

ST. PATRICK'S DAY IN CHRISTCHURCH.

THE members of St Patrick's branch of the H.A.C.B.S. celebrated St Patrick's Day by a banquet. Over 200 sat down to table, and a very pleasing prospect was the large number of ladies present. The chair was occupied by the President (Bro Nelson), who was supported by Bros O'Connell and Sellars (P.D. Presidents), Curtin (P.B.), R. P. Lonargan (Trustee), and O'Shaughnessy (secretary). Bro Reidy (P.P.) occupied the vice chair.

After ample justice had been done to the good things provided, the president announced that before proceeding with the toast list they had a pleasing little ceremony to perform, viz, the unveiling of the emblem of the Society. Twelve months that evening, Bro Percival (now Agent General), in addressing the members and friends of the Society, remarked the absence of anything in the hall representative of the Society, and suggested that something should be done. The words had hardly fallen from him when Bro Rogers, jun., took the matter up, and that night his noble efforts were to be crowned. The work was artistically done, and would reflect great credit on the artist. He would now call on Bro O'Connell (one of the first presidents of the branch to unveil the emblem. Bro O'Connell, in a few well-chosen words, unveiled the emblem, described its different characteristics. The surprise was so great to all present, that it was some seconds before they could fully realise its beauties, when it was greeted with an outburst of applause, and musical honours—"St Patrick's Day."

The chairman now proposed "The Pope," "the Queen, and Royal Family," which were duly honoured.

"The Land of our Adoption." Bro O'Connor said, though he had consented to propose this toast, he would prefer substituting "The land we live in." As an Irishman he still clung to his native land and his love for the same was as green as the day he left it. For that reason he considered it a misnomer to call this the land of our adoption. New Zealand, he considered, had a great future before it, and when you looked round you and saw the happy and well kept people it could not be denied that we were a very prosperous people. The yield in wheat, oats, potatoes and other kind of cereals could not be excelled in any other part of the world, and the climate was second to none. But there was one thing that marred the content of the Catholics of the Colony, and that was the matter of education. We are being unjustly treated in that respect. If he were allowed he would propose a resolution protesting against that injustice, as he considered it most unfair that we should have to bear the burden of educating other people's children, and at the same time to have to put our hands in our pockets and support our own. We are told that we can send our children to the Government schools. Yes, that may be so; but then we believe in religious as well as secular education, and our conscience will not allow us to do it. He was pleased to notice that the Anglicans were now taking active measures to have this ungodly system of education altered, and if they would, then, the matter would be virtually settled, as the Anglicans in themselves were more than half the population of New Zealand. In conclusion he proposed "The land we live in," which was duly drunk with musical honours.

Mr W. Hoban, in responding to the toast, said as a colonial, he was proud of his country. As a rich and fertile country it could not be excelled. Its wonders of hot water springs and streams of cold water running side by side was the theme of admiration of everyone that witnessed them. Its mineral and other wealth was unbounded, and its climatic influences were so great that no wonder when men left its shores for fatherland that they returned. That reminded him of the good old song—"Home, sweet home, there is no place like home," and the suitability of the toast "The land of our adoption."

Bro B. P. Lonargan, proposing the toast of the day we celebrate, said:—Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen—I regret that owing to the unavoidable absence of Rev Father O'Donnell I have been called upon at so short a notice to propose the toast of the evening. In his hands ample justice would have been done to it. You will therefore excuse me if, at the last moment, I fail to satisfy you in all you wish to have said on it. However, there are feelings which, with the rapidity of the lightning-flash, are called forth at the mention of the day consecrated as the anniversary for honouring the memory of the patron saint of Ireland. These same feelings to-night swell the breasts of every gathering of Irishmen met for the same purpose all the world over. Turn to what land you will; look throughout the length and breadth of that great continent of America, look even at the backwoods of Canada, or at Africa or India, or the great extent of our own Australasia and you will find that the magic of the name. St Patrick's Day collects the children of the sea-divided Gael to express in joyous festivity their sentiments on the many happy memories connected with the dear old land. How fitting then that we, of Christchurch, should be no exception to the rule. As the Irishman's faith is so closely allied with his nationality, all of us will doubtless miss faces from the board which we should love to honour amongst us. Though the absence to-night is one of our misfortunes, let us trust that at the recurring festival we shall secure their presence to

assist to make more complete the celebration of this glorious anniversary to which the Irish race through ages of unexampled persecution has faithfully clung.

