

CATHOLIC AFFAIRS AT WANGANUI.

December 9th, 1879.

ALTHOUGH no notice of this district has appeared in the columns of the TABLET for some considerable time, still, like our co-religionists elsewhere, we have not been idle. During the year, the church has been lined and painted, the sanctuary richly decorated; confessional, baptismal font, and new seats made, in keeping with the architecture of the building. A very handsome set of stations have been purchased and hung with the solemn ceremony of the Church special to such an occasion. A new side altar, to which I shall refer hereafter, has been erected, and altogether the interior of the church now presents a very rich and imposing appearance. In addition to this, a great many improvements have been made outside both to presbytery and church grounds; but though much has been accomplished, much still remains to be done, and I trust ere long to see a convent erected on the ground dedicated to the purpose by his Lordship the Bishop, in July last. I may add that the timber is already on the ground, and funds for that object are likely to be available very shortly.

Thanks to the zeal and energy of our pastor, the Rev. Father Kirk, who has endeared himself to his flock by his devotion to all that appertains to their spiritual welfare, as well as by the keen interest he displays in all affairs connected with the parish, we are enabled to have the most beautiful services of the church carried out with becoming splendour. On Sunday evening last, the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was witnessed one of those impressive ceremonies which excite our devotion to our blessed Mother. During the vespers proper for the feast, and while the Magnificat was being sung, the beautiful new altar of the Blessed Virgin was unveiled, and a magnificent sight met the eyes of all present. On a chastely but richly-decorated altar, lighted by innumerable tapers and be-decked with vases containing the rarest flowers of the season, stood the new life-size statue of the Blessed Virgin, while in the back-ground fell in ample folds the rich robe of white and gold, which depended from a handsome corona fixed immediately over the head of the statue. Both altar and statue are worthy of a far better description than I can convey, while the mixture of warm colours, delicate tints, rich gold, and chaste silver, denotes the work of a real artist.

Our good pastor, after a few words to the congregation generally, then addressed the children, especially those who had been on retreat during the past week preparing for their first Communion, which would be made on the following morning. In earnest but simple words, he impressed on his young hearers the importance of making suitable preparation for receiving our dear Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Then, addressing several young girls about to become Children of Mary, he enlarged on the importance of the step they were about to take, the duties that it would necessarily entail upon them, the examples they were expected to show, and the advantages and blessings they would secure by a loyal devotion to our dear Lady. It is the gift of few to express all they would desire to convey to the youthful mind, but our pastor evidently possesses this gift to perfection. On finishing this address, which was listened to eagerly by all, the hymn *Ave Maria Stella* was sung, and the priest proceeded to receive the youthful aspirants into the Order of Children of Mary. On the conclusion of this ceremony, a procession was formed, and certainly nothing like it has been witnessed here before. The affair had been so well planned, and the arrangements were so complete, that nothing occurred to mar the effect of the impressive scene.

Preceded by incense bearer and acolytes, followed by the cross-bearer, came the school girls in white and blue, commencing with the most diminutive; these were followed by the Children of Mary, preceded by those newly received, bearing lighted tapers; one of them carried their large and beautiful gold embroidered banner lately imported (a number of other banners being distributed among the children); after these came the members of the Altar Society, Boys of St. Mary's School, members of the H.A.C.B. Society, followed by the altar boys and priest.

Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament closed the ceremonies of the evening.

The music throughout the service was well rendered by the choir. On the following morning Mass was celebrated at eight o'clock, when a large number of children (upwards of 30) having been again addressed by our zealous pastor, who assisted them in every possible manner to worthily approach the Blessed Sacrament, made their first communion. They were afterwards entertained at the presbytery by the Rev. Father Kirk, and spent the day in a happy and becoming manner.

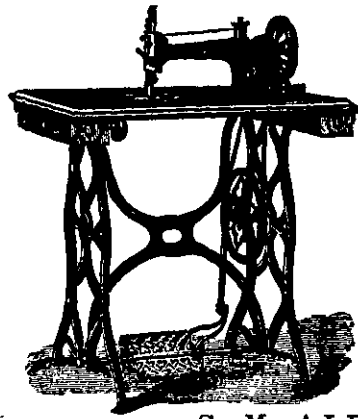
CATHOLIC.

LITERARY MEN AND THE "CAT."

ARCHIBALD FORBES, the famous war correspondent, declares that he was saved by the "cat," which it is now proposed to abolish from the British Army. Twenty years ago, he enlisted in a cavalry regiment. Young, full of spirits, and not destitute of money, he was scandalously often in trouble. At length an escapade got him placed for a month in the Sheffield provost. He was not cured, however. Again, brought before his commanding officer, he was asked if he knew he was a second-class man. No, he knew nothing about it. "Well," said he, "you are, and, as such, liable to be flogged, and the next time you come before me I'll flog you." Mr. Forbes never again came before him, and is now so full of love for the cat that he pleads for its retention.

An almost similar experience was that of John Boyle O'Reilly. At eighteen years of age, he enlisted in a hussar regiment, and in the strength and wildness of youth began a reckless course. One day a friendly old sergeant said to him, as he was merched to the guard-room, "You'll destroy yourself, youngster, if you don't stop. The next time the Colonel's in bad humour, he'll court-martial you, and you'll be flogged." The word clung to O'Reilly's mind, and appalled him into steadiness. But, unlike his English brother in literature, he regards the "cat" with horror, and considers its use more degrading and demoralising on soldiers who witness it than would be the death of the defaulter.—*Pict.*

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[CIRCULAR.]

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