

Napier

(From our own correspondent.)

March 27.

The Holy Week ceremonies were very well attended in St. Patrick's Church, particularly the Mass of the Presanctified on Good Friday.

A bazaar commenced at Taradale last night in aid of the Meeanee church funds, the secretaries being Mesdames Halpin and Lyons. From all accounts they have a superior stock of very useful articles, including some handsome oil paintings on canvas and glass.

St. Patrick's Day was celebrated here by a social gathering on the Wednesday evening, which was a great success, mainly due to the untiring efforts of the secretary, Mr. J. C. Gleeson, and a monster picnic at Farndon Park on the Thursday, in which Hastings, Meeanee, Taradale, Clive, and Napier united their forces. Unfortunately rain set in in the afternoon.

Gisborne

(From our own correspondent.)

March 20.

During the past week several interesting events relating to Catholic matters took place here. St. Patrick's Day was celebrated by a sports meeting in the Victoria Domain, and a social gathering in the Garrison Hall in the evening. The weather conditions were perfect. Both events were very successful from every point of view. An art union in aid of the funds of St. Mary's Convent was drawn in the evening at the social in the Garrison Hall. The attendance at the sports meeting was very good, and the arrangements were excellent, reflecting great credit on the secretary (Mr. M. Segedin) and an energetic committee who left nothing undone to make the undertaking a success. There were large entries for the numerous events, and some good racing resulted, an excellent track having been prepared. During the afternoon a programme of children's races was got off under the supervision of Mr. J. P. Haughie, and the youngsters entered into the sport most enthusiastically. The Rev. Father Lane and Messrs. T. Haisman, G. Wildish, and J. J. Martin officiated as judges, and Mr. C. F. Lewis despatched the competitors in an able manner. The careful handicapping of Mr. W. Howard was responsible for some close finishes. The Vita Brothers' string band played some enjoyable music at intervals. A representative committee of ladies, of which Mrs. Maynard was president and Miss N. Martin secretary, organised the social, and provided an excellent supper, which was laid out on artistically decorated tables.

Interprovincial

According to the *Wairarapa Daily Times*, it is understood that an association is being formed in Masterton to take up land under the provisions of the Land Settlement Finance Act, which came into operation on January 1. It is the intention of the association to purchase the fine estate of McGregor Bros., at Manaia, consisting of 900 acres, and to utilise the land for dairying purposes.

Kawau Island, which is one of the best known of the holiday resorts in the vicinity of Auckland, is to be shortly cut up by the present owner (Mr. A. J. F. Farmer) into suitable lots, both for those who want a small area for a summer residence and also for those who want to engage in farming. The island, which was formerly the home of Sir George Grey, is a perfect paradise in miniature, abounding in lofty hills, deep bays, splendid beaches, with good fishing and shooting, and, in fact, everything that the heart could desire.

'Kingdom of Kerry,' Wellington, writes:—'Fault-finding as a rule is not a very pleasant task, but there are occasions when such cannot be avoided. At our Irish national sports held in the Basin Reserve on Saturday last, we were treated to one of those occasional samples of Cockney-cum-Donnybrook stage Irish jiggers, who imagined that he was giving a grand display by caricaturing an Irishman in a flaming red vest, bright green stockings, battered caubeen, and a bit of a stick, etc. It is much to be regretted that those in charge had not sufficient backbone to prevent it.'

That statistics need not always be dull is amply demonstrated in the annual report of the Chamber of Commerce, which teems with figures of a most interesting kind (says the *Dominion*). Of the £18,953,661 worth of exports from New Zealand for the year ended September 30 last no less a sum than £15,268,174 was furnished by the products of the soil (wool, skins, meat, butter, cheese, tallow, gum, hemp, timber, and grain). The meat exported from the North Island weighed 1,526,044cwt, and from the South Island 979,400cwt; the wool export amounted to 115,872,097lbs from this island, and 71,747,084 from the South Island; more than twice as much cheese was produced in this island than in the South (241,410cwt to 114,260cwt) and over ten times as much butter.

