

CATHOLIC SOIREE AT PALMERSTON NORTH.

(Manawatu Times, October 20.)

ENTERTAINMENTS in connection with St Patrick's Church at Palmerston have invariably been a success—due no doubt to the energy of the pastor, the Rev Father Patterson and ready and willing assistance given by the members of the congregation—but last night's soiree and social must be described as not only the most successful and enjoyable ever held by the Roman Catholics of the district, but that has yet taken place in Palmerston. Even the most sanguine could never have anticipated such a large gathering, and the wonder was where all the people came from. People were not there by tens but by hundreds, and the Theatre Royal was taxed to its utmost capacity, not for seating accommodation but to give standing room to those who were present. Certainly the number present at last night's soiree and social has never been approached at a similar gathering of the kind in Palmerston. Members of all denominations were there, and enjoyment and festivity prevailed every corner of the hall. That the Rev Father Patterson and his helpers were elated at the result could only have been expected, and they may deservedly take credit to themselves for assisting in carrying through an entertainment, unparalleled, so far as Palmerston is concerned, in success. Throughout the evening every attention was paid to the convenience of patrons, and not only was there not a single word of complaint in this respect, but one and all were ready to admit that the affair from first to last was in the highest degree pleasant and enjoyable and that they would be only too glad to have the opportunity of attending a similar gathering at a future date. Unqualified success is the only term that can be applied to the gathering as in any way indicative of the result. At 6.30 the hall was thrown open to the public, and on the three tables occupying the whole length of the hall, were laid eatables—wholesome, palatable, sweet, and in every way calculated to prove enticing to the tastes of patrons, thanks to the forethought of the lady members of the congregation. The decorations were pretty and tasteful; in fact, the whole arrangements in connection with the feasting portion could not have been improved upon. Within a few minutes of the opening of the hall every seat was occupied, and so the crush continued without intermission for upwards of a couple of hours. The flow of people towards the tables seemed to be incessant, and it was impossible to gauge the number who partook of the innumerable good things provided. The supply, on the other hand, appeared to be inexhaustible, and as fast as one supply disappeared it was replaced by as equally inviting a repast. The various lady and gentleman assistants were assiduous and energetic in their efforts to satisfy the wants of patrons, and their task of supplying the wants of the hundreds who presented themselves at the tables must truly have been an arduous one. Following is a list of the names of the ladies who presided over the tables:—No 1 table—Mrs Craeven, Misses Jackson, Kate Dowling, Hodgson, Keegan (2). No 2 table (Children of Mary)—Misses Dixon, Henley, Oakley, Cavanagh, Cullinane, McDonald, Kriven, O'Reilly and McGonnel, with the assistance of Mesdames Slattery and John Sullivan. No 3 table—Mesdames Faka and Hickey, and Miss Woodward. The bachelors' table was on the stage, and was presided over by Misses Cronin and Misses O'Driscoll and M. O'Connor. After the tea the hall was immediately cleared, and a concert followed, which proved of a very appreciable character. The chorus, "Kylie Eleon," by the choir, was splendidly sung. Miss McMinn sang "In O'd Yadri" with much taste and feeling, and her rich voice was heard to great advantage. Mr O'Sullivan, a vocalist new to Palmerston, has a baritone voice of rare power, and his singing of "Rocked in the cradle of the deep" and "In happy moments" secured for himself a favourable reputation. Mr A. Jack danced a sailor's hornpipe and Irish jig in first class style, and his unexcelled dancing fairly brought down the house. Mr Jack also played several tunes on the bagpipes in the most approved style. Miss Rogers sang "Eileen Alannah" very nicely; Mrs Sullivan secured loud plaudits for her vocal contribution; the duet, "The wind and the harp," by Misses Henley and Shepherd, was a very pleasing item, as also were the duet, "Ora Pro Nobis," by the Misses Rogers, and Miss Shepherd's singing of "Marguerite." Accompaniments were played by Misses McMinn and Hollis, and the Rev Father Patterson and Mr Bottomley, and left nothing to be desired. Then followed a dance the music for which was supplied by Mr Bottomley (piano) and Mr Meyrick (cornet), who gave every satisfaction. Mr I Faka acted as M.C., and carried out his duties in a very creditable manner under the disadvantage of having to supervise a regular crush of dancers, who were rather too numerous for the size of the hall. Everything went "swimmingly," however, and at 11 o'clock the most enjoyable gathering of the kind that has ever been held in Palmerston was brought to a close.

