

A FUSS is being made in Scotland and echoed among ourselves on the descent of one Dr. Browne, a Catholic priest, among the ranks of the Presbyterian clergy—of some sort or another, though we cannot particularise it. It would be just as well, however, for the sake of their own reputation for understanding and information, if the particular sect of Presbyterians in question were to refrain from publishing the reasons given to them by Dr. Browne for his change. Were they, for instance, in any degree instructed concerning Catholic matters, they would know that no priest could take offence at the Monaco case, since he must always have been well aware that the Pope had the power of deciding as to whether, in any given case, the conditions necessary to constitute a valid marriage had been fulfilled, or whether, those conditions not having been fulfilled, the marriage was null—as the Monaco marriage was declared to be, because Lady Mary Hamilton had resolutely withheld her consent to its performance, and had been forced to go through a vain form. There was no divorce, properly so called, since there had been no marriage, and no contradiction of infallibility, as Dr. Browne, supposing him to retain his senses, must know perfectly well. As to the rest of the apology, it is cobbled up in a most ludicrous manner from anti-Popery tracts. It may, however, be consistent with the cunning of a lunatic, and, for the sake of Dr. Browne's honesty, let us hope it is so. No excuse, meantime, can be offered for the gross ignorance and credulity shown by the Presbyterian ministers.

THE question of the payment of members formed a chief feature of the National League Convention held at Wexford on June 25. The *Nation* gives us the following particulars:—One of the resolutions submitted to the meeting pledged those present to the principle of recompensing the representatives of the county and of the boroughs included in it; and, as a means towards carrying out this resolution practically, it was proposed that an assessment of 2d, in the £ should be made and collected every October. Father Doyle, C.C., of Duncannon, in proposing these resolutions, stated that the valuation of the county was about £370,000, but he calculated that only one-half of that could be assessed, as the tax would, of course, be an entirely voluntary one. Such an assessment, he believed, would produce at the very lowest £1,200 per annum, which would mean £300 a year for each of their four members. A long and intelligent discussion arose, and ultimately the suggestion in the original resolution was carried enthusiastically. In the course of the proceedings the reverend chairman stated that Wexford began to pay its members so long ago as 1852, when the people paid the sheriff's fees for Patrick MacMahon.

MATTERS in Scotland seem still to be making fair progress. What would be thought if the following two resolutions, passed at Glendale the other day by the Highland Land-Law Reform Association, were published in connection with a meeting held in Ireland? 1. "That the president of this association, who was such an excellent disciplinarian in keeping members within the limits of the law, being now away from home, we do not feel his restraint in keeping from getting *by force* what was recommended to be passed into law as immediately necessary for our benefit by a royal commission, which is the direct representative of Government, if the legislators do not pass these recommendations into immediate law." 2. "That the young men of Skye and the Highlands generally, should amalgamate for the purpose of breaking up tack lands into goodly sized crofts *by force* if they did not get the desired legislation in land reform."

A FRIEND has forwarded to us a number of the *Hawke's Bay Herald* containing a letter on education from a writer who signs himself David Sidey—the Rev. David Sidey, a Presbyterian minister, if we are not mistaken. We do not see, however, that there is much which we need say concerning this letter. It is evidently the production of a long-winded, prosy man—a bigot to boot—and, it would seem, of very imperfect education himself, although he speaks so confidently on the subject with regard to other people;—who makes confident statements which are completely false—such, for instance, as that the "universal voice of history," whatever that may be, and wherever Mr. Sidey may have heard it, teaches that those whom he calls "sacerdotalists" give the poorest education possible, an assertion wholly false and at variance with the teaching of history;—such also as that Prussia had tried a purely secular system; since the primary schools there have always been denominational. Mr. Sidey's argument, moreover, so far as it is possible to discover any argument beneath the obscurity of the writer's prose, seems to be that of the persecutor and oppressor, who advocates the closing of schools, in which religious teaching that he condemns is given,—an argument that cannot, as yet at least, be urged by any responsible person in accordance with the toleration established by the laws of the empire. We do not see that this letter, then, is of any importance whatever to us. We do not know whether it is calculated to produce any effect upon the public mind. A Scotch philosopher has told us that the British public consists of people who are mostly fools, and, if it be so, no doubt they, or any portion of them, can be influenced by such productions as only fools could find suited to their mental status.

