

labour, will do well to secure a copy of this manual which is published at the moderate price of 3s 6d.

ON the eve of Mr. A. J. Rearden's departure from Hokitika for Napier, he was presented by the members of the H.A.C.B.S., in recognition of his services to their society, with a silver tea and coffee service and an address. The presentation was made in the Catholic school-house, where a large number of Mr. Rearden's friends and well-wishers had assembled—the Rev. Father Martin presiding.

THE usual quarterly meeting of St. Patrick's Branch, H.A.C.B.S., Wanganui, was held in St. Mary's school-room on Monday, 14th inst. The President, Bro. Lloyd, occupied the chair, and there was a good attendance of members. As the Secretaryship of the Branch had become vacant, Bro. Kearney, who was nominated at the previous meeting, was elected to that office. Various matters affecting the interests of the Society were discussed, and the meeting closed in the usual manner.

THE friends of Freethought may well fear for its future when they consider the manner in which its chosen leaders not unfrequently prove faithless and desert its standard. The death-bed is very fatal to its interests, as was proved once more, for example, the other day, when Cardinal Sanfelice reconciled to the Church the dying Senator and Professor of Philosophy Vera. A more notable conversion, however, is that of the champion of the sect, commonly known under his *nom de plume* of "Leo Taxil," and of whom we had last heard as presiding, two or three months ago, at the Atheist congress so daringly and insolently held in Rome. The Dublin *Freeman* refers to this event as follows:—"It is no exaggeration to say that the conversion of 'Leo Taxil' (M. Gabriel Jogand) has astounded all France. He was the most pronounced Atheist in the country, and filled the office of President of the Anti-Clerical Society of France, of whom he was also the founder. No more relentless or ferocious writer against Catholicism, and, indeed, Christianity in all forms, has recently appeared; and some of his offensive anti-Papistical volumes have been standard works among the French Freethinkers. Some doubts having been cast upon the sincerity of his conversion, he wrote to *L'Univers* declaring that his conversion was indeed a true one. 'I had been,' he added, 'discouraged, pained, but I believed in Republican truth; nay, I thought that among Republicans alone was truth. For the Republic I had sacrificed my friends, my father himself. Now I have been the subject of endless Republican lies. . . . I refused to be interviewed in spite of which I have been accused of acting by way of a little advertisement. But, indeed, I have taken no part in the disturbance made about me. . . . The mere resignation no longer suffices to my conscience; it is now a matter of true penitence, sincere, absolute. The pain which has been inflicted upon me has been followed by shame for my faults. If I am weeping now it is no longer for anger or spite; I weep only for the scandals which I have given, which I deplore, and which I will henceforth repair with all my powers.' The curious part of 'Leo Taxil's' conversion is that it was while in Rome attending the 'Anti-Clerical Congress' that he returned to the Church from which he had seceded, and of which he became the bitter enemy. The conversion of Lord Ripon, the Grand Master of Freemasonry in England, was not a more remarkable event in England than the conversion of the President of the Anti-Clerical League of France has been in France." But while such conversions are frequent, it is evident that the Freethinker's standing-place must be considered in some degree precarious, and such as might reasonably check the confidence with which we occasionally hear it boasted of.

THE ravages made by the cholera in Spain have been terrible. And there also the Sisters of Charity and other members of the religious orders have proved themselves as usual true to their calling, and given many proofs of a more than earthly heroism. An unfortunate contra fiction has, moreover, been given to the assertion that devoted members of the Catholic Church are opposed to the advance of science, by the fact that 49 of the Sisters submitted to the inoculation invented by Dr. Ferran and died in consequence of it. Pasteur, meantime, declares that the face of their death proves that Ferran has discovered the true virus of the cholera, but that he has not known how to use it properly. If the inquiry be followed up by the great French man-of-science and result in a true success, we may conclude without hesitation that the dead Sisters would not regard their lives as sacrificed in vain. They has in any case offered them willingly for the good of their fellow-creatures.

HIS Lordship the Bishop of Dunedin, who has been staying for the past ten days at the Hot Springs, Hanmer Plain, is expected to return to Dunedin to-morrow (Saturday).

A MEETING of Aspirants to the Sodality of the Sacred Heart (women's branch) will be held in St. Joseph's school-room Dunedin, on Thursday evening, October 1st.

THE Dunedin Irish Rifles made their appearance on parade for the first time on Tuesday evening, when they were considered to acquit themselves very creditably. The appointment of Mr. J. B. Callan as captain of the corps has been gazetted.

THE report that Russia insists upon the deposition of Prince Alexander of Bulgaria would seem to give countenance to the opinion

that Russian intrigue brought about the revolution. An excuse was wanted in order to get rid of a Prince who had successfully resisted the designs cherished at St. Petersburg—if he would not be brought to a better mind. It is not to be expected that Russia will permit the suzerainty of the Sultan to be extended over Bulgaria, and, therefore, unless things can be reduced to their former condition, it is not unlikely that a serious outbreak may be the result. The dangers of the Afghan frontier have, perhaps, been renewed on another site, and now may prove doubly formidable.