It is estimated that over 800 people were present, and included visitors from Birmingham, Campbelltown, Fuxton, Ashurst, and other places. The Rev Father Patterson expects that about £40 will be netted, but the exact results will not be known until the returns of the sale of the tickets are obtained.

It must be mentioned that the Palmerston Fire Brigade Brass Band played a number of selections in excellent style in front of the Theatre during the evening.

IRISH NATIONAL CONFEDERATION.

AUCKLAND ASSOCIATION.

At an inaugural meeting of the above federation, held at the Catholic Literary Society's Hall, the Hon Mr Toles as president delivered an address to the members. He said his first duty was to thank them for the double honour conferred upon him in electing him unanimously President of the Association, and also thereby seeing in him some qualification for the office which he wished he could more ably and worthily fill. However, he hoped he possessed one or two qualifications at least common to them all; that he had sincerely at heart the welfare of Ireland, the birthland of his parents, and that he was anxious to co-operate with them all in the endeavour to secure the freedom of a long-suffering people, and to restore them in more perfect form to the position they once held and were fitted by the Almighty to hold, and to take their place among the nations of the earth. He said before proceeding further he had a sad and solemn duty to perform which it would be impossible to omit wherever any portion of the Irish race were assembled, and that was to allude to the death of Charles Stewart Parnell. This, he said, was not the time to criticise his life and character, because nothing but good should be spoken of the dead. The worst, however, that history could say of him was, that a fierce and relentless public light had been thrown upon a human frailty. At the same time history records that the cruel world often stones its prophets, and the path of the patriot is frequently the road to martyrdom. However, Charles Stewart Parnell, though frail, as a man, as a patriot, was never false. He was the inviolable descendant of an incorruptible ancestor who voted steadfastly against the so-called Union to the last. Of all Ireland's sons he was the greatest of the century. Sir Charles Russell, speaking of Parnell during the Commission which resulted in sustaining his fame unsullied, said: "My lords, Mr Parnell has forced public attention upon the Irish question; he has awakened the conscience of England upon the Irish question; he has, in season and out of season, persistently and unreasonably in the minds of many, urged Irish claims, and he has a right to say and he does claim, that in ten years this party have accomplished more of solid gain and solid remedial advance in legislative measures for Ireland than the history of any hundred years can disclose." Mr Toles contended that this was not the casual remark of an irresponsible observer, but the deliberate statement of one of the greatest advocates, and before the greatest tribunal in the Empire, and many of whom such could be said deserved the proudest niche in the Pantheon of his country. He (Mr Toles) was glad to observe that Parnell was so generously spoken and written about, now after he had departed from the stage of life. It brought to his memory Parnell's own prophetic words in reply to Gladstone, who, when a coercionist in 1881, was alleged by Parnell to be maligning all Ireland's great sons with a few deceased exceptions, such as Isaac Butt, who was described "as a most estimable man and a true patriot." Parnell said (and for this speech he was placed in Kilmainham Gaol), "In the opinion of English statesmen, no man is good in Ireland until he is dead and buried, and unable to strike a blow for Ireland. Perhaps the day may come when I may get a good word from English statesmen, as being a moderate man, after I am dead and buried." He (Mr Toles) did not believe the cablegrams recently appearing in the papers to be a proper indication of the state of affairs at Home. He believed, as appeared in that evening's paper, that there would be no sectional manifesto from Justin McCarthy, and that a union of all sections of the Irish party would soon take place. They might, therefore, indulge in the fervent hope that not only English statesmen, but Irish statesmen—those politically estranged from the illustrious dead, and even those who regarded the cause as overshadowed with darkening clouds—may in spirit join hands over his grave, and proclaim to the Irish world—

"We who toil in chains to-day

Still feel thy words our bosoms thrill;

The damp grave holds thy silent clay,

But thy fond faith united we hold it still."

And we, in this distant land, who have felt enthusiasm and admiration for the dead patriot, and grieve at his loss, cannot refrain from weaving a garland of fervent aspiration around his memory in the words of one of Ireland's poetesses:—

"Time, the consoler, may assuage our grief,

But yet we promise, as the seasons roll,

Whether our life may be prolonged or brief,

Our prayer shall be, 'God's peace unto his soul.'"

Mr Toles then passed on to consider the objects of the Association and its establishment in union with the Irish National Confederation. Were he not speaking to those acquainted with Ireland's history, her beauties and fertility—the virtue, valour, intellect, and religion of her