

More than the church breakers were surprised as the clanging of the old bell disturbed the stillness of the night, but certainly none more so than they. From the dark old tower above them the sound came booming forth with startling suddenness. Thunder-struck, the would-be sanctuary-despoilers dropped their tools and ran. 'The hand of God,' gasped the renegade Italian, and all were more or less stricken with like feeling of fear. As to the parish priest, at first he thought the sounds were but noises of dreamland. Next they seemed to him to proceed but from the trickster Imagination. But finally, thoroughly aroused, he became fully alive to the reality of the clangor of the bell, and rushed forth to inquire the cause of this mysterious occurrence. The other citizens of Exeter naturally thought a fire was in progress and each hurried from his home. But there was no sign of fire anywhere, and so those nearest the church hastened thither.

The old sexton was the first on the scene, closely followed by the pastor. Opening the main door they entered. The bell had ceased ringing, but the rope yet swung gently to and fro, and underneath lay a limp, bleeding form. What was the astonishment of all present to find that the mysterious bell-ringer was Phil Seton, who had fainted after having accomplished his work. Teudently they carried him into the Presbytery, while in the meantime the village doctor was summoned.

The mental and physical strain Phil had undergone had proved too much for him. Brain fever resulted, and for several weeks he lay at death's door. During this trying time he was tenderly and lovingly cared for by his anxious mother, whose grief, however, was submerged in feelings of maternal pride in her little hero, her little Knight of the Blessed Sacrament. Mrs. Seton also succeeded in nursing her son back to health and strength, to the joy of the whole village, for Phil was the lion and idol of all Exeter, whose good citizens still love to discourse on the heroism of the brave little sacristan.

THE BISHOP OF DUNEDIN.

PREPARATIONS TO WELCOME HIM HOME.

A SUCCESSFUL MEETING.

A REPRESENTATIVE meeting of the Catholic clergy and laity was held in St. Joseph's Hall, Dunedin, on Friday night, for the purpose of making arrangements for the reception of his Lordship the Right Rev. Dr. Verdon on his return from Europe, and also with the object of collecting funds to make him a presentation. Among those present were the Very Rev. Dean Mackay, administrator of the diocese, Very Rev. Father O'Neill (Milton), Rev. Fathers Murphy, Coffey, Cleary, J. Ryan, Geary, M. M. Ryan, and O'Malley—the three last-mentioned having been recently secured by Bishop Verdon for work in the diocese of Dunedin.

The Rev. Father Murphy, in introducing the business of the meeting said that it was called, as they were aware, for the purpose of organising a testimonial to his Lordship the Bishop on his return from Europe. His Lordship was deserving of all the honour they could show him. If they looked around them they could see in the hall the first fruits of his labours whilst at home. He (Father Murphy) had written to the priests of the diocese regarding the object of the meeting, and they had promised their hearty support and co-operation. He was pleased to see such a representative gathering present, and many others who were unavoidably absent had sent apologies and expressed their willingness to assist in every way towards making the presentation a success. He concluded by proposing that the Very Rev. Dean Mackay, administrator of the diocese in the Bishop's absence, take the chair.

Dean Mackay, who was received with applause, said it was intended that the presentation should be the unanimous expression of the respect and esteem felt by the whole diocese for his Lordship. He was pleased to see Dunedin so well represented by so many of the leading Catholics, as it was only natural that the city should make the first move in such a matter. At the same time the whole diocese would take the matter up and make it a great success, in recognition of the good work which his Lordship had done. One of the works for which not only Dunedin but the whole of the diocese was indebted to Bishop Verdon was the establishment of the Orphanage in South Dunedin—(applause)—and another was his success in obtaining a number of young priests to labour for the cause of religion in the diocese. (Applause.) In order to procure priests funds were indispensable, and he did not think his Lordship was burdened with much of the world's wealth. They should direct their efforts to raise something substantial towards the expenses which the Bishop had incurred or was to incur on behalf of the diocese, as well as to provide the nucleus of a fund for other good works.—(Applause.)

Mr. J. B. Callan said that they knew that his Lordship had gone Home for the purpose of procuring priests, and on his return it was only natural that the Catholics of the diocese should tender him a hearty welcome. The chief object of the meeting was to arrange to collect funds for the purpose of defraying the expenses which his Lordship had been put to in the interests of the diocese. They had with them that evening the 'first contingent,' and he had no doubt they would be successful clergymen in the work they had to do. He believed there was to be also a 'second contingent.' All this cost money, and when they reflected that it had been done in the interests of the laity, it naturally followed that the laity should contribute to defray those expenses. He had no doubt but that the Catholics of the diocese would, as they had always done, contribute liberally and act loyally in this direction. For his own part he would be glad to do all he could to give his Lordship a hearty welcome, and assist in collecting. He believed the object of the meeting would be a thorough success.—(Applause)

On the motion of the Rev. Father Murphy, Messrs. James O'Connor and John Halley were appointed secretaries.