H. A. C. B. SOCIETY.

THE half-yearly meeting of the Otago-Canterbury District Board was held at the Catholic schoolroom, Christchurch, on Thursday and Friday, August 13th and 14th, and adjourned until September 11th, 1885. The District Executive present—Bro. G. J. Sellers, D.P. (Chairman); Bro. A. H. Blake, D.V.P.; Bro. P. Donnelly, D.T.; Bro. P. Leahy, D.S.; Bro. J. Joyce D.P.P. Branches represented—Christchurch, Bros. Delegates R. P. Lonargan and P. Burke; Dunedin, Bro. P. Pope; Pimaru, Bro. M. J. Meagher; Wanganui, Bro. James Nelson; Leeston, Bro. James Murphy; New Headford, Bro. J. Doherty; Invercargill, Bro. J. McNamara; Lawrence, Bro. J. J. Reidy.

Special business—The resignation of Mr. Trustee Conroy was accepted, and Bro. J. McNamara elected instead.

Ordinary business—The minutes of last meeting were read and confirmed. The balance-sheet, Auditors' report, and Executive Officers' report were read, and after some discussion adopted. It was as follows:—

"Brother Delegates.—We have much pleasure in placing before you the present condition of the District; the work done since the last half-yearly meeting; and the future prospects of the Society.

"There is now on the Roll a total of 314 financial members, 71 unfinancial, and 20 new members. Our funeral Fund is £387 1s 7d; and the relations between the District Board and Branches is of the most cordial and encouraging nature.

"During the term, the resolutions of the District Board February meeting have been carried out successfully, as far as possible. One of the first of these was the amalgamation of the two Christchurch Branches, which was, without any unnecessary delay, accomplished, to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. Negotiations were opened between the District Board and the E.D. Branches of Auckland, Wellington, Bleubeim, and Hokitika, with the object of joining the District, and ultimately getting all the Branches in the Colony to form a New Zealand District Board, and we are happy to be able to state that success has already rewarded our efforts, inasmuch as Hokitika has already joined the District, while the other Branches, although not yet acquiescing, nevertheless do not debar the possibility of yet seeing all the Branches in New Zealand under one District Board, and with this object in view the District Executive recommend the substitution of "New Zealand" for "Otago-Canterbury" in the title of the District.

"The Wanganui Branch, which had actually passed a resolution to become an E.D. Branch, has since, you will be pleased to learn, rescinded that resolution, and is now as firmly attached to the D.B. as any Branch in New Zealand; and, as an evidence of its good faith, has very kindly consented to take over the members of the Patea Branch, which unfortunately was unable to survive the dispute referred to in the previous report.

"Correspondence has also passed between the Parish Priests of Rangiora, Milton, Ashburton, and the D. B., bearing on the question of opening new Branches in these centres of population, and although in each case the District Board has the sympathy and support of the clergy, still as yet nothing practical has resulted; but there is no intention on the part of the District Executive to let matters rest, but they are prepared to persevere until, with the assistance and co-operation of the clergy and the energetic Catholic laymen, the establishment of Branches in these towns will be an accomplished fact.

"The Amendments of the District Board Rules has also been attended to, copies of which are laid on the table, and are now in the hands of the Registrar, Wellington, for registration.

The Incidental Fund is weak, owing £35 5s 11d. The Executive, recognising this, proposes to refund a considerable portion of their salary for the term, beginning with the D.S. £5, D. T. £1 6s 3d, D. P. £1 1s., D. V. P. £1 1s. It is hoped that the Branches will consent to assist the Executive Officers towards wiping off the debt.

"You will also learn with regret that the past half-year was a heavy one on the Funeral Fund—three members and two members' wives having died.

"It may be added that the quarterage to Melbourne has not yet been paid, owing to the state of the Incidental Fund, but it is proposed to do so without any unnecessary delay, and therefore seek the counsel of Delegates for the most advisable way of removing the only seriously defective part of our executive machinery.

"During the half-year no less than 26 new members have joined the Society under the District, independent of the Hokitika Branch, while the number left through all causes is only 14.

"From the facts herein stated, that is the unity of the Branches and the District, the rapidly increasing number of members, and the opening of new Branches, it may be reasonably anticipated that a sounder prospect is now before the District Board, and in fact the New Zealand Branch of the H.A.C.B.S., than has hitherto been the case; and further, owing to the excellence of our organisation, as an Insurance Society, together with its being exclusively Catholic, the District Executive now appeals to all Catholics who have, until now, held aloof from the Society, and request them to join and support it. It also appeals to young men to join for the benefits and association of the Society; and finally it appeals to the clergy to use their influence towards its success. In many towns it is the only Catholic institution, certainly the only one that secures medical aid to members and their families, £1 per week to members during illness,