

REEFTON.

(From a Correspondent.)

THE history of Reefton is eminently the history of the physical, moral, and intellectual energy of Irishmen, for with one or two exceptions all the pioneers hailed from Ireland, and they can now behold with pardonable pride the present gay and business-like appearance of the town and the adjoining districts of Caplestone and Black's Point, with good roads and comfortable modes of transit, and the pleasure derived from the thought must be considerably enhanced when they look back to the time when there was neither track nor road in the neighbourhood—except the rough beds of creeks and rivers—and no vehicle for the transport of "swag" or "tucker" except their own brawny shoulders.

As its name implies, it had its origin in the discovery of gold-bearing quartz reefs in the neighbourhood, and is situated about halfway between Greymouth and Westport on what is commonly called the "Right Hand Branch" of the "Inangahua," but which is in reality the "Left Hand Branch," the error having arisen from having ascended the river from its entry into the "Buller" instead of descending it from its source.

The principal street, Broadway, is about three-quarters of a mile in length, and contains some substantially-built stores, hotels, and sharebroking offices, whose numbers are slowly but steadily augmenting. In the centre of this street Mr. P. Brennan, chairman of both the County Council and Road Board, is having erected a very substantial and commodious building, which will contain several suites of offices, to meet the requirements of his large and increasing business as sharebroker, mining manager, commission agent, &c., which will also contribute to the improved architectural appearance of the place. Mr. Brennan is a man who has attained his high social and commercial position by strict integrity, force of character, energy and intelligence, which qualities have enabled him to overcome difficulties in his onward path that would make other men—made of less stern metal—succumb. He exhibits a praiseworthy example of liberality and generosity in not accepting any remuneration for his services as president of the two before-mentioned local bodies, and the value of this boon to ratepayers is considerably enhanced when is borne in mind the tax that it implies on his hours of relaxation which are necessary to counteract the effects of his close attention to his own private business.

There are 762 ratepayers on the electoral roll, and the total population of the entire county may be roughly estimated at about 2,000. The Council consists of eight members, four of whom, Messrs. P. Brennan, P. Q. Caples, M. Byrne, and P. Kelly, are Irishmen and Catholics, and of the right stamp. There are three churches, the Roman Catholic, Wesleyan, and Church of England, the latter being not yet quite ready for Divine worship, and two schools, the Roman Catholic being recently placed under the management of Mr. J. J. Crofts, late of Kumara. The one building is at present utilised for both church and school purposes, but the inconvenience inseparable from such an arrangement will soon be remedied, thanks to the zealous exertions of our highly esteemed and worthy pastor, the Rev. Father Carew, and the noble liberality of his flock, who in answer to his call for funds to build a new church, proved their thankfulness towards Him who is the "Giver of all good and perfect gifts," and their "Zeal for the glory of His house," by subscribing in one day over fourteen hundred pounds for that glorious object.

The site of the building is most eligible and central, and will be the first object that will catch the traveller's eye, no matter from what direction he arrives at Reefton. The following twelve gentlemen's subscriptions alone reached £580, viz.: Messrs. Matthew Byrne and Patrick Butler, £100 each; Mr. Patrick Brennan, £50, and a promise of £50 more; Rev. Father Carew, £60; Mr. John Butler, £50; Mr. John Williams, Fern Flat, £40; Mr. Maurice Fitzgerald, £30; and Messrs. F. Hampson, T. Deegan, P. Twohill, E. Potts and James Fitzgerald, £20 each. These items prove that the Irishmen of the Inangahua district, are imbued with the same undying spirit of love and zeal for the dear Old Faith, for which the sons of St. Patrick are renowned all over the universe.

The opening of the new road from the Grey to Westport, and another to Black's Point will make another era in the strides Reefton is making in advancement and civilisation. Nearly all the pioneers are here still, and most of them in a position of independence and all with fair prospects before them—for there is not perhaps in all these colonies a wider or a more encouraging field for labour and capital than the district of which Reefton is the centre, extending in a northerly direction to Collingwood and to the head of the Brown Grey in a southerly. Newly discovered reefs are of almost daily occurrence latterly, and there are thousands of acres of a reefing country in the neighbourhood, probably containing millions of buried treasure, which only wants the "golden lever" to exhume it.

A quantity of stone crushed for the year, ended December 31, 1877, was 41,067 tons, which yielded 35,853 ounces, of which £60,583 6s 8d were allotted to dividends. As compared with the returns of the previous year, the amount of dividends declared is highly satisfactory, showing an increase over the entire district of nearly 50 per cent.

The total number of tons crushed from March 1872, to December 31, 1877, was 146,000, yielding 123,803 ounces, and dividends to the amount of £162,416 8s 4d.

These results have been arrived at by the indomitable energy of a few Irishmen who opened up this district without extraneous aid of any kind, which goes to prove that industry is the natural sure way to wealth, and that it is impossible for an industrious man to be any considerable length of time in want of the comforts and necessities of life in this colony.