The Rev. Father Murphy, in replying to a suggestion made by Mr. Callan as to the mode of collecting, said he was in favour of a house-to-house canvass in Dunedin. With regard to other parishes the matter would be best left to parish priests to decide upon the best means, for they were quite as anxious as those in the city that the affair should be a success. They had expressed their intention to do all in their power to make it a success. The whole diocese would be represented in the testimonial. In order to carry out the work of collecting funds in Dunedin he had compiled a list of prominent Catholics to form a committee and do the collecting.

On the motion of the Rev. Father Murphy a general committee was appointed to make a house-to-house canvass.

Mr. J. Liston expressed his pleasure at the remarks of the previous speakers. During his Lordship's absence he had done good work, and they should do good work now and show the Bishop on his return how they respected him. He suggested that a subscription list be opened at the meeting.—(Applause.)

This was done, and in a very short time Father Murphy announced that over £80 had been subscribed.

A conversational discussion then took place as to the desirability of having a Sunday set apart in Dunedin for a collection at the Church doors, in addition to the house-to-house canvass. The matter was referred to the committee.

It was decided that the secretaries write to the priests of the diocese, acquainting them with what was done at the meeting, suggesting that local committees be formed, and requesting that all moneys collected be sent to the common fund.

Rev. Father Murphy and Mr. John Carroll were appointed joint treasurers.

On the motion of the Rev. Father Murphy a vote of thanks was passed to the Very Rev. Dean Mackay, who had come from Oamaru for the purpose of being present at the meeting. Father Murphy mentioned that the Very Rev. Father O'Neill had attended the meeting at considerable personal inconvenience.

THE LITTLE SISTERS OF THE POOR.

WE take the following from the *Foresters' Miscellany*, a magazine published in England by the Foresters' Friendly Society:—

In that section of the Christian Church which we in England know as Roman Catholic, there is to be found an organisation designated 'The Little Sisters of the Poor.' These little Sisters devote their constant effort to collecting money for the purpose of helping poor aged persons, and their *modus operandi* is to secure a suitable building in which to house the aged people, irrespective of creed or profession. We personally had the pleasure of going over the St. Elizabeth's Home, where were to be found nearly 100 aged people, who were fed, clothed, and housed entirely by the efforts of these devoted women. The place is scrupulously clean, and the inmates as contented as it was possible for them to be. Amongst the men were to be found members of the Ancient Order of Foresters, who, on receipt of their final allowance of reduced sick pay, finding themselves unable to do for themselves, here found an asylum in which no questions were asked as to their previous life or conduct, nor as to their religious belief; the sole qualification being 60 years of age and inability to work for their maintenance. Here were to be found aged women, some the wives of husbands who were also inmates, and some the widows of men who had formerly been prosperous tradesmen. Here at least was one lady, who, 20 years ago, was left a widow well provided for, whose children, still alive, had insisted upon sharing that which their father had left behind him, and who, when all had been eaten up, had refused to maintain their aged mother, and she, at 80 years of age, found asylum with these Little Sisters of the Poor.

In this retreat the inmates are not given monetary allowances, but are maintained through the services of these holy and devoted women, who, day by day, year in and year out, acting upon the injunction, 'Ask and ye shall receive,' move about amongst their fellow citizens asking for the wherewithal to provide food and clothing for their numerous charge.

The good Mother, Sister Benedict, showed us round the building. We sat and chatted with the inmates, learned many of their life stories, heard their devout expression of thankfulness to the never-tiring Little Sisters, and came away with the conviction that the poor old folk were here as comfortable as ever they had been in their lives, and had, indeed, much to be thankful for.

WEDDING GIFTS.

WHEN it becomes necessary to make a bridal gift to those of whose tastes we are uncertain, or to those who are so wealthy that they already have almost everything the heart can wish, who have silver and gold and jewels, houses and lands, then the task becomes more involved, and really a good deal more interesting. To such persons a gift that simply shows the expenditure of money is unnecessary and unwise; and if you have not a superfluity of money, and they know it, it places you in a foolish light. For a gift to such people the world—that is, our corner of it—has to be ransacked, and something has to be found, curious or beautiful or original and unusual, that only research could have turned up or an ingenious mind have conceived; something that does not merely represent a bank account, but thought, care, and the qualities that money cannot buy; something out-of-the-way and undreamed of, and as sure as anything can be sure to be without a duplicate among the gifts. Such a present stands for that for which, in a way, gold has no purchasing power, for the long affection and preparation, and for the effort in which there is a certain touch of the genius that evokes wonders from the hidden and unforeseen.