

THE STATE AS A MASTER.

It is a somewhat prevalent idea amongst the community that persons are to be envied who have had the good fortune to have been taken under the paternal wing of the General Government. This may, and no doubt is, correct in isolated cases, where places have been made for the favored few, but it is a fallacy with regard to at least one class of the servants of the State. Some short while since we drew attention to the eccentric regulations in force in the postal department, and this week we give our readers a few facts regarding the treatment and remuneration of one section of its employes. We allude to the letter-carriers who constitute the Dunedin staff. We think it will be admitted by those who have been resident in this city for the last decade that during that period its proportions have been fully doubled, and during the past three years, the rate of living, &c. has materially increased. Taking these two facts, then, into consideration, it is but natural to suppose that to keep pace with the march of progress an increase in the number of the staff would have been necessary, and in a spirit of justice to its servants, the Government would have felt it incumbent upon it to see that its employes were not placed at a disadvantage by increased expenditure required, consequent upon the general prosperity of the colony. The Provincial Government, under whose control is placed the Police Force of Otago, viewed the matter as we do, and some six months ago, on the recommendation of the Commissioner, increased the pay of every member of the Force, from the head of the department down to the last constable. But the letter-carriers of Dunedin are unluckily for themselves the servants of the General instead of the Provincial Government, and the powers that rule at Wellington do not see such matters with the eyes of ordinary mortals, or more likely still are quite oblivious of the increased duties of the hard-worked letter-carriers of Dunedin. Who is to blame in the matter we know not; but this we do know—and our authority for the fact is the Postmaster at Dunedin—that the staff is totally inadequate to the requirements of the city. As a proof of its truth it may be started, that unless when possessed of a private box at the post-office, upon the arrival of the English mail, no less than twenty-six hours elapse before its delivery, and that to persons within four hundred yards of the head office. And now for a few facts as to its cause. Our readers will scarcely believe—but we have it on the best authority—that while six years ago, when the city was but of half its present dimensions, the number of postmen were six; now, to keep pace with its rapid and daily-increasing growth, the number has been increased to four. A similar logical and equitable decision has been arrived at in the matter of remuneration. Half a dozen years ago, when the work was comparatively easy to what it is at present, when the hills round about were not dotted with habitations, and with six to do the work, the salary per man was fixed at £150 per year. To-day, in consideration of the facts set forth their pay has been raised to *one hundred and thirty pounds*. Is it any wonder to hear, then, that under such paternal and considerate treatment, two out of the four have handed in their resignations, and leave the department at the close of the present month. In the Police Force provision is made for a retiring allowance to its members after a term of years, but no such compensation is allotted the hard-worked and poorly-paid class to which we have alluded. One of the two whose resignations have been handed in, has been in the department for thirteen years, and after that lengthened term of service he now quits it with the consolation of knowing, that while the whole community has been participating in the general prosperity, his merits have been recognised by increased work and reduced pay. No doubt the vacancies thus made can be easily filled, but will they be filled, at least for a considerable time, in a manner to give satisfaction? Humble though the position may appear in the eyes of some, it is undoubtedly one of trust and responsibility, and the policy which causes trained servants of tried integrity to throw up their appointments in disgust is more than questionable. It may be that the head of the department in Dunedin has not the necessary authority to increase his staff or its pay, but we have not the slightest hesitation in saying that were proper representations made by that officer to the Postmaster-General as to the total inadequacy of the staff at his command to meet the requirements of the city, the evil would be soon removed. In any case, no matter in whose hands the matter lies, steps should at once be taken to put a stop to the anomalous state of affairs we have described, and place the department upon something like a workable footing.

DIOCESE OF DUNEDIN.

CONFERENCE was held, on Wednesday last, in the Bishop's residence, Rattray street, Dunedin. The following gentlemen were present:—The Most Rev. Dr. Moran, the Very Rev. W. Coleman, the Revs. T. Crowley, J. Keogh, W. Larkin, T. Higgins, J. Donovan, E. Royer, P. O'Leary, M. Walsh, T. Lenihan, J. Gleasure, and J. Mackay.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

THE following is the daily average attendance of scholars at the Catholic schools at Queenstown and Lawrence, which proves that notwithstanding the difficulties under which they are placed by the Government, the schools are largely attended.—Queenstown, average attendance, 65; number on the roll, 75; Lawrence, attendance, 120; on the roll, 140.

