

## CHRISTCHURCH.

(From our own Correspondent.)

DURING the past week or so the weather has been simply delightful. Some of the days have been so warm as to suggest the presence of mild nor'-westers. It is quite a treat to see the paths dry, the air clear, and to feel the sun again. On Saturday afternoon a curious atmospheric change took place. Possibly the clerk of the weather wanted to let us know that his stock of fog was not exhausted, and that he could still make things unpleasantly damp if he so wished. After Saturday's experience no one will question his power in that respect. About half-past three the sun was shining brightly, the sky was cloudless, the air perfectly clear, and everyone went about with a pleasant feeling that spring was not far distant. Suddenly a thick fog came crawling over and down the Lyttelton hills. It steadily crept over the plains, and enveloped the whole city. In a very short space of time the warmth and the sunshine departed, and the air became intensely cold. The fog was so heavy that in an hour after its appearance the moisture was dripping like rain from the trees overhanging the side walks. Let us hope that a month's supply of mist has been summed up in this one, and that for this season we are done with these unpleasant visitants from across the hills. All the vagaries of the Christchurch climate I can endure with equanimity, except its fogs; but these, I must say, are my special abhorrence in the climatic line.

Of course directly a start was made by the Irish residents here to prepare for the reception of the Delegates, the old system of anonymous writing to the newspapers condemning the movement was adopted by some little-minded persons. One letter signed "Union Jack" was a fair specimen of what a bigot ever ready to be on the rampage to stir up religious ill-feeling can do, or rather would like to try to do. However, fortunately the intellectual ability of men of the stamp of "Union Jack" who deliberately try to bring discredit upon their Catholic fellow-citizens is generally of a very inferior order, so that their power to inflict injury is not by any means in proportion to their desire to do so. Doubtless as the time for the visit of Mr. Dillon approaches nearer, the crop of savage anonymous correspondence will increase. But as such letters, if they were as thick as hail, will not, I am convinced, keep one shilling out of Mr. Dillon's pocket, or one person away from his meeting who intends to be there, I do not think that we need trouble ourselves much about such cowardly endeavours to injure a great cause. There has been some talk here about the Christchurch "loyalists" getting up a counter demonstration, but like all such projects here I think it will end in a fizzle out.

The fight over the Representation Bill is causing a great deal of excitement here. The democrats, of course, applaud the action of the stonewallers, while the fine old Conservatives, who would like to see a curb put upon the power that democracy wields in the towns, do not approve of the obstruction of the town members, and would like to see the Premier rush his little Bill through the House. As it would undoubtedly be a very bad thing for the country for the landed class to get such an undue amount of influence in their hands as this Bill would give them, I must say that all my sympathies go with the stonewallers, and I hope they will succeed in blocking the Bill until the Government is obliged to withdraw it. The constituents of the city members who have opposed the Representation Bill should give their representatives on their return after the session a reception worthy of the gallant fight they have waged in defence of the rights of city voters and in the cause of Liberalism. I think if the city electors quite understood the drift of the bill, and what an entirely Conservative measure it is, the protests against it would be much more vigorous than they have been. It is unjust and tyrannical. Any man who calls himself the workingman's friend, and supports the Representation Bill in the House ought to be made by the workingmen to feel at the next general election that they know how to punish a traitor to their real interests. On Saturday night a meeting was held here for the purpose of protesting against the Bill, but the majority of the speeches were not remarkable for point or vigour. One speaker, however, who, I believe, is somewhat new to a Christchurch platform, made a remarkably able and eloquent speech. That was the brother of Mr. Russell, a well-known barrister in this city. Mr. Russell did not handle the Bill with the gloves on. He dealt with it pretty roughly, and showed his hearers what it really meant. It is a pity that there are not more public speakers in Christchurch of this gentleman's mental calibre. I hope we shall hear of him again.

No answer has as yet been received from Melbourne by the secretary of the Reception Committee, in response to the request sent that Christchurch might be placed upon Mr. Dillon's New Zealand programme. No doubt, though, in due course the reply will come. Fathers O'Donnell and O'Connor are, I believe, already working up their respective parishes. So I shall expect to have the pleasure of recording the fact that Rangiora and Darfield will do yeoman's services in welcoming the delegates, and in supplying respectable little piles of coin for the purpose of swelling the Canterbury contributions to the National fund.

Father Donnelly, of Oamaru, was in town last week.

The Christchurch Press has spoken very favourably of Mrs MacPherson's little story, and prophesies that she has a future before her as a writer.

I regret to say that Mr. P. Henly, of Shaud's Track, has been suffering from a somewhat severe attack of bronchitis. It is to be hoped that, like Richard, he will soon be himself again.

His Lordship the Bishop appears to have recovered from his indisposition. He was in Church on Sunday and spoke a few words of thanks to the members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society for the work which they had done in assisting the poor.

Mr. E. O'Connor has at length got his "double-breasted mansion" in Barbadoes Street into a habitable condition. The new dwelling house is quite an imposing structure and adds considerably to the appearance of Barbadoes Street South. Patrons of Mr. O'Connor's

book depot can henceforth depend upon finding him on the premises, since the shop and dwelling house are now combined.

