

## IN MEMORIAM.

It is with much regret we record the death of Mr. John Burk, of Sawyer's Bay, Port Chalmers. He was interred last Friday in the old cemetery at Port. The last services of the Church were performed by the Rev. Father Burke, Port Chalmers, and the Rev. Fathers Lynch and Vereker, of Dunedin, assisted by the young choristers of St. Joseph's Cathedral. When the funeral formed at St. Mary's Church, the *Requiem* Mass and absolution being over, it was found to be the largest funeral ever seen in Port Chalmers. The Mayor, the councillors, the great majority of the men of Port, the officers of the Dunedin Railway Department, and many friends from the city were there. Certainly more respect could not be paid to any private person by his fellow-citizens. All regarded him as a man true, sincere, without a particle of dishonesty, duplicity or low selfishness in his character. Mr. John Burk was born at Mallow, County Cork, in the year 1828 and belonged to a family a little remarkable. His love of Ireland and of her faith was intense; it was an acting, abiding enthusiasm. He inherited it. His grand-father, who owned the place now occupied by Burke-Roche, Lord Fermoy, was "outlawed" and impoverished during the last century. He was one of those "rebels" who, rather than submit to the demands of the wicked regime of that period, endured "many a hard run on the mountain's bleak side," and many a year without resting his head quietly on a pillow! His "rebel" spirit did not die with him.

At break of day one Sunday morning in October, 1829, Daniel O'Connell, looking out from his window at Derrynane, saw a man riding towards the house with eagle speed. Knowing that some mischief was up, O'Connell hastened down to meet him. The story—a story not so unfamiliar in Ireland in days happily gone by—was soon told. O'Leary, a gentleman farmer, and a number of the Catholics of Doneraile had been falsely accused of conspiring to murder some Protestants of the neighbourhood. Judge Pennefather and Attorney-General Doherty were actually trying the accused in Cork. Some were already condemned to death; "and," said Burk—for the herald was Mr. Burk's father—"Pennefather and Doherty will hang every man of them, though they are innocent as the unborn." Though Burk had ridden all night, after two hours' rest he hastened back, announcing that "the Counsellor" was coming. Relays of men were placed along the road to Cork to meet Burk with fresh fleet horses, so that he could fly without delay with the news. At eight o'clock on Monday morning he arrived in Cork, and a few hours later O'Connell was in the court house. His sudden appearance electrified the Crown party. Doherty turned pale with rage and apprehension. "Ah! its little I thought I'd meet you here, Mr. O'Connell," exclaimed the principal informer, Nowlan, when breaking down under the fire of cross-examination. O'Connell procured the acquittal of all the supposed conspirators. All honour to the enthusiast who secured his presence; a blessing must have rested on his head. His ride surpassed the ride of Sheridan or Paul Revere, but it wanted a Longfellow to make it famous. This unknown, unsung reverend of Cork County was idolised by his neighbours. During the *Nation* excitement in '43, '44, and '45, the men and youths of the place were wont to gather on Sunday afternoons in this man's house to hear the *Nation* read. Half-reproving and, we are sure, half-approving these meetings of the young fellows of the parish, Father Falvey, the curate, used to say:—"What is the world coming to, at all? You prefer going up to old Burk's to hear the *Nation* to coming to church to learn the catechism." The hearing of the *Nation* told. "After a little," says Duffy, in *Young Ireland*, "the young tradesmen in towns and the young peasants who listened to the *Nation* read aloud around the large fire of an evening, or in the chapel yard on a Sunday morning, were swaying to and fro in the fever of a new faith for which they were impatient to labour and suffer." The sons of "old Burk" were, of course, "out" in '48.

Mr. John Burk delighted to tell of his escapes in those days. He was often the bearer of the secret communications of the leading Young Irelanders of the South. He used to bring the letters sewn by his mother beneath the collar of his coat! The tears would come into his eyes at the mention of the names of Davis, Meagher, Doheny, Denny Lane, Maurice Leyne, and the Munster Young Irelanders, whom he knew. Friends learned that on the very night William O'Brien happened to be born, a police raid for arms was to be made upon his father's house. It was Mr. John Burk and his brother who were deputed to give the alarm, and to remove all contraband goods from the place. Mr. Burk used to speak of O'Brien's mother as the finest specimen of an intelligent, open-hearted, patristic Irish matron he had ever seen.

Mr. Burk was brother to General D. F. Burk, of New York. This gentleman is described in the annals of the American war as "a brave, dashing soldier, and genial, efficient officer." After the 19th of October, 1864, it was he who commanded the consolidated regiments of the Irish Brigade. He received special distinction for the success and gallantry with which he attacked and captured a portion of the Confederate lines, opposite Fort Sedgwick, on October 29, 1864. He came to Ireland in '67 to strike a blow for the old land, but finding the country utterly unprepared for a "rising" he withdrew. Mr. Burk was also a relative of T. F. Burk, who in '67 delivered in the dock at Green Street a speech, rivaling in fire, defiance, and eloquence, those of Meagher in '48, and of Emmet in 1803. Thomas F. Burk, who had been a Brevet-General of the Confederate Army, was appointed to organise the County Tipperary. He was arrested near the town of Tipperary on February 6, '67, conveyed to Dublin, tried for high-treason, and sentenced to be hanged. A few brief extracts from the speech and letters of this brave and good man will tell better than we could the spirit which animated this section of the Burks:—"But fully conscious that I can go into my grave with a name and character unsullied; fully convinced of the righteousness of all my acts in connection with the late revolutionary movement in Ireland, I have nothing to recall, nothing to cause the blush of shame to mantle upon my brow, nothing that I would not cheerfully do over again. . . . I, my lords,

