

THE IMPOSTOR RUTHVEN.

SOME time ago, as reported in our columns at the time, an anti-Catholic lecturer, who passes by the name of Ruthven, brought an action against Father de Bom, of Shanklin, Isle of Wight, with the result that he succeeded in obtaining a verdict on the second count for forty shillings, which carried with it costs amounting to close on £400. The Catholic Truth Society of England undertook to support Father de Bom in his defence, and the Committee of the Society are now appealing to the Catholic public for help towards defraying the cost of the action. The appeal is signed by the hon. secretaries, Mr. James Britten and Rev. H. W. Coigan, 120 Kensington Park Road, London, S.E. The following is a summary of the events which led to the action—

'Some three or four years ago, Michael Riordan, calling himself "Ex-Priest Ruthven," began to deliver in England lectures of a certain type, which were resented by Catholics on account of their untruthful and indecent attacks upon the Catholic religion and priesthood. The Hon. Secretaries of the Catholic Truth Society received from the Catholic Truth Society of Minnesota an account of Riordan's career, reprinted from the *Cleveland (Ohio) Universe* of March 15, 1895, which was largely based on statements of Presbyterian newspapers and of clergymen of repute. It included an account of Riordan's conviction and subsequent imprisonment for misappropriation of funds in the Erie County Penitentiary, the chief witness against him being the Rev. Dr. Paton, the well-known Presbyterian missionary, in whose name Riordan had been collecting. Dr. Paton has published an account of the transaction in his *Autobiography* published by Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton (1898 edition, pp. 455-457), and during the recent trial confirmed on oath all the statements contained in it.

'The Catholic Truth Society, having previously successfully exposed a lecturer named Slattery, was asked to supply information regarding Riordan. Having learnt from America that the statements in the *Cleveland Universe* had not been challenged, the C.T.S. reprinted the article as a leaflet, and many thousands of it were distributed in places where Riordan was lecturing. Meanwhile the Editor of *Truth* took up the matter and published a long series of exposures of Riordan's career. Not one of these has ever been refuted, nor did Riordan ever take or threaten any action against the Catholic Truth Society, although in the bills of his lectures he frequently referred to the leaflet.

'In the summer of 1900, the Rev. Emil de Bom, of Shanklin, where Riordan was announced to speak, printed and distributed a leaflet warning folk to avoid these "unhealthy lectures", with this leaflet he enclosed a copy of the Catholic Truth Society's account of Riordan's career. Riordan thereupon threatened Father de Bom with an action, and the Catholic Truth Society undertook to support Father de Bom in his defence. After many delays, the action came off in the Court of King's Bench on February 7 and 8 last, before Mr. Justice Ridley.

Accounts of the trial appeared in the daily and weekly press, and there is no need to enter here upon details. The nature of the lectures may be inferred from the fact that as soon as extracts from them began to be read, the Judge ordered the court to be cleared of women and boys. The Judge divided the issue of the action into two counts: (1) whether the lectures were "unhealthy," (2) whether the defendant had proved the truth of the libel complained of. On the first count he directed the jury to find for the defendant. On the second count he said that though some of the statements in the leaflet had not been proved, yet, as the plaintiff had not denied the allegations, and had declined to face examination, the jury might draw their own conclusions. The jury found for Father de Bom on the first count and for Riordan on the second count, giving him 40s damages. Judgment was entered for Father de Bom on the main point, with costs on the first count and general costs: the costs, if any, on the second count—there were none—to be paid by the defendant.

'This verdict, coupled as it was with the strongest denunciation by the Judge of Riordan's lectures, is of course highly satisfactory. But the necessary legal costs—for solicitors, counsel, witnesses, etc.—are heavy, amounting in all to nearly £400. This would, of course form a serious charge upon the general funds of the Society. The committee therefore issue this appeal for special contributions, in order that the general work of the Society may not be hampered by this charge. The Society has afforded so much assistance, through the press and in other ways, to those who have suffered from the attacks of persons of the Riordan class, that they make the appeal with perfect confidence that it will meet with a hearty response.

'It is only fair to the various Protestant societies to say that no one of them has ever given Riordan the slightest support or encouragement, nor has he been supported by the Protestant press; this is in itself no slight indication of the estimation in which he is held by Protestants in general.'

It is reported that an Irish rifle corps is to be formed in Wellington.

THE four stud horses, selected in England for the New Zealand Government by Mr. Gilruth, have arrived in Wellington by the Gothio, in charge of Mr. Douglas, a veterinary surgeon.

AN amusing incident has arisen in connection with the proposal of the Cornishmen to present an address to the Duke of Cornwall. The secretary of the Society in Wellington recently invited the Cornishmen in the country districts, through the press, to sign the address. This invocation was published in the Maori newspaper, with the result that Mr. Stevens has received a letter from a Rangitikei chief stating he approves the presentation, and that not only will he sign the address himself, but he thinks all Maori chiefs should do so.