Mr Mahalm, in responding, said:—Mr Lonargan, in proposing this toast, made happy reference to the many endearing sentiments which the name of this day we celebrate brings to the mind of Irishmen all the world over, and commented on the proud fact that throughout the wide extent of Australasia gatherings similar to this are being held to-night to do honour to this great day, and keep alive the glorious memories connected with it. Considering the circumstances surrounding life in these new countries so far removed from the home of our race, all wishing to keep alive its best traditions must earnestly wish that the custom shall never cease, nor the spirit which animates us here to-night flag. How many incidents came almost daily under the notice of most of us which should teach the necessity for this periodical amassing of our people, for those reunions which keep the spirit of Irish nationality from being chilled and from growing apathetic by those old forces which are not yet played out nor spent. I refer to those forces of calumny and misrepresentation which have followed us down through the whole dark long line of 700 year's history, since the day when Henry II., the murderer of two Archbishops and saints, said that he came on a special mission from Rome to teach the Irish people how to live in peace and order. It is those forces which have to be fought against, for they work silently but effectually in any community where the barriers to their progress are weak. Let me give you two incidents which will illustrate what I mean. A short time since, in the hands of a Christchurch student, I came across a book called a "Universal History," which, on the title page, said it was "designed" for families and "schools." It contained about 200 chapters, and out of that gave one brief one to Ireland. I suspect you will say "quite enough too," when I give you a sentence or two from it. It opens thus: "The history of Ireland, or "Green Erin" as it is called, is full of very interesting matter, and I am sorry I can only bestow on it one chapter." "The first inhabitants of Ireland were hard-fisted Kelts, who fought with clubs, and seemed to love fighting better than feasting." After a dozen lines about the Christian missionary which it called Patrick, it said, "When he was gone the people told wonderful stories about him, and finally they considered him more holy than other men and called him a saint. To this day they consider St Patrick as in Heaven watching over the interests of Ireland. They pray to him and do him honour. They set apart one day in the year for going to church and breaking each others heads with clubs." After some spicy anecdotes it wound up with glowing lines on the conquest. It breathes a reference to Ireland's being ill-governed, but that King James I. did something about improving the condition of the people, "but neither he nor any subsequent king has been able to get St Patrick out of their heads." Then in all solemnity it tells us that St Patrick was a Roman Catholic, and most of the people of Ireland are Catholics to this day. Ladies and gentlemen, we have heard of a bird's-eye-view of Irish history; to designate this would be difficult; it is, at all events, the low view of some crawling creature akin to the snakes that St Patrick banished. The other incident I give you is the outcome of the work of such writers, but it is none the less instructive for us. In a Christchurch morning paper, about a couple of months ago, I saw a paragraph announcing that a play had been acted under the auspices of a severely select set of Christian young men. The paper said—"If this be a faithful representation of Irish court procedure, that procedure differs considerably from what we are accustomed to here. Counsel turn their backs on judge and jury; cross-examination is conducted on somewhat curious lines. The judge allows counsel to abuse the laws he sits to administer, and it is not contrary to rule for persons in the body of the court to speak to jurymen." I am not especially concerned about defending the Irish judicial dignity, but it does strike one as strange that neither the Welsh, nor the Scotch nor the English courts are selected for the lofty burlesque of these especially designated young Christians. The answer is evident; the old spirit of viewing all things Irish has not yet died out amongst our neighbours, and these incidents I have given are straws which show how the wind blows in Christchurch; and God alone knows how many live out their lives getting their spirit gradually crushed within them by the daily influence of that prejudice. It is to counteract that, to cheer and animate and revive old spirits that these gatherings are useful—to make us recollect what we are and whence we sprung—to turn our minds back on the chequered roll of history and to recollect that for 700 years our people have struggled on steadily for a principle, and when we notice to-day the patronising airs of a people who in the past were benefitted by our superiority—our superior customs, laws, and manners—we can recollect that when our neighbours were not out of the jungle of barbarism—we had laws and government superior to any country of Western Europe outside the very heart of the Roman Empire. We had, in fact, a system of land laws which modern thinkers are striving to-day to obtain for the benefit of mankind. The right of each to the soil was duly recognised by all. St Patrick found amongst us no class distinctions. The head of the sept or clan was allied by birth to his humblest follower. The chief who on his