Father Cummings has returned from his wandering into internal Canterbury, and much to the satisfaction of his parishioners, has settled down at home for a time.

On the Feast of St. Anne, the anniversary of the Bishop's consecration, there was Solemn Benediction in the evening.

At eleven o'clock church on Sunday Father Cummings drew attention to the concert which is to be given on the eighth of August in aid of the parochial schools. This, he said, was an easy way of assisting the school fund, and he hoped that everyone would recognise it as their duty to be present at the concert. In addition to the pleasure which arises from the performance of a duty, those who attend the concert will have another pleasure in store, namely that of listening to some very good music. Mr. H. H. Loughnan is to act as conductor and that fact alone should be sufficient guarantee of the treat which will await patrons of the concert. Less it should not be sufficient, however, I may mention that Mrs. Townend, Mrs. K. H. Miss Grace Fenner, and Mr. Buschell are among the singers. If this intimation will not bring large numbers to the concert, then people must want an awful lot for their money.

I have just read the first annual report of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and I must say that I have been much surprised at the amount of work which the Brothers of the St. Vincent de Paul have managed to accomplish in so short a time. It is just a year ago since the Christchurch branch was put upon its present footing by the Bishop. A ladies' branch of the Society had been in existence for some time before, but it was in a somewhat languishing condition. The Bishop then called together a few gentlemen, explained the objects of the Society, and urged upon them the desirability of taking up the work of the great St. Vincent. This was done. The association was very small, but, in spite of all difficulties, the little band of disciples of this great lover of the poor have struggled on, and have done a surprising amount of work in the way of relieving distress. Out of their small funds as many as four hundred orders have been given for food, clothing, and firing. An analysis of these orders shows that one thousand people have received aid from the St. Vincent de Paul Society. It must be remembered that the Society number comparatively few members, and that on them the work falls very heavily. It is difficult to imagine why this work, which is so estimable in itself, should be left to the few. Everyone professes to have sympathy with the poor, but that sympathy, I am sorry to say, does not seem to take a practical shape. If it did, the members of the St. Vincent de Paul would be greater in numbers than they are. This professional sympathy with the poor generally means just a little sentimental talk at the fireside, but it does not mean that people should practise the smallest effort at self-denial to relieve the distress which they so gloriously commiserate. I have seen good Christian people sitting before a good blazing fire, enjoying their comfortable evening meal, while a poor, hungry-looking, shivering fellow-creature has gone away from the door unfed and unwarmed, and I have heard such people talk of how sorry they were for the poor. I would not give a straw for such sympathy. I would far rather hear a person say hard things of the poor, than say soft things and do the hard ones. If there is one thing more another word I detest it is this comfortable, costless "sympathy" which never is backed up by a good or generous action. After experiences which I had myself of late among the poor of this city I could quite understand Father Cummings' feelings upon occasions to which he referred on Sunday. He said that often in presence of the dull despair generated in people by grinding poverty, that he felt ashamed to talk to them of Christianity, and of the providence of God. How can any man talk of unity to the weary-faced, thin-limbed, hungry mother of hungry children, with the cupboard empty beside her, her bed blanketless, her pocket penniless, her feet unshod, and nothing but the street before her and her little ones; when all round her there are people professing Christianity who are reveling in luxury and never think of giving a solitary shilling to the poor. People need not shake their heads and say that the priest overdraws his pictures of the wretchedness which exists in this city; that there is no real want. Is there not? Let those who think so go and search for themselves and they will quickly discover worse and more pitiful cases than the priest has ever described. I have seen hungry people in this fair city. I have stood in homes in which want has stood as surely as it did by the bedside of Manabaka. I have seen poor little babies with their faces pinched and old looking, and the ribs almost fleshless because they had not enough to eat, and frequently literally without a rag to their backs. I have looked into empty cupboards and turned over their thread-bare blankets on poor beds or cold floors, in this rich city. No one need button up their pockets when a charity sermon is preached in Christchurch, because there is no distress to relieve. There is in fact, unhappily, much and more need for the ministrations of such societies as that of St. Vincent de Paul; but if everyone would do a little that distress would be minimized. As I have written elsewhere, out of the waste all the want could be supplied.

At eleven o'clock Mass Father Cummings, as was announced in Saturday's papers, preached a charity sermon in aid of the needs of the Society. The church was pretty full and I hope that the contributions were substantial. Father Cummings took for his text the 35th verse of the XIII. chap. of the Gospel of St. John. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another." Our Lord, he said, not only left commandments which were to guide the conduct of men, but he also left upon them a strict injunction to love one another. They had been invited there that day for an especial purpose. In Saturday's papers there was an advertisement headed "Remember the poor." He had been asked that day to plead the cause of the poor. That was a cause for which saints had lived and died. It was a cause dear to the heart of every Christian, and especially dear to the Sacred Heart of our Divine Lord. It was a great cause for which he pleaded, this cause for which their great patron St. Vincent de Paul lived. Men and women gloried in calling themselves brothers and sisters of St. Vincent de Paul. Their object in becoming disciples of St. Vincent was the noble one of drying up the tears caused by poverty. He hoped that he should be