SOME months since we advocated the initiation of "Saturday evening entertainments," pointing out how successful such sources of amusement had proved in other cities. We are pleased to see that steps have been taken to carry out the suggestion, the first of a series coming off at the Oddfellows' Hall this evening. If properly managed, there can be little doubt of their proving a success, and providing a wholesome source of amusement. His Worship the Mayor has consented to occupy the chair on this the opening night.

WE have received from the publishers, Messrs Langbridge and Edgecombe, the proprietors of the 'Bay of Plenty Times,' 'The Handbook to the Hot Lakes of the Rotomahana and Taupo Districts,' which will be found a most useful guide to visitors to the Bay of Plenty. The little work contains an excellent map of the district, and the letter-press gives most interesting histories of its settlement; in addition, an account of the various boiling springs, healing baths, geysers, and intermitting fountains for which it is celebrated. Considering the many natural curiosities with which it abounds, its easy access from the principal northern ports, and the very reasonable charges for accommodation, the Hot Lake district should be extensively patronised by tourists, to whom the little guide just published will be found to be a most useful travelling companion.

WE would remind our readers that on next Tuesday evening his Lordship the Bishop will deliver his promised lecture in aid of the erection of a church at Port Chalmers. Setting aside the laudable object towards which the proceeds are to be applied, the subject is one which must have peculiar attractions at the present time.

THE writer of "Socialities" in the 'Australian Sketcher' tells the following curious story:—"Two or three almshouses for the reception of indigent Jews were built in a certain city, and a fund provided that would give £1 per week each, in addition to the free quarters, to the objects of the charity. For a long time no one could be got to live in them. A personal canvass was made by the promoters of the charity on their poorer brethren, but none of the chosen people could be found mean enough to accept the terms. 'Say £2,' at last a feeble old marine store dealer said, 'and I'll go in.' His offer was thankfully closed, and the conductors, in their annual report, congratulated the subscribers on the progress the good cause was making. But even for £2 they couldn't get a tenant to go next door. Determined to make the thing a success, the benevolent president bribed an aged pedlar and his wife with the offer of an extra £1 out of his private pocket to become partakers of the charity. The rage of the original pauper when he heard of the transaction surpasses belief. 'It's a downright swindle,' he cried to the committee on their next visit, 'I'm done out of a pound a week, and I won't stand it. Look here, if I don't get the same wages as the other cove, I'll go out on strike.'

WE notice from our Canterbury exchanges that Baker's Hibernicon are now appearing in Timaru, and with an equal amount of success to that achieved in Dunedin.

A REMARKABLE *contretemps* has arisen between the Provincial Government of Auckland and the Ladies' Benevolent Society, in consequence of the former discharging the matron of the Old Woman's Home, which is under the management of the ladies. The latter took the matron under their protection. The Deputy-Superintendent (says the 'Marlborough Times') wrote to the ladies that unless the matron cleared out before noon on a certain day, that a policeman would expedite her departure. The ladies thereupon carted the whole of the bedding and fittings of the home, which are their property, and left the Government with the bare building full of decrepit old women in a helpless state. How the matter will end is doubtful, but public feeling favors the action of the ladies in resisting the arbitrary measure of the Government.

THE New Zealand census for 1874 is just out of the hands of the Registrar-General. The population of the colony, on the 1st March, 1875, was 299,514, of whom 4,816 were Chinese. The males numbered 170,281, and the females 128,523. The Provincial returns are: Auckland, 67,451; Taranaki, 5,465; Wellington, 29,790; Hawkes Bay, 9,228; Marlborough, 6,045; Nelson, 22,558; Westland, 14,660; Canterbury, 58,775; Otago, 85,113. The population of the chief towns is—Auckland (without suburbs), 12,755; with the suburbs of Parnell and Newton, 21,520; Wellington, 10,547; Napier, 3,514; New Plymouth, 2,044; Wanganni, 1,134; Nelson, 2,806; Hokitika, 3,352; Greymouth, 2,551; Christchurch, without suburbs, 10,294; including suburbs, 16,959; Lyttelton, 2,974; Dunedin, 18,499; Port Chalmers, 1,535; Invercargill, 2,479; Oamaru, 2,819; the town of Thames, 8,073.

IT is a matter for surprise that, amid the general prosperity which at present pervades the Colony, Auckland would appear to be the only city left out in the cold. Not only is her Provincial exchequer worse than empty; not only does her education scheme threaten a failure, for lack of means, but her City Improvement Commissioners are equally impecunious, and, for lack of means, have been compelled to suspend operations, which, having been begun, must now be finished.