

assistance of some of his parishioners, did all that was necessary in materially adding to the success and enjoyment of the gathering.

The Rev. Father Deby has been transferred to Ahaura, taking charge of that parish in place of the Rev. Father Gallais, S.M., who is doing temporary duty in Greymouth, relieving the Rev. Father Carew. The Rev. Father Gallais is eventually to assist the Rev. Father Marnane at St. Mary's, Manchester street.

The Very Rev. Father Le Menant des Chesnais, S.M., V.G., accompanied by the Rev. Father Goggin, S.M., left town last week for a brief holiday at the Hammer Plains Sanatorium.

On Sunday evening last his Lordship the Bishop commenced, in the Pro-Cathedral, a series of fine discourses on Prayer. There was a crowded congregation. The series will be continued on succeeding Sunday evenings during Lent. A procession in honour of our Blessed Lady preceded Benediction.

(From our TIMARU correspondent.)

February 20.

A most delightful trip was undertaken, under the auspices of the Sacred Heart Choir, on Saturday last, when a party of ladies and gentlemen journeyed by the morning train to Waimate. On reaching there they were joined by the Waimate Choir. Both parties were then conveyed in vehicles to Kelcey's Bush, a distance of about six miles from the town. The weather was exceptionally fine, and the party spent a very enjoyable day. The picnic was a great success, and those who had the management of affairs are to be congratulated on the result of their efforts. Rev. Fathers Tubman, Regnault, and O'Connell were present.

The programme of the St. Patrick's Day Sports has been issued. It is evidently the result of careful consideration on the part of the committee, who are to be congratulated. The following judges and officials have been appointed for the sports:—Cycling—Messrs. J. Whelan, W. Lawson, and E. Hassell; running, walking, etc.—Mr. J. Sullivan, Sergeant-Major Jones, and Mr. W. Priest; general sports—Messrs. R. Chute, F. Lalliser, and P. Reilly; wrestling—Messrs. T. Pringle, J. Sullivan, and W. Angland; dancing (Scotch)—Messrs. A. Martain, A. Sinclair, D. Henry; (Irish)—Messrs. T. Howley, P. McCarthy, J. Sullivan, and P. O'Connell; Press steward—W. O'Rourke; competitors' stewards—Messrs. Geaney and Burns; Marshal—Mr. R. Chute.

THE CHURCH IN FRANCE AND BRITAIN.

AN ERA OF PROSPERITY IN IRELAND.

THE Very Rev. Father Le Rennetel, S.M., the popular pastor of St. Patrick's, Sydney, returned to the New South Wales capital on February 4, after an absence in Europe of some months. Father Le Rennetel during his trip visited France and Ireland among other countries, and naturally he had something to say, when interviewed by a *Freeman's Journal* representative, with regard to religious and material progress in these countries. After referring to local matters the interviewer said: 'May I call a halt here while you tell me something about the position of the Church and the

STATE OF RELIGION IN FRANCE?

Is there no persecution?

'Certainly, I can speak of these things with pleasure. In Australia and in England people who are absolutely in the dark and are simply moved by prejudice talk and write a lot about the decay of the Church in France. Nothing could be farther from the truth. On the contrary, Catholicity is gaining ground every day. As a proof of this, there are more people going to church on Sunday in Paris than in any other capital in the world. While I was in Paris I saw the churches filled to overflowing from the early Mass at 5 till the last Mass at half-past 1. That last Mass, I should explain, is mainly for the convenience of soldiers and others who otherwise could not attend. If this is the case in Paris, the supposed stronghold of Infidelity and Anti-Clericalism, you can think for yourself how Catholicity is "decaying" in the other cities and in the country parts. And having mentioned anti-clericalism, it is only right that I should bear witness to the fact that nobody is more respected nowadays throughout France than the Catholic priest. If you read of insults and persecution, don't imagine that the people have anything to do with these things. The only opponents of the clergy are designing politicians, avowed Atheists, Anarchists, and common disturbers of the peace. The antagonism, broadly speaking, is wholly political.'

But is not the attitude of the Government anti-Catholic?

'No, I cannot say that—not of the Government itself. It is true that many of the officials are not only anti-Catholic, but anti-religious. Those men would suppress all religion, but they really do little harm. They have tried their best to undermine the Church, though, by the unfair "working" of the Education Department, but in this they have failed. As a matter of fact, the Catholic schools have gained ground to such an extent that the University people, not being able to successfully compete with the Catholic colleges and schools, actually started an agitation for the alteration of the Education Laws with a view to preventing anyone getting a position in the State service unless he had spent at least a year in a Government school. This proposal, which was made while I was in France, was received with a tremendous laugh, even in Parliament. The originators dare not push it on. The underlying reason of the jealousy is that an immense majority of the young officers in the army and navy come from the Catholic schools. In the Public Examinations the State schools are nowhere. The State schools are not wholly secular; but at best the education given in them is only a half-and-half sort of thing.'

