

CHRISTCHURCH.

(From our own Correspondent.)

AFTER a long spell of fine weather the sunshine has departed at last, and our city is drenched with rain and enveloped in fog. On these damp, misty days Christchurch, with its bare, brown trees, and sloppy streets, is one of the dreariest places imaginable. At this season the river loses all its beauty, and becomes a muddy commonplace stream, totally unworthy of its name. The willows which fringe the banks have just been subjected to a severe course of pruning, and the white wounds which remain where the branches have been lopped off, give a patchy and unsightly appearance to the trees. Since the removal of the mill-dam the river has fallen a couple of feet, and the banks are covered with dead brown vegetable matter up to the old water level. Altogether the Avon at present is not a thing of beauty, and visitors who expect to see in the Avon a magnificent, wide, winding river, are apt to be very much disappointed. At the best of times the Avon is only a stream, but on Summer evenings, when the drooping branches of the willows sweep the water, and the moon gleams through the foliage overhead, it is a very beautiful and fairylike stream indeed. Our level city is delightful in the summer time, but in its winter garb of brown and grey, and faded green, and with its clinging fogs, penetrating damp, and biting south-west winds, it is by no means an ideal town.

Mr. Alfred Saunders has, as I predicted, been once more defeated. He went very near getting in for Ashley, but the fate in the shape of the Catholic vote was again against him, and I am glad to say once more relegated to the would-be member to the shades of obscurity in which all narrow-minded bigots should be kept. Mr. Saunders, since his last public appearance, has evidently lost none of his old true blue spirit of intolerance and injustice to Catholics. He was just as determined as ever to refuse all aid to Catholic schools. Therefore there is poetic justice in the death blow to his ambitious hopes being dealt to him time after time by Catholics. When Mr. Saunders, profiting by experience, learns to expand his ideas and, taking a wider view of matters, cultivates a stricter sense of justice, and fair play towards his fellow-colonists than that by which he is animated at present, and in short drops his old puritanical ideas and realises that he is living in the nineteenth century, then he may hope to achieve his great ambition and write M.H.R. after his name. Until he does that he may as well save himself and the country the cost of his share in elections, for he has not the faintest chance of ever seeing his name at the head of the poll.

The staff at the Lyttelton orphanage is evidently not a happy family. Between the master and matron and the staff including the governesses and the cook, what may be called strained relations have apparently existed for some time. In fact a kind of domestic volcano has raged in the institution for months past. At last the disturbance spread outside of the walls of the orphanage. It got to the ears of the committee. A semi-private enquiry and then a public enquiry was held. The committee took sides, six were in favour of the staff and of the dismissal of the master and matron, and seven were of the opinion that the institution was not established for the staff, but for the children, and that Mr. and Mrs. Brownlee having attached to the interests of the latter were entitled to retain their places. While all this wrangling has been going on between the staff and the master and matron, who are evidently unfitted for their position, the poor children suffer, and have frequently been supplied with food of a most disgusting kind. Instances like this cause one to contrast the cold official charity of the State with the genuine charity which is practised in Catholic institutions of the kind, and one ceases to wonder that, in the way of reformation the State effects so little, and the Catholic Church so much. It would be to the interest of society, and for the welfare of its poor waifs, if all juvenile reformatories were handed over to the wise and loving care of some of the gentle disinterested Sisterhoods of the Catholic Church. The poor little children would then grow up knowing something of human love and affection. This they will never learn with the State for their foster mother and with people like the Brownlees for their nurses.

The pupils attending the ambulance lectures were on Friday evening afforded a striking and dramatic illustration of the use of the ambulance litter. While the class was attending the lecture in the City Council Hall, one of the litters was carried across the Worcester-street Bridge on the way to the hospital. The occupant of the litter proved to be an old resident of Canterbury, named Mr. Potts, who arrived here in one of the historical "first four ships."

I am sorry to say that the Ambulance ball, which was given on the 26th, was not a great success from a pecuniary point. This is to be regretted. The Society is an admirable one, and does a vast amount of good in teaching people to render aid to each other in case of accident. Again and again there is not the slightest doubt that lives are lost through lack of the diffusion of a little practical knowledge.

The rehearsals of the "Mikado" go steadily on, and as there is no professional company in Christchurch just now the performances, which are to be given on the seventh, eighth, tenth, and eleventh of August, are sure to be largely attended.