The Story of the Potato

In telling the story of the ordinary vegetables which take their place upon our tables so regularly that we never question whence they came nor when and how they were introduced, the potato is obviously the first to be considered. It is the one vegetable seen everywhere; the universal accompaniment to meat, and often its substitute.

So well known is the potato that it may seem superfluous to pause to consider what it is. Yet if the general knowledge on that point were to be examined it might prove rather vague; unwary persons might even pronounce the potato to be a root. While in ordinary speech it is, indeed, mentioned among root crops, in reality it is not a root any more than asparagus is. The one is a stem with undeveloped leaves which is just forcing itself through the ground; the other is a stem growing underground. The potato is not recognised as a stem on account of its thickened or tuberous form, but it is a stem, nevertheless; and if a potato plant be pulled up the true roots can easily be distinguished from the underground stems, with the tips swelling into young potatoes.

These tubers are the storehouse of the potato, its lunch-box, in which it puts up a supply of food to furnish nourishment for strong young shoots of the next year. But man rifles the storehouse of the potato as he does that of the bee.

Scientists tell us that man is not very largely the gainer by the appropriation of the potato. While it furnishes a generally acceptable food, and one which can be prepared in a great variety of forms, it does not supply a large amount of nutrition. While differing slightly in detail, all analyses agree that the potato is mostly starch and water—about 75 per cent. water, with from 15 to 18 per cent. of starch. The potato, therefore, does not stand at the head of the list of vegetables in value, though it does in popularity.

In 1886 the tercentenary of the potato was celebrated in England with interesting exercises. Credit is generally given to Sir Francis Drake for introducing it into England in 1586, and to Sir Walter Raleigh for planting it in his castle grounds near Cork, and thus raising the first Irish potatoes.

The potato was one of the gifts of the New World to the Old. The Spaniards found it under cultivation in Peru, and it has been discovered at various localities in the Andes. The Spaniard introduced it into Spain, from whence it was taken to Italy, and then to Belgium some years before it was known in England.

The story of its introduction into France is too interesting to be omitted. In 1769 there was a terrible famine in that country. The grain crop was ruined, and the poor were reduced to the verge of starvation. The sight of men disputing with the beasts for the scanty harvest of the fields, and even eating grass, moved a benevolent chemist named Dr. Parmentier to search for some means of help. He recalled that during his imprisonment in Prussia as a military captive the Government had issued rations of a vegetable generally supposed to be only fit to be fed to cattle. The doctor had found the food to be not unpalatable, and had made entry in his notebook regarding the possibility of its use for human food in time of scarcity. Such a time had come, and the chemist prepared a pamphlet on 'Certain Vegetables that in Time of Necessity can be Substituted for Ordinary Food.'

The treatise obtained favor with the Minister of Agriculture, and there was granted by order of Louis XVI. a tract of waste land near Paris to the 'tubercle man' for the cultivation of his new plant.

Nothing but scornful amusement greeted him at first, but the doctor understood human nature.

When, on August 24, the King's fête day arrived, 'the tubercle man' wended his way to Versailles with a basket of the tubers in one hand and a bouquet of flowers in the other. He presented the flowers to the King, who pronounced them superb, and placed one in his buttonhole, giving the rest to the Queen, who twined them in her hair. The tubers were boiled for the Royal table, and Louis XVI. ate his first potato.

The potato blossom became at once the vogue, and courtiers vied with each other in their efforts to obtain some of the rare flowers; £9 was the price paid by one of them for a cluster.

Dr. Parmentier saw, however, that he was not reaching the end he had in view, that of introducing the new vegetable to the poor. He therefore had a guard set around the potato patch, and various reports circulated to arouse curiosity. Certain of the guard had secret orders to stray away from their posts during the night, and the doctor's stratagem was rewarded by the disappearance of quantities of his new vegetable. By degrees the prejudice against it was overcome, and Dr. Parmentier attained his benevolent purpose of supplying the poor with a food that could be obtained cheaply and abundantly.

In reply to an inquiry by a *Dominion* reporter, the Prime Minister stated that the appointment of a successor to Lord Plunket, the retiring Governor, had not yet been made.