

RANDOM NOTES.

"A child's amang ye takis' notes,
And faith he'd prest 'em."

If "opposition be the life of trade," amalgamation must decidedly have quite a different effect. Ever since the unlucky hour in which its birthright was bartered for a mess of potage, has the "mercury" fallen lower and lower, until, to the weatherwise, one glance is sufficient to descry hard times ahead. Alas! what a falling off! From being at one time the messenger to the gods, and the purveyor to favoured mortals of a perfect ambrosia, its services have been transferred to another region, and it now labors to regale its patient readers with hazy tales of printers' devils. And how fares it with the 'Guardian'? It, too, seems to share the fate of its "weakly" edition—pardon the orthography—towards which with Upas-like effect it has netted the part of the pilot fish. As the somewhat limited stock of incorporated originality has of late been rather lavishly expended in the manufacture of facts for the daily, the suffering readers of the 'Mercury' have been surfeited with a particular misty production, more notable for its length than logic, and for which their patience is rewarded with the information that the 'Lyttelton Times' had substituted an "s" for an "r"; the 'Dunstan Times' had been published with a "t" doing duty for an "h"; and—horror of horrors! THE TABLET had misplaced an "l." Poor Timon! you have, indeed, a great cause of grievance against the Press—of which you appear to be the self-constituted censor—and it is too bad not to have relieved you from your dilemma, and furnished you with a growl. Although you have proved yourself to be a "man of letters," and that your orthography is unimpeachable, candor compels me to state that you are sadly deficient in originality. Week by week the Echoes become more weak—this is fact, and not intended as a pun—which seems to presage the date of their final dissolution as not afar off. 'Tis pity, but 'tis fact, my dear boy.

I have heard it "on authority" which does not require the arrival of Home papers for confirmation, that Chief Tyler (which I presume to be the personage who performs the "slating" operation). Bakewell J.W., No. 432, S.C., &c., &c., is to receive a severe rap over his masonic knuckles for imprudently drawing such a hornet's nest about the ears of the mystic brotherhood. Very many months since the moral and Christian society of which the zealous but indiscreet member seeks to be the champion, received a most wholesome lesson, and one it had the sense to profit by. Now, however, by a piece of stupid officiousness, the discreet silence so long maintained may be rendered nugatory. I have been assured that notwithstanding the pseudo-official tone of the document, and the imposing alphabetical array appended to the signature, a very small corner of the mystic veil has been lifted for the enlightenment of the worthy medico; and further, that if it were sought to "draw the budger," the hon. member for Trinidad would be the last instrument selected for the purpose. The worthy doctor has of late secured a lasting renown for his scientific researches into the watery element, and the monsters which his analysis brought so disagreeably to light, and he had better rest on his laurels. He has just entered upon another analysis which if pursued will necessitate a more tropical temperature in the element, and the monstrosities of which may even astonish J.W., No. 432, S.C. If Bro. Bakewell must indulge his morbid craving for notoriety, let his *cacoëthes scribendi* be devoted to his interesting experiences as Health Officer of Trinidad, for although there is but small probability of their being new to any, still on matters Trinidadical he is an authority.

THE LATE GRAND MASTER OF ENGLISH MASONS.

We certainly live in an age of extraordinary events, if not of miracles. The conversion of the late Grand Master of English Masons, the Marquis of Ripon, to the Catholic faith is so much beyond the ordinary course of events, that it may well be regarded as miraculous—something akin to the conversion of Constantine. Such an unlooked-for and remarkable occurrence must create a strong sensation in the minds of all the Masons throughout the world. It must set every reflecting man among them to think deeply on what is coming. It has been said that the fairest flowers in the Anglican Church are being transplanted into the Pope's garden. We now see the most eminent of English men—eminent for personal worth, rank, wealth, and talent, quitting not only the Anglican Church, but an institution still more extensively diffused and important—the Masonic body—to enter the Catholic fold. We do not yet know, and shall probably never know, the process of reasoning by which the mind of such a man as the late Grand Master of the English Masons was led to perceive the claims which the Catholic faith had to his assent. This, however, we do know: that the Catholic faith is a Divine gift, and will only be granted to those who ask it aright. No amount of human study or learning, apart from Divine grace and humility and docility of mind, will ever procure the Catholic faith to anyone. We may be sure, therefore, that however much Lord Ripon's great natural talents, his learning, worldly wisdom and experience, and reflection on the events of the age now passing before him, may have contributed to open his eyes to see the truth of the Catholic faith, yet that the main cause of his conversion was in the disposition of mind which fitted him to receive that faith as a free gift from the hand of God. The Catholic Church is the Church of the poor and lowly in a more especial manner. She can exist in spite of the opposition of the great and wealthy. Yet it is, no doubt, to her great benefit when men of wealth and rank, and extensive social and political influence, like Lord Ripon, have the grace to join her Communion, more especially under the very peculiar circumstances in which he was placed prior to his reception.