OUR contemporary the *Dunedin Evening Herald* is very properly disgusted at the indecent and blasphemous language which, as he says, is commonly to be heard from the mouths even of little children.—Our contemporary says, moreover, "We suppose it is competent to schoolmasters, even under the present secular system, to teach children the impropriety and indecency, if not impiety, of such a manner of speech."—And, no doubt, something might be done in our secular schools to check obscene language—but, as for blasphemy, how shall its prevention be taken in hand there? Do not the very wit and wisdom of some of those who are the chief upholders of secular schools depend, in a great part, on their power of blasphemy.—We are sure that, it is so, in the case, for example, of the famous Colonel Robert Ingersoll—amongst whose most admired productions we have read choice passages, all whose force consisted in the outrage they offered to the feelings of the Christian. And had we not here the other day, under the patronage of our present Premier, a lecturer in whose praise it was reported that his style was framed on that of Colonel Ingersoll? Shall blasphemy, then, be protected on the platform by the highest patrons of the secular schools, but checked in the schools by the teachers, their servants and dependents? And if, indeed, there be no God, and no devil, as the secular schools would seem to signify, and as certainly some of their patrons most undisguisedly proclaim, how shall there be such a thing as blasphemy at all? Let it pass for mere unmeaning exclamation as fit for the expression of excitement as anything else. Where religion does not exist it is mere harmless babble in the mouths of babes and sucklings.

"PARNELL denounced by Davitt"—So runs the heading of a paragraph published by several of our contemporaries containing a telegram to the *New York Sun* and giving a sensational summary of an exposure supposed to have been of the Migration Company and its founder,—Mr. Parnell. Unfortunately, however, for those who wish evil to the Irish cause, the whole thing is a sham resting on the slenderest foundation possible, that Michael Davitt had expressed an opinion that too high a price had been offered for the land near Tuam bidden for by the company. On the day before the telegram was sent to the *Sun*, or pretended to be sent to it, as it seems most probable, Michael Davitt acting in company with Mr. Sexton at the Leitrim convention had drawn up among others a resolution containing the following words—"that we declare our unqualified confidence in the leadership of Mr. Parnell."—Our contemporaries, then, may thank the *New York Sun* for providing them with a mare's nest. They will, nevertheless, we have no doubt, be very sensible of their debt to a newspaper that has furnished them with the means of calumniating Mr. Parnell, and generally doing a little more to blacken the Irish cause. We shall not find them contradicting the falsehood they have published.

A PRESENTATION of a purse containing 175 sovereigns was made on Wednesday to Mr. Thomas Bracken, who is about to leave Dunedin, as a testimony to the high place which he has long occupied in the estimation of his fellow-citizens. It is a matter of much regret to us all that Mr. Bracken should have made up his mind to remove from our neighbourhood where his talents and genial and obliging disposition have done so much for the benefit of those among whom he lived.—As a journalist, he had long since attained to distinction; his parliamentary career was creditable, and its termination was caused rather through accident than anything else; his relations with his fellow-townsmen have been at all times of the most friendly nature, and in all respects he has deserved and gained the good opinion of the community in general, made up though it be of various elements. Under such circumstances, it is needless to add, he carries with him the good wishes of us all and our best aspirations for his success and happiness in the new sphere chosen by him.—As well as the presentation made on this occasion by the general body of our citizens, the Oddfellows presented Mr. Bracken with a handsome diamond locket, and the New Zealand Engine-drivers and Fireman's Association with an address accompanied by a pair of diamond earrings and a brooch for Mrs. Bracken.

The *Auckland Star*, we see, has also made a joke or two on the *Tablet's* policy. Our contemporary says, in conclusion, that, "fortunately for the community at large, the people are a good deal wiser than their would-be leaders." What! wiser even than those anonymous wiseacres who aspire to lead them through the profound and brilliant columns of the daily Press? Surely not.

DOES the fact that special police protection has been removed in Ireland mean that the country has now been sufficiently cowed, or that the soldiers taking the place of the police so employed may be required for the Sudan? There is decidedly a doubt in the case which it would be interesting to have solved.

FOR the especial instruction of the Rev. David Sidey of Napier we give the following extracts from a letter of the Archbishop of Gnesen and Posen, read in evidence before the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education in Ireland, held in February, 1869:—"The mixed system has never been applied in Prussia to elementary schools. These have been, and are at the present day, purely denomi-