The usual Annual Meeting of the Reefton Branch of the H.A.C.B.S. was held last month at Williams' Family Hotel. The following officers were elected:—Bro. J. McSherry, President; Bro. M. Cullen, Vice-President; Bro. W. Williams, Treasurer; Bro. J. Dechan, Secretary; Bro. J. Quigley, Warden; and Bro. Jas. Dunn, Guardian. The usual vote of thanks was passed to the retiring officers; and

the officers elect having individually acknowledged their respective honours, the meeting was closed in prayer by the President. Speaking of the Hibernian Society, I think its sphere of usefulness might be considerably enlarged, and its numbers increased, by the members keeping steadily in view the principal objects of its institution, viz., the moral, and material amelioration of their race, and that they should be *brothers* not merely in name but also in reality. All Catholics are brothers in religion, and, no matter how we disagree on minor matters, we have religion left us as a grand central point of unity, which inculcates charity towards all men but especially towards our "own household," and, as members of the H.A.C.B.S., we incur as it were a triple obligation to assist one another. That is what I mean; and if there is only *one* poor brother who is struggling manfully against adverse fate, and who, in trying to keep his head above water, is assisted by the honest counsel of a poor brother, or by the material aid of a more wealthy one, I shall consider myself amply repaid for the trouble of bringing it under the notice of your readers. I believe our position as Irishmen would be materially improved in these colonies if we could crush out the spirit which is sometimes observable in the ignorant portion of us who cannot bear to see anybody getting along prosperously. This fault with many others attributed to us as a race might by very little trouble be proved as having its existence in our connection with the just and liberal government of England.

J. J. C.

OPENING OF A CHURCH IN TARANAKI.

(From a Correspondent.)

AFTER twelve years absence from Taranaki I pay it a visit during my Christmas holidays and find that many improvements have taken place during my absence. I stroll round and learn that all this has taken place in a very short time, for it was only within the last few years that the people seemed to have awakened and joined in the march of progress. The good old fashioned style of not moving might have remained much longer in existence, but for the *rude* interruptions of a few troublesome men with go-a-head ideas who were never easy unless, like John Brown's spirit, they were always "marching on." The town has been placed in telegraph communication with the rest of the colony, and a few miles of railway to a small village on the banks of the Waitara has been opened. A branch from this line runs up to a prosperous settlement called Inglewood, a town on the intended main trunk line to Wellington. I stopped at Inglewood a few days and could not but observe that life in the bush promoted a buoyant feeling of good, robust, health and energy. While staying here I had the pleasure of being present at the opening of a Roman Catholic chapel in this rising little township. Other denominations had already erected neat little edifices, and the Catholics were only biding their time to follow suit. Their numbers having increased, steps were at once taken by Mr. Stagpoole and others to collect subscriptions for the purpose, and now a neat little chapel stands as a monument of their unflagging zeal and energy. It is about 50 x 16, with 12 feet wall plates, lighted by six Gothic windows 6 x 2, and will comfortably seat about 100 persons. On the morning of the 14th inst., 50 persons arrived by train from New Plymouth to be present at the ceremony, including the choir of the New Plymouth Church. At 11 o'clock the chapel was duly opened, Father Pertuis, of Patea, celebrated High Mass, assisted by Father Lampilla, of New Plymouth. The choir, under the able leadership of Mr. William Francis, sang Mozart's Seventh Mass very nicely and in good time, but there was not sufficient strength to do it real credit as I have heard it performed, not only in a Cathedral city, but in New Plymouth itself some twelve years back when the choir was much stronger. The performance of Mr. Francis on the harmonium was really a display of masterly execution. At the close of the Mass, Father Pertuis delivered a short address suitable to the occasion. After a walk around the township we all met again in the recreation ground at 3 o'clock, where we partook of an excellent tea which had been provided for the occasion by Mr. John Stagpoole. The visitors returned to New Plymouth by evening train highly delighted with their trip.

While on the subject of churches, I might refer to that of New Plymouth. Some thirteen years ago, when the troops were stationed here, a piece of ground was obtained in the town and a building was erected (by voluntary subscription) to be temporarily used as a church, till a sufficient fund accumulated to permit of a larger edifice being built. I see now that another building has been erected, though I am sorry to say much architectural praise cannot be awarded to it, and the former building has been converted into what it was originally intended for, the residence of the priest. It must be borne in mind that the Catholics of New Plymouth do not form a very wealthy part of the community, but they are of a liberal nature wherever their faith is concerned, and are not without a school for the education of their children. Few places in New Zealand compare with Taranaki for rural beauty, pleasing repose of aspect, and all the requisites for the surroundings of an agricultural country, the only drawback against her future progress being the want of a harbour, which would have been supplied long ago, had it not been for the blind opposition of a few old fashioned residents who have a great prejudice against anything new or the introduction into the place of new blood.

New Plymouth.

24th January, 1878.

J. H.

HANGMAN of England must be a lucrative post and a tolerably active one. Here we are in the centre of the most civilized part of the world, and yet the public hangman is kept almost constantly at work. Marwood, the successor of the distinguished Calcraft, had an engagement in his dismal diary for every day last week. Four men were hanged, and a woman and another man were also down for strangulation, but their sentences were commuted. For a small little island—a mere speck in the ocean, and, comparatively speaking, a mere handful of population—we evidently do our fair share of crime; yet who dares to say we are not the most civilized nation on earth? *London Universe.*