

## CHRISTCHURCH.

(From our own Correspondent.)

## LEESTON.

AFTER celebrating an early Mass at the pro-Cathedral on Sunday morning week, the Very Rev Father Cummings drove to Leeston, where he arrived in time to preach at High Mass. The words of his text were: "To know Thee, O Eternal Father and Jesus Christ Thine only Son is eternal life." The very rev preacher, in the course of an eloquent discourse, showed that a religious education was the greatest of all necessities, and was one which the Catholic Church alone was commissioned and able to impart. The sermon ended, the Vicar-General made a collection and about £40 was gathered, and this money, also what was promised, will be devoted to the maintenance of the local Catholic school, now under the charge of the Sisters of Our Lady of Missions. There was a large congregation present. The object of the visit was, however, not only to advance the welfare of the school, but also to organise a local committee and to establish for the first time in the district a branch of the Confraternity of the Holy Family. At Vespers, which were also largely attended, he explained fully the nature and objects of the Confraternity, and when his discourse was over, about fifty persons presented themselves for affiliation and became members of the Sodality. After Benediction, in order to form a church and school committee, he called a meeting of the Catholic laymen of the parish. He occupied the chair at the meeting, which was well attended and very enthusiastic, and the following gentlemen were elected committeemen:—Messrs William Holly, Patrick O'Boyle, John O'Boyle, William O'Brien, Michael Stapleton, — Bowen, and William Holly (junior). The meeting accorded to the Vicar-General a very cordial vote of thanks for presiding on the occasion, and for his able and salutary ministrations during his visit to the district. He returned to this city on Monday week, and, while he was in Leeston, he was the guest of the local parish priest, the Rev Father Chervier.

## THE SCHOOL AT HALSWELL.

At the recent distribution of the prizes to the pupils attending the Catholic school at Halswell, the usual entertainment was dispensed with, in consequence of the death of Mr and Mrs Booth. Amongst the prizes, which were distributed by the Very Rev Father Cummings, was a valuable cross and a neat little time-piece, presented by Mrs Stratz, of Christchurch. The cross was awarded to Miss Leo Kennedy for good conduct, and the time-piece to Miss Kathleen Kilbride for regular attendance. The Vicar-General complimented the pupils and the teacher (Miss Booth) on the work done during the year, particularly the needlework. He alluded to the feelings of respect and esteem existing between the people of the district and the teacher. He thought the committee deserved every commendation for the energetic manner in which they had conducted the school, and for its flourishing condition, financially and otherwise.

PUNCH AND JUDY *versus* RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

The following letter, written by the Rev Robert Wood, of Masterton, and addressed to the editor of the *Lyttelton Times*, appears in the issue of that newspaper of Saturday last:—"Sir,—As the editor of the *Times*, is interested about the way concessions are granted to caterers of amusement by our school authorities and the restrictions laid on moral and religious teachers, the following facts may find room in your columns:—(1) "In September, 1891, the Rev W. E. Page (Church of England), Rev J Dikes (Wesleyan), and myself (Presbyterian) applied for the use of the Masterton School to give an unsectarian religious lesson. We asked that on the day we gave our lesson the course of teaching in the school should last only four and a-half hours—that is, half an hour more than the minimum time prescribed by the Act. This meant that the school teaching would stop at 3 p.m. instead of 3.30 p.m. Our request was refused. The door was shut against us, and for the committee to say the request was granted is untrue. (2) A few weeks afterwards a travelling Punch and Judy showman came round. The use of the school was granted to him. It was granted, the head master tells me to-day, by authority of the committee. There is no reference to it in the committee's records. The present members of the committee generally know nothing about the show, and feel safe in saying that if the show was held it was held after school hours. I was assured at the time by several parties that on the day the show was held school teaching closed at 3 p.m. The head master has no reference to it in his "log-book," but frankly says that the school teaching did probably close earlier than usual to enable the man to arrange his show so as to begin his performance at 3.30 p.m. The showman got a concession of time—thirty minutes or less—that we teachers of morals failed to get. (3) This case does not stand alone. It is quite an usual thing to shorten school hours when the children's love of amusement may be gratified. The teacher's "log-book" notes that the school was closed early to allow children to see "shows." A parachutist came round here some time ago, and the school was closed early to enable the children to see this person rise into the air. Teachers and children went and paid their shillings to be huz-

bugged. There was no ascent that day. The purveyor of pleasure easily gets time concessions from our school authorities; moral and religious teachers in the North here get none. (4) Within the last few months the Church of England minister here got use of the school building for a religious lesson at the close of a five hours secular instruction. The local Liberal journal, the *Wairarapa Star*, has been unwearied in its denunciation of the school committee for thus daring to allow morals and religion to be taught in the school by a minister of religion. Could 'secular' fanaticism go one step further?"

