however, for this pleasing picture, "a chiel was there takin' notes" who churlishly took exception to the flights of fancy indulged in, and deeming a stretch of imagination extending over three centuries and a half rather too wide a gap to be bridged without foundation, through the columns of the Press sought to bring the imaginative chronicler from fiction to fact. Prove that his assertions were tenable Mr Stout could not, and own that his assertions were untenable Mr Stout would not, so Mr Stout, following the tactics of another "learned friend," sought the weapons used by the profession under such circumstances, and made up in abuse what he lacked in argument. Strange enough, however, the originality of his assertions was made apparent in his endeavor to defend his new "stories" by his condemnation of the staleness of those of his opponent. Of course, Mr Stout is at perfect liberty to assert that Ireland was a *terra incognita* at the commencement of the ninth century, and that the life and labors of its Patron Saint are entirely apocryphal; but it is rather too much to expect those outside his peculiar "circle" to accept such a dictum, even though Mr Stout be the "medium" through which the information is conveyed.

Being of an inquiring mind, and influenced by a thirst for knowledge, I am led to ask what has become of the proposed testimonial to the senior member for Dunedin—the Hon. Mr Reynolds. I will not carry my inquisitiveness to the extent of inquiring why such a step should have ever been intended at all, being perfectly convinced that the keen and far-seeing gentleman from whom the idea emanated had good and tangible reasons for such a proposition. "Coming events cast their shadows before," and rumor hath it that the testimonial to the Minister was the shadow which preceded an addition to the stipendiary bench. Such being the case, I am the more surprised at the subsidence of the movement, the more so as the 'Gazette,' so far, has not chronicled the expected appointment. "The best laid schemes of mice and men gang aft aglee," and it must be confessed the prospects of the testimonial and its concomitant look exceedingly "fishy" at the present time.

One meets occasionally with some "curious" paragraphs, and it must be confessed that the following from the 'Hokitika Leader' is a unique specimen of the class:—It says, "A curious accident happened in the house of the Resident Magistrate at Wellington last week. Two servant girls, sleeping in the one room, upset a kerosene lamp, which set fire to their night-dresses and the room." Had the lamp been alight at the time of its upset it would, indeed, be "curious" had not some such mishap been the result; but, as that fact has not been stated, it is to be presumed that such was not the case, and no doubt the "curious" part of the proceeding would be such disastrous consequences under such peculiar circumstances.

NASEBY.

A GREAT many events have transpired here since my last communication. There was first the bazaar in aid of St. Patrick's Church which, I am happy to say, was a complete success. Next came the election of a member to represent the district in the Provincial Council, and on the very same day the examination of the children attending the Roman Catholic school. The majority of the children passed the ordeal with credit, and their proficiency reflects the highest credit upon their teacher, not alone for their answering the several questions put, but their uniform good conduct and decorum on the occasion. In giving an account of their secular studies I must not omit to state that their religious instruction was not forgotten. The children for their first Communion, about 12 or 14 of them, were in retreat for three days before. Their first Communion took place on the 20th Dec., and the renewal of their baptismal vows and consecration to the Blessed Virgin on the same day was most edifying. The exhortation of the Rev. Father Royer to the children at the time was most touching; its simplicity, pathos, and homeliness could be understood by the most juvenile of his hearers. At Christmas we had midnight High Mass, and a large congregation in attendance. At eleven o'clock on Christmas Day the congregation were reminded of their duty to the Church, to its pastors, and above all to their God—"He that will not hear the Church let him be to thee as a heathen and a publican." The preacher reminded them of the devotion of their fathers to the Church and its pastors in holy Ireland, and what they suffered for it times gone by; but, alas, what a falling off!

The annual meeting of the Naseby Branch H.A.C.B. Society took place on the 31st December. After transacting the usual routine business the following officers were elected for the ensuing six months: Messrs Joseph Kealy, president; Clancey, vice-president; Gordon, secretary; O'Connell, treasurer; Costello, warden; and Gantier, guardian. On yesterday the members attended their religious duties in regalia.

Jan. 11, 1875.

HIBERNICUS.

HIBERNIANS TO THE FRONT.

PUBLICITY OF THEIR PROCEEDINGS.