NEW ZEALAND: GENERAL.

THE Ladies of Wellington will present a model of a carved Maori house to the Duchess of Cornwall. It will cost about £60.

FIFTY special constables will be sworn in for a week's duty in Wellington during the royal visit. The pay will be 10s a day, and each member will wear a distinctive badge.

It is understood that Mr. A. Grant, the traffic superintendent for the North Island, formerly district traffic manager in Otago, takes a similar position in the South Island.

THE Oamaru *Mail* is authoritatively informed that the requisite number of shares have been taken up to induce the North Otago Dairy Company to establish a creamery at Morven.

THE General Manager of Railways (Mr Ronayne), who recently returned from Australia, states that none of the railway workshops which he visited in Victoria, New South Wales, or South Australia are so well equipped as that at Addington, Christchurch.

MR. A. H. BURTON gave another of his series of 'Evenings with Great Authors' in the Victoria Hall, Dunedin, on Monday night. The audience was very appreciative, and thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Burton's treatment of Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*.

THE export of oats from North Otago and South Canterbury appears to be very heavy at the present time. The *Bernicia*, which loaded 20,000 sacks of 80lb each in Oamaru, has increased her cargo by 31,000 sacks at Timaru, and the *Fashoda* has taken in 23,000 sacks in Oamaru.

THE bacon industry in Taranaki is assuming large proportions. There are now four factories in the district, and all are working full time. It is estimated that among them something like £30,000 will be expended this year in the purchase of pigs. About one-third of that amount will represent the expenditure of the factory at Stratford.

WE have to acknowledge receipt of 'Was Australia discovered by De Quiros in the year 1606?', a paper presented to the Royal Geographical Society of Australia by his Eminence Cardinal Moran. The paper appeared in the April issue of the *Australasian Catholic Record*, and created considerable interest. Some additional remarks have since been added by Cardinal Moran in support of his theory.

A PRESENTATION which took the form of 40oz of West Coast gold was made to Mrs Seddon at Wellington on Tuesday afternoon. It was Mrs Seddon's birthday, and the present was a birthday offering from her husband's constituents. The gift was presented by the Hon. Mr. Ward, who had been requested by the Mayor of Hokitika to act in that capacity on behalf of the electors of Westland.

AT the balloting for the right of selection to various Crown land sections in the Kawhai district, Auckland province, there were 2191 applications, as many as 161 having been received for a single section. Nearly half of the successful applicants are from southern parts of the Colony. The total area of 3861 acres was disposed of, chiefly on lease, with the right of purchase, and carrying improvement conditions and requiring personal residence on the lands within one year.

A STATEMENT having gained currency that the Government intended to release a number of prisoners on the occasion of the visit of the Duke of York, Mr. G. Laursen, M.H.R. for Lyttelton, wrote to the Minister of Justice on the subject, asking that he might be consulted with regard to several men at present serving sentences in Lyttelton Goal. He has received a letter from the Hon. Mr. McGowan stating definitely that the Government has no intention of remitting any sentences.

AN interesting fact in connection with the Wellington telephone exchange is that of the total number of connections (about 1550) fully one-third are with private houses. Auckland has the second largest exchange, the number of connections being about 1330, of which only 200 are with private residences. The exchange in Dunedin is nearly as large as that in Auckland, the connections with it numbering about 1250, of which 309 are with private houses. The Christchurch exchange has 1050 connections, 250 of which are with private residences. The present switchboard at the Wellington exchange will provide accommodation for about 250 more subscribers than at present, but, in anticipation of a rapid increase in the number, the Post and Telegraph Department is getting from Antwerp another switchboard section capable of bringing the capacity of the exchange up to 2100.

AN occasional correspondent from Palmerston North writes as follows:—It was very consoling to see the number of young men who approached the Holy Table on last Sunday.—Our esteemed pastor, Rev. Father Tymons, referred on Sunday to the good work which was being done by the Sisters. He announced that a concert would be held on the Duke of Cornwall's birthday for their benefit, and considering that the musical programme was in the hands of Sister Augustine we may look forward to a really good entertainment.—Corporal O'Reilly, son of Mrs. O'Reilly, of College street, who went away with the Second Contingent, arrived here last week. In an interview with him he spoke highly of the work done by the Sisters of Mercy at the front.—The weather of late has been splendid, and it has enabled farmers to get through their usual routine of work.

We must strive in all earnestness to fix the abode of our hearts in the Heart of the Immortal King of Ages and live only for Him. O my God, how great a consolation do I find in the assurance that my heart shall be eternally absorbed in loving the Heart of Jesus!