To what extent is the taxation and confiscation carried out against the religious bodies?

'It is true that certain oppressive laws were passed by Parliament, but they are a dead letter. There is nothing approaching open persecution at all in the way of wholesale confiscation of the properties and revenues of religious bodies. The anti-clerical laws were passed as a 'sop' to the Socialists, who were clamouring for rigorous measures; but only in very few instances has the machinery of the law been set in motion. Certainly heavy taxes were imposed, but the religious bodies by appealing from one tribunal to another have in nearly every case succeeded in defeating the officials. Take the Marists, for instance. Our Order was one of the first to receive attention, yet we have successfully resisted every attempt to extort money from us. As I have said, the 'robbery' law, if I may so call it, is practically a dead letter. The religious communities continue as if nothing had happened. The Socialists themselves did not believe that these laws when passed would ever be carried into effect. Only a few months ago the Holy Father, speaking of the Universal Church, said that France would take her place again as the leader of Catholic nations.'

A NEW ERA OF PROSPERITY IN IRELAND.

'I had been speaking about our arrival in England,' Father Le Rennetel continued. 'Father Cummings was waiting for us in London. The party of three was made up again. We went almost at once to Waterford, then to Cork, on to Killarney, then to Limerick. After a rest we journeyed to Tipperary. Our next move was to Dublin, and after that we invaded Dundalk, where our Fathers have a house. I left Father Cummings in Dundalk with Father Tierney, and struck out for Monaghan, which may boast with pardonable pride of having the best Cathedral in all Ireland. It is a beautiful building, and the marble work of the interior is a conspicuous feature. In Monaghan I met an old Australian friend, Father Phil Doherty, till lately of the Melbourne Diocese, but who is now back again in his old diocese in Ireland. Father Doherty took me by force to Derry. While under Father Doherty's care I visited Lock Swilly, where the French landed in the days of the Irish struggle for independence. I lingered at this place, and found it and its surrounding most interesting. Newry was next on my list. I saw all that was to be seen in the town which has given Ireland, England, and Australia so many distinguished men, including Lord Russell, the present Catholic Chief Justice of England, and the late Sir Patrick Jennings, our first Catholic Premier in New South Wales. When I said good-bye to Newry I returned to Dundalk, and embarked for England.'

HOPEFUL SIGNS.

I know, Father Le Rennetel, you had been in Ireland years ago. Did you notice any change on your last visit?

'Change!—a wonderful change. When I was in Ireland before the country was in the midst of a land-rent war, and evictions were going on every day. This time, excepting in a few out-of-the-way places, I found the people cheerful, contented, and fairly prosperous. Many new industries had been established, and the fisheries in particular were proving a great boon. Hundreds of farmers had been able to throw off the yoke of the landlord, and most hopeful sign of all, men who had been driven from Ireland by bad times and extortion were returning from the United States to take up their holdings again.'

What was the feeling in Ireland with regard to the administration of the new Local Government Bill?

'Well, so far as I could see, the people, especially in the agricultural districts, accepted the Bill with open arms, for they are confident that very soon the grasping landlord and his unscrupulous agent will be "starved out." Yes, I was told on all sides that Local Government must, for a certainty, break the back of landlordism in Ireland. Then the rightful owners of the soil will be left in happy and undisturbed possession. The majority of the landlords will be glad to sell out almost at any price, and big family estates, held by absentees, now contributing nothing to Ireland's revenue, will be broken up once and for ever. When the people themselves own the land and industries are flourishing, it will not be possible to withhold Home Rule. While I was in Ireland I saw on all sides evidences of a new awakening—a strong and sound revival of national spirit and national prosperity. Yes, I feel that I can say that the present in Ireland is full of hope—the future full of brightness.'

The religious spirit in Ireland—how were you impressed?

'What can I say? Ireland is always Ireland—pious, faithful, self-sacrificing and generous. I did not notice any improvement in the religious character of the people—that would be impossible. What I did notice was that, as the Catholic people improve their condition socially and commercially, every advance in worldly prosperity is strikingly marked by the erection of new cathedrals, new churches, new colleges, new schools, new convents, and new religious houses. It is astounding to see what has been done within the past twenty years.'

CATHOLICITY IN ENGLAND.

'A man with half an eye, as the saying goes, could see the very advanced position the Church has taken up in England. Who would have thought even 20 years ago that the Catholic religious processions through the streets of London would be possible? As a rule, the work of spreading the Catholic faith in England has been going on very quietly; still the external evidences of progress are very many and very gratifying. All the old bitter feeling of bigotry and mistrust seem to have died out. Just to show you in a small way how the Church is making headway. At Paignton, in the South of England, two years ago, there were about half-a-dozen Catholics. Our Fathers established a novitiate there. It was not intended to make a parish. But the people of their own free will came to the little chapel, and to the instructions. There are now at Paignton 300 Catholics.'

DECAY OF ANGLICANISM.

What is the state of the Low Church v. High Church war among the Anglicans?