A PARAGRAPH lately appeared in a sub-leader of the 'Auckland Herald,' in which it was stated that the Auckland Branch of the Hibernian Society, though only about 12 months old, already numbers 130 members, and promises ere long to attain to a prominent position in the colony. I notice that the parent society at Ballarat, in the preface to the second edition of their notes published last year, say that "Since the amalgamation of the separate societies in 1871 the H.A.C.B.S. has continued to progress steadily. At the present time it numbers several thousand members in 85 branches, which are firmly established in Victoria, New South Wales, and New Zealand." In this colony 17 branches have already been established, of which one of the most important, if not the first in importance, is the Auckland Branch. As yet the association consists almost exclusively of the humbler classes, or the working men, I believe, and it must always consist of those principally, because it is the most numerous class, and it is for the special benefit of them and their families that it has been got up. It is a pity that the more substantial class of Catholics do not see their way to become members—honorary, if not beneficial, members—or the sake of countenancing and encouraging their humbler co-religionists in so good a work. From what I hear many respectable Catholics still entertain a suspicion that, in spite of all the assurances to the contrary, the society is of a secret and political kind. Time and the fullest publicity to all that passes at the meetings of the society can alone effectually remove this suspicion from the public mind. It is expressly provided, by one of the rules of the society, that the meetings shall be open to the Press. If this rule be departed from, and the gentlemen of the Press be on any pretence excluded, it will tend to confirm the suspicion I refer to, and which must be injurious to the credit and prosperity of the association.

The society is not a secret one—it is not even a private one—and the outside public, both Catholic and Protestant, have a right to know all that goes on at its meetings. Why should the members be afraid of publicity. The proceedings would be conducted with all the more decorum from the knowledge that a reporter was present. The fear of public opinion often makes men stand upon their good manners when otherwise they might be inclined to forget themselves and give way to their temper. If there be nothing of sufficient importance to report, of course nothing would be reported; but the meetings, as a rule, should be open to the Press, as a matter of course, and a reporter should not be required to ask permission to enter the room. The very circumstance of a reporter attending any meeting of a public kind is a compliment to those who are to take part in it, and his exclusion always gives rise to unpleasant surmises. Bishop Moran, on occasion of a late visit to Hokitika, said, in reference to the Hibernians, "Whenever there was secrecy in any society there was suspicion. Men who meant right had nothing to fear from an open disclosure of their proceedings."

There is another thing calculated to excite suspicion in the outside public that the society exists for party or political purposes: the name "Hibernian" coupled with "the wearing of the green" in public processions. These are innocent things in themselves, and, in a certain sense, laudable as indicative of filial attachment to old Ireland, the native land of most of the members. Still, this is a Catholic, and not an Irish, society, and is meant to include men of all nations. When once the society is firmly established, therefore, it might be worth while to consider if it might not with advantage be divested of its present very decided Irish character, and assume more of a purely Catholic appearance in name and otherwise. Even the constitution of the society makes allusions to Irish wrongs and sufferings which had better be avoided. These wrongs, God knows, have been grievous enough, and they can never pass from the memory of Irish men; but better not refer to them in the laws of a Catholic benefit society. Irish Catholics must, if possible, forget past wrongs, and forgive those who are descended from the men who inflicted them. What they have to do is to look hopefully to the future, and to unite in harmony and good-will with all classes for the promotion of the common good. Let them do this, and the Catholic benefit society need fear neither publicity to their proceedings nor anything else. In the meantime, all honor to "the Hibernians." But for Irishmen we should, in all human probability, have been at this day without anything Catholic in this colony, and they have a good right to occupy the foremost place in every Catholic movement.

N. B.

THE LONDON 'TIMES' ON LORD RIPON'S CONVERSION.

AUCKLAND.

WHEN the news of Lord Ripon's conversion first reached this colony some months ago I took the liberty to make some remarks on it, a portion of which I notice are confirmed by an article of the London 'Times' on the same subject. Indeed, from what the 'Times' says, it seems to be felt that the event referred to is one of the most important of any affecting the fortunes of the Roman Catholic Church which has occurred in England for many years. "Lord Ripon, it must be owned," says the 'Times,' "is no ordinary convert. He is one of the leading noblemen of England, who has discharged high political functions, and might have been called to discharge them again. But," he adds, "a statesman who becomes a convert to Roman Catholicism forfeits at once the confidence of the English people." Very likely for a time, but he may regain their confidence. The English people have great confidence in just and honest men, whether they be Catholics or Protestants. In the political honesty and sense of justice of the 'Times' they have but