have no desire for the name of a martyr. I seek not the death of a martyr. But if it is the will of the Almighty God that my devotion for the land of my birth shall be tested on the scaffold I am willing there to die in defence of the right of men to free government—the right of an oppressed people to throw off the yoke of tyranny, I am an Irishman by birth, an American by adoption; by nature a lover of freedom, an enemy to the power that holds my native land in the bonds of tyranny. . . . Ireland's children are not, never were, and never will be willing or submissive slaves; and so long as England's flag covers one inch of Irish soil, just so long will they believe it to be a divine right to devise means to hurl it from power and to erect in its stead the God-like structure of self-government. . . . On the eve of his trial he wrote to his mother from Kilmalsham prison:—"On last Easter Sunday I received Holy Communion at late Mass, I calculated the difference between this longitude and yours. I knew that you and my dear sisters were partaking of that Sacrament at early Mass on that day and I felt that our souls were in communion together." . . . When sentence of death had been pronounced upon him he wrote to a priest—a friend of his:—Kilmalsham Gaol, 4th Month of Mary. . . . I am perfectly calm and resigned. My thoughts are centred with hope in the goodness and mercy of that kind Redeemer, whose precious Blood was shed for me, and in the intercession of His Blessed Mother, who is my star of hope and my consolation. . . . I have only one thought which causes me sorrow, and that is, that my good and loving mother will break down under this affliction. And, Oh God, that I, who loved her more than my life, am the cause of it. This thought unmans and prostrates me. . . . Good bye, dear father, and that God may bless you in your ministry, is the prayer of an obedient child of the Church." The devotion to country and the tender piety that breathe in these extracts were exactly the same in Mr. John Burk. Placed in like circumstances he would speak in the same strain.

Yet his love for Ireland was mainly owing to his love for her old religion. "Were Ireland right," he often remarked, "then the Catholic Church would soon be on her feet in the British Empire." The delight of his soul was to see Catholic churches springing up in the townships around. Wherever his lot was cast—in Western Australia, in Melbourne, at Port Chalmers—he was a pillar of the local congregation, often, it was well known, denying himself and his family things needed, in order that he might be able to help the Church more largely. "Is not this our destiny," he would say; "there goes old Mrs. So-and-so selling a bundle of 'tickets' for the church; grand! I look upon her, and myself, and all of us, as missionaries." "Will you come, Burk, and have a drink?" was a common mode of address to him by sailors newly come on the wharves. The reply was, "No; you know I don't drink; but fling us here that shilling for the church fund." And they often did so. Needless to say that he was constant in the reception of the Sacraments, and that he was never known to omit the Sunday obligation. Twenty-five years ago, he regularly walked to town on Sunday mornings (10 miles, mostly through scrub and bush) from Port to old St. Joseph's. To his family he was much attached; but his chief ambition was, not that they should be "up" in the world, but that they should, when he was gone, cherish the faith of their fathers and remember the grand old Irish traditions he had taught them. How firmly this humble man, guided by the instinct of the faith, grasped the three great ideas underlying Christian civilisation—family, country, religion; children, fellow-citizens, God! His kindness, frankness of manner, and his scrupulous honesty gained for him the esteem of all who knew him and the strong affection of his fellow-Catholics. Many of these—men and women—might be seen sobbing like closest friends around his grave on the day of his burial. May the influence of his example live, and may his soul rest in peace.

## Diary of the Week.

WEDNESDAY, 27th.

AUCKLAND agricultural statistics show encouraging increase.—Government school at Greymouth closed because infectious illness.—Native meeting at Orakei Bay condemns policy of Government; decides to uphold treaty of Waitangi.

THURSDAY, 28th.

Negotiations for settlement of Cape Foulwind strike broken off.—Scott, manager Maori footballers, declares their record, 48 wins out of 73 matches, unequalled.—Lincoln, son of Lincoln, President, appointed American Minister at London.—Unsuccessful attempt to wreck Czar's train near St. Petersburg.—Queen Victoria visits Queen of Spain at San Sebastian; enthusiastic reception by Spaniards.

FRIDAY, 29th.

Council of Sydney Trades and Labour Association urge Government to protest against Goschen's State-aided emigration scheme.—Huge dynamite conspiracy against Czar discovered.

SATURDAY, 30th.

Indications of existence of rubies and probably diamonds discovered in central Australia.—Committee of House of Commons appointed to inquire into best means of promoting emigration to colonies.—Gladstone addressing electors of Enfield, Middlesex, declares essence of Home Rule plea remains intact.—Cowles (Conservative) elected for Enfield; Conservative majority diminished by 520.—French Government prosecutes Boulanger for complicity in anti-republican designs of Patriotic League.

MONDAY, 1st.

Rumoured at Greymouth that instructions received to discontinue works on Midland Railway; contractor dismisses staff.—Earl and Countess Onslow arrive at Adelaide.

TUESDAY, 2nd.

English Education Department proposes abandonment of payment by results for general grants.—Eiffel tower completed.—Seventeen men and two women, with Father McFadden, committed for trial for Martin's murder.