Mr. H. Lonargan, the president of the Catholic Literary Society has been endeavouring to stimulate the young men of the Society to study the National question. Mr. Lonargan has offered prizes for the first, second, and third best papers upon the Home Rule question. Those papers are to be read before the Society on Thursday evening, when it is to be hoped that the competitors will show that they possess an intelligent acquaintance with their subject. Mr. Lonargan deserves very great credit indeed, for thus endeavouring to induce the young men of the Society to study the question of Home Rule though it is to be hoped for their own sakes that no such inducement was necessary to cause them to study a question so fraught with interest to the welfare of their country. I have been told that the subject of Home Rule is not a popular one for discussion with the members of the Literary Society. However, literary they may be, and if they had the literature of every country on the globe at their

fingers' ends I do not think that they need consider the subject of Irish politics at all unworthy of their consideration. Politics may not perhaps come strictly within the province of a Literary Society, but then the Canterbury Catholic Literary Society is not altogether composed of Max Mullers and Edwin Arnolds, one would suppose that they would not need to draw hard and fast lines. At all events a young man, especially a young Irishman who exhibits ignorance in regard to Home Rule, which apart from its vital importance to his country, is one of the political questions of the day, must to be considered a very ill informed person indeed. If the young members of the Society do not wish to leave themselves open to this charge, they had better betake themselves to the study of the Irish question at once. There may be some excuse for a young Irishman not being able to locate a quotation from Dante, Milton, Cervantes, or Beranger, but there is no excuse whatever if he is able to read for his ignorance in regard to a subject which is so nearly associated with the destinies of his own country. Should the members of the Canterbury Catholic Literary Society imagine that Home Rule is a question beneath their dignity to discuss, perhaps it might change their opinions to recall to their minds that the Dialectical Society, the debating club of the Canterbury College, last year debated the question in a most vigorous manner, when the advocates for Home Rule, nearly all Englishmen and B.A.'s, carried the vote in favour of Home Rule by a large majority.

I think that the apathy which is displayed by people of Irish birth and descent in this city in regard to Irish matters is largely due to the fact that the clergy here do not endeavour to popularise national studies. The people take their tone in this respect from the clergy, as in the case of the Literary Society, and the result is that there is a marked decadence of that strong national feeling which, among Irish people, does so much to promote that ardent enthusiasm in the cause of religion, which has worked such wonders elsewhere. Where the national feeling is weak among Irish people there will not be found that royal-hearted, open-handed generosity which has studded the world with some of its noblest eclipses. When Irish people take on the "Saxon graft of civilization," and become Anglicised, they begin to develop a thoroughly Anglican love for threepenny bits. In this, and in other colonies, it will be generally found that where the national feeling is strongest there the Church is in the most flourishing condition. In Otago, upon the West Coast, and in some other places, the Irish people are distinguished for their strong sympathies with the sacred Island of Sorrows, and in no part of New Zealand do the Catholics so freely and generously respond to the call of religion, and no where are they more devotedly attached to their clergy. The obvious inference is that in the cause of religion it is not wise on the part of those who can prevent it, to let the old, warm, generous Irish spirit die. Those who do so must be prepared for the inevitable consequences.

On Sunday Father Halbwachs announced that after vespers a meeting of the men of the parish would be held for the purpose of forming a branch of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Father Halbwachs referred, evidently very reluctantly, to another parish matter, that is, the subject of the Sunday contributions. These are very small, and are not at all adequate to the support of the mission. This is to be regretted. Instead of the contributions falling off there is a very great necessity for them to increase. The wants of the parish are manifold. Father Halbwachs justly remarked that charity should begin at home, and so it should. It will need to stay there, too, for a considerable time before all our wants are removed. A very great and long-sustained effort will have to be made by the people before this parish is put upon a healthy footing. It is true that in so far as possessing a Magdalen Asylum we are in advance of every other parish in New Zealand, but in other respects we are lamentably behind. Our church is bad, our schools are worse, the house accommodation for the Brothers is deplorable, and the Bishop's residence is quite unworthy of him. All this sounds very appalling, but it is true. Therefore it will be seen that I do not exaggerate when I state that both Bishop and people have a stiff task before them to get this parish into ship shape, and that charity will have to make a very prolonged stay in the region of the southern end of Barbadoes street before she will have satisfactorily accomplished her work.

I see Cardinal Moran has had, or was to have another interview with his Holiness before proceeding to Ireland. No doubt his Eminence will again seek to set poor Ireland right with the Pope.

With much interest many persons are awaiting the expected intelligence that Archbishop Bedwood has put a particularly strong spoke in the Duke of Norfolk's wheel. In view of what I think I may fairly call the perfervid declamations recently made in New Zealand by his Grace, this is the least that the Irish people and consistency have a right to expect.

Mdme. Sarah Bernhardt's affidavit in the "La Tosca" case will not be pleasant reading for the "great unacted." Eight hundred is the number of unread plays which Mdme. Bernhardt thinks she has in her possession; but of course she cannot be certain to a score or so.

The rumor which obtained general circulation in Berlin that an imperial decree was about to be issued, the effect of which would almost wholly prohibit Frenchmen from visiting Alsace-Lorraine is probably much exaggerated. Nevertheless, there is a great deal of indignation in the German capital at the obstacles thrown in the way of and restrictions imposed upon German tourists upon the French frontier, and it is quite probable that some measure of reprisal will be resorted to. The *North German Gazette*, which is nothing if not official in its utterances, points to the facts that France has twice the number of officials on the frontier that Germany has and adds that most of them are Alsations. The incidents which occurred on the frontier during the last year, the *Gazette* continues, clearly shows the object of the French Government in maintaining the large force of frontier guards that it does, makes it the more necessary that Germany should adopt some method of retaliation.