The Masonic body, of which he was the head in England, is the implacable and deadly enemy of the Catholic Church. When the Church conquered him, therefore, she secured a most glorious triumph—a triumph which, one may suppose, would be celebrated in the court of heaven above with great joy, as it certainly will be by all

English-speaking Catholics throughout the world. The English Mason next, in point of Masonic eminence, to Lord Ripon is probably the Prince of Wales. Humanly speaking, it is very unlikely that he will have the grace to take a similar step to that which Lord Ripon has taken; yet even he, in common with all other English brethren of the "mystic tie," must be a little staggered at the course Lord Ripon has taken, and feel at their wits' end what to think about it. Will Disraeli write a novel on the occasion, as he wrote "Lothair" when the wealthy Marquis of Bute joined the Church? Lord Ripon is no weak-minded devotee, but a man of the world, and a politician of experience, besides being an influential member of the British House of Peers. His religious convictions and his political creed must be in unison. He sees the dangers which threaten Christendom from present influences, hostile to the Catholic Church, and he adopts his course accordingly. He no doubt has a following—a party among the English Protestant aristocracy, who share his convictions, and who, sooner or later, will follow him into the Church. The next to come over to Rome may be Disraeli himself. We have seen quite as unlikely things in our time. It would not surprise us in the least to hear of the conversion both of Mr Disraeli and Mr Gladstone to the Church. The former has just told us that Catholicism and Atheism are the two great master powers in Europe at this hour. We must all choose one side or the other; Protestantism is politically dead. The enemies of the Catholic Church generally, but throughout the British empire in particular, may well be puzzled and perplexed when they examine her position at this moment. There is no public demonstration of physical force being made on her behalf, or likely to be made. No powerful military Government is lifting a hand or saying so much as a word in her favor. On the contrary, the most powerful military Government in modern times is laboring for her ruin. Catholic bishops, priests, and religion are being gagged, reduced to beggary, and driven into exile. Her Visible Head has been stripped of his temporal possessions, and is a virtual prisoner in the hands of his enemies, not sure of his life for a day. Yet, in spite of all this, never was the Church more powerful or influential. Her Visible Head commands more reverence and respect than the most powerful and richest of his enemies. She is extending her triumphs in all lands, and most of all in England, the natural home of the free and the brave. The chief cause of all this is to be sought for in the power of prayer and the Sacraments. The Catholics of the world are now united, with one heart and one mind, in beseeching the Throne of God to entreat Him to show mercy to His Church. They have formed a solemn league of prayer for that end. This is the true secret of the present triumph of the Church. Happy for her when she does not trust to an arm of flesh—to carnal weapons, to concordats, or Government patronage, but puts her chief trust in prayer and the providence of God, to whom she commits her cause. There is a power at work in her interest superior to the power of Bismarck or any of her enemies. In short, Providence has its own policy, and in that policy Catholics now place their confidence. We see it developing itself in such events as the conversion of the Marquis of Ripon. Far better that the Catholic faith progress in England slowly and steadily, as now, rather than by violent and sudden commotion, such as heralded "Protestantism" in the 16th century. Where noise and tumult are, there the spirit of God will not come.

ST. PATRICK'S SCHOOL, LAWRENCE.

THE merry peals which issued from the belfry of St. Patrick's School on Thursday morning announced that a marriage was about to take place—a thing, we regret to say, of very rare occurrence in the Tuapeka district, so rare that it may be considered an event in the history of the place. The marriage referred to anyhow was an event of no small importance to a considerable section of this community, seeing it was the happy nuptials of the master and mistress of the Roman Catholic School. The bride, Mrs Conway, is very well known to the most of our Tuapeka residents, having occupied with very great acceptance the position of female teacher of the school for the last three years. By her frank and generous disposition she has endeared herself to all the children of the school, and gained for herself a large circle of friends. The bridegroom, Mr Wood, is a comparative stranger to the place, having only been a resident a few months. But we feel confident that he only needs to be known to be appreciated. He is a young man of great and versatile ability, is a good musician, and an excellent teacher. Since he assumed the mastership of the school, it has shown wonderful signs of vitality; and if the numbers continue to increase as they have lately been doing, the capacious schoolroom will not by any means be too large for their accommodation.

Shortly after ten o'clock, Mr Larkin entered the room with the bride leaning upon his arm, followed by the bridegroom and bridesmaids—the Misses Topsy and Tilly Wolfe,—and took their places in front of the altar. By this time, a large crowd of ladies and gentlemen had gathered in the building to witness the ceremony. To the right and left of the altar were ranged on forms the children of the school, trimly dressed for the occasion. The Rev. Father Larkin, priest of the parish, was the officiating clergyman, and after administering the sacrament to a considerable number of communicants, he proceeded to tie the silken knot. The ceremony was a very solemn and impressive one, and was concluded by the priest addressing the young couple in a few very appropriate remarks, followed by the usual prayers spoken at these times. Then came a general shaking of hands, wishing a newly-wedded pair long life and every happiness, &c., &c. The children, meanwhile, retired to the other end of the building to enjoy the cakes and sweets that were provided for them without measure. After songs had been sung by Miss Dalton and Mr Wood, which were accompanied on the harmonium by Mrs Wood, to the great delight of all present, a very pleasant scene was enacted, viz., the presentation of congratulatory addresses beautifully engrossed on vellum, from the children to their teachers. The first was the following address to Mrs Wood, read by Miss Mary Bowes, and signed by a large number of the girls:—
"To Mrs John Wood.