## THE MEMORIAL WINDOW.

The solemn unveiling of the memorial window erected in honour of the late Reverend Mother Marie St Gabriel, the first and until recently the prioress of the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Barbadoes street took place at the pro-Cathedral at High Mass on Sunday last. The very beautiful and artistic window which has been solidly placed in its present position by Messrs Taylor and O'Keefe, plumbers in this city, is the result of a movement to raise a suitable monument to the memory of the deceased prioress. Messrs K. P. Lonergan, M. Taylor, E. O'Connor and the late A. J. White are the originators of the movement, and the window, upon which a small balance is still owing, has been subscribed to by friends and ex-pupils of the late Reverend Mother in Christchurch and throughout the Colony. The window is the workmanship of one of the most famous manufacturers in the world, M. Lucien Begule, of Lyons, France, and is really an exquisite work of art. The window, which has been placed in the middle of the north side of the pro-Cathedral, is 12ft by 6ft, and the subject is the Archangel Gabriel making known to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she was about to become the mother of a divine infant who would be the Saviour of mankind, also the Blessed Virgin receiving from the hands of the archangel the message coming direct from the most high council chamber of Almighty God. The two figures—one of the Blessed Virgin, and the other the archangel—are life size and extremely pretty. Over them is the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and on a scroll is the inscription "*Ave Maria, gratia plena*." A splendid vase, on which the monogram "*Ave Maria*" is artistically wrought, appears between the two figures, and in the vase there is a magnificent lily of Jericho. Underneath are smaller flowers which are emblems of chastity, charity and humility, and the whole design on the window is surrounded by an ornate border. The inscription at the foot is executed in Roman letters and is: "Pray for the soul of the Reverend Mother Marie St Gabriel, late Prioress of the Convent of Notre Dame des Missions, Christchurch, Died July 25, 1893. On whose soul sweet Jesus have mercy." The name of the deceased lady, who was a near relative of the Rev Father L. M. Ginath, S.M., was in the world Elizabeth Conachy, and she was a native of Castlebellingham, County Louth, Ireland, where she was born in 1853. At the age of 14 she went to Lyons, in France, and joined the Order of the Sisters of Our Lady of Missions. In 1867 she was sent to Deal, England, where she remained until 1870, at which time the Franco-Prussian war was going on. She returned to Lyons, where, in the following year 1871, she made religious profession, and was sent back to Deal and was charged with a school and an orphanage. She was named superior of a monastery at Argentine in 1877, and in November of the same year she was named superior of the monastery in this city, where she arrived in 1878. The Superior General visited New Zealand in 1883, and she was accompanied during her sojourn in the Colony by Mother St Gabriel, who assisted the Superior General in founding houses of the Order in New Plymouth, Ashburton, Pakekoke and Hamilton. Mother St Gabriel was moreover appointed in 1883 Vicar Provincial and Assistant General. After labouring assiduously in this city for seventeen years she visited Lyons, where in a short time after her arrival she died in the fortieth year of her age. Her great talents and admirable qualities fitted her in an eminent degree for the most responsible positions. Her genial and loving disposition endeared her to all persons who came in contact with her. Persons who know her well will remember her calm simplicity, her active, open-hearted, yet unobtrusive kindness, and her patience, humility and cheerful virtues which betoken a soul deep rooted in grace. The very Rev Father Cummings said Mass, and when the curtain which screened the monument was drawn aside, he gave the foregoing sketch of the life of the deceased prioress. He spoke also in beautiful terms of her many virtues and of her numerous good works. He said, among other things, that a famous ancient ora or statue that it is difficult, for two reasons, to speak suitably of the dead. For should one say too little of them, a sin against charity would be committed, and should one say too much, then things too easy to understand would be spoken. All persons agree that Mother St Gabriel was a talented and holy woman, and when a person performs a multitude of heroic actions, as she has done, we are reminded of the deeds of the apostles and martyrs. Yet we cannot compare her to these illustrious personages. Nor can we confine to them our ideas, for God's power is unlimited and is manifested in a small flower as well as in his greatest works. The operations of divine grace often times shine forth in the simple religious in her convent, or even in a woman engaged in domestic duties, as brilliantly as in the apostles and martyrs. Examine that memorial picture, which represents the blessed Virgin in the home at Nazareth, and from the two lions in the ceiling, in the house of David. You will see in the picture a large plant, and several small ones, which figure the life of the late prioress. For each one of the latter displays its pretty colours, sheds its sweet perfumes and is as wonderful as the large plant. Mother St Gabriel has worked for years in educating your children, many of whom are now women, also in attending to your sick and destitute, and these labours, which rank among the most important, are a sufficient record to show that she was great and to entitle her to your veneration. A collection was made at the various services to defray the cost of the monument, and the amount necessary to pay all expenses in connection thereto will doubtless soon be raised.