

NOTES FROM AUCKLAND.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

Auckland is to have its Museum opened on Sunday at last, and it is the last city in the colony to come to that decision. Yet the people of Auckland are as pleasure-seeking a community as there is in these islands, but they make great profession of what passes as piety while owning very little of the genuine article. In September a requisition was presented to the Council in charge of the museum, requesting that it should be opened on Sundays. Several Christian sects regarded such a proposition as heretical, and, with that intolerance which has for centuries been synonymous with Christianity, they got up petitions to keep the museum shut. These petitioners were of the Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian type. They were not joined by the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. On the contrary, it is now said that Bishop Cowie, of the Anglican Church, has long been in favour of opening. The puritanical observance of Sunday is a modern phase of Christianity not three centuries old. It is also a local phase, manifested chiefly in England and Scotland, but utterly repudiated on the Continent of Europe. It has been imported here as other home matters have, and though somewhat diluted to what it is in the parent country, is nevertheless the backbone of what a large proportion of the population consider genuine Christianity. This opinion is held in defiance of early Christian tradition, for if New Testament narrative possesses a grain of truth, Jesus was a most violent opponent of Sabbatarianism. Yet these Sabbatarians, in the most fulsome manner, profess to be the close followers of this same Jesus. The infatuation of these sectaries is due, first, to their ingrained egotism—they are confident that none mean so well as they do; second, to their passion for domination. Except liberty to themselves they have no other conception of liberty, nor have they any disposition towards it. To bring over such minds to the side of liberty, you must touch them through their pockets and interests, then they may be brought over to be professed supporters. That the Auckland Museum is to be opened on Sunday is due to a fortunate chance. Peculiarly, the Museum has been embarrassed. The revenue was derived in part from subscribers of £1 each per annum. A large majority of these subscribers have been for years in favour of opening, but the minority threatened that if it were opened they would discontinue their subscriptions. The Council quailed before the intimidation of this minority and deferred indefinitely the action they would most willingly have taken. However relief came, and from a most unlikely source. Over a year ago an old man named Costley died. He lived as if he were poor. An old clothesman would not have given more than ten shillings for his wardrobe, but he died legally worth about £100,000, unearned increment on city property he had bought away back from the year 1840. The bulk of this large sum he apportioned by will amongst seven public institutions. The share which fell to the Museum was about £12,000. This relieved that institution from all embarrassment, made it independent of the bigoted governing minority of the Institute, and now the public will be able to enter it on Sundays. With the new lights that have lately been shed around on the land question, Mr. Costley's very liberal act may be viewed from a very different stand point to what it would have been viewed a few years ago. From that new stand point, Mr. Costley in bequeathing his property to institutions designed for the benefit of the community did merely an act of justice. The increase in the value of his property was due entirely to the numbers and enterprise of the community, and not his exertions. He may have acknowledged this fact—may have been a disciple of the Henry George school, and, following up his convictions to their practical end, have resolved honestly to return to the community that increment which the community had earned.

It is not an uncommon opinion that Governments are backward in reforms and improvements, but in this instance that opinion is not borne out, for the Government years ago imposed this condition on the Council of the Museum, "that it should be opened on Sundays as soon as the other Museums were so opened," but the Council have for years been boycotted by the illiberal, and no doubt in their own estimation, pious minority of the members of the Institute.

GLEANINGS.

'NATIONAL REFORMER.'

There are seven Freethought Associations in Canada.

Mrs. Besant's "Atheistic Platform" seems to have taken with the public, the sales being very large.

Mr. Bradlaugh is glad to learn that Mr. Stout has been re-elected President of the Dunedin Freethought Association.

Newdigate Newdegate is begging for money to pay his law costs, and all the Tory leaders have signed his begging petition.

Fifty new members joined the National Secular Society in one week, and four new branches were being formed at the same time.

In the first division of the advanced stages at South Kensington, four of the five candidates from the Hall of Science Schools who qualified were women.

In consequence of the death of M. Goffin, the illness of M. Rothmaler, and the state of things in Brussels, the next International Freethought Conference will be held in Antwerp in 1885.

The Diderot Centenary Committee, after obtaining the authorisation of the French Government to inaugurate the Diderot statue, invited Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant to attend. Work, however, prevented their acceptance.

The Hall of Science Schools are maintaining their high reputation. Of twenty-six sent to the South Kensington examinations all passed. They won't need any more of Sir Henry Tyler's advertisements in the House of Commons.

The 'Church Reformer' has discovered that "*the present oath (of allegiance) is non-Christian, if not anti-Christian,*" and uses Malcolm McColl's argument to show that the oath was altered from "on the truth faith of a Christian, so help me God" to admit men who deny the Christian faith.

In a late number of the 'Reformer' is an acknowledgment of subscriptions received from Nelson, N.Z. The subscribers, in a note, said—"On behalf of ourselves and the other subscribers, we tender you the hand of fellowship and sympathy, and trust that the day is not far distant when your indomitable courage and splendid skill will prevail for the complete discomfiture of your enemies." Such messages from this far-off land show that even here the fight for constitutional right is eagerly watched.

A Mr. J. St. Clair challenged Mr. Bradlaugh to a debate on the moral or constitutional right of the House of Lords to delay passing one half of a Reform Bill until "its concealed half was before the nation and the House." He also named forfeits which were to be paid for deviations from facts, immoral arguments, fallacies, or ambiguities during the debate. Mr. Bradlaugh replied that he was of opinion that the Lords had repeatedly acted mischievously since 1760, and also in the Franchise matter. He accepted the challenge, but asked for a banker's reference, and two sureties for the amount of fines. The forfeits to be divided between the London Hospital and the Masonic Boys' School. Mr. St. Clair could not meet the conditions.

'SECULAR REVIEW.'

There is a Freethought journal in Spain. It is called 'La Tronada.'

Saladin (Stewart Ross) has challenged the Rev. Canon Richmond, of Carlisle, to a debate in the columns of that paper.

The above-mentioned cleric, speaking of Mr. C. Watts, said "he ought to be met somehow or other," and that "perhaps it was not wise to meet him on the platform; but he must be met, and his followers must be met." As the Rev. Canon objects to the platform, Saladin offers the 'Review' columns.

Cardinal Manning told the last Temperance Congress that Christians "are the only men on earth who are stained and shamed by the manufacture and consumption of strong drink. Indian, Oriental, and Chinese were bound by their religion not to take it, and they only broke through the rule where the Christian name had spread."