

NEW ZEALAND: GENERAL.

Mr. H. A. FIELD, M.H.R. for Otaki, died on Friday afternoon of disease of the heart.

THE December number of that popular monthly, *The Triad*, is well up to its usual standard of excellence. The reading matter is varied, and comprises articles on music, literature, and science.

THE Bluff Harbour Board on Saturday accepted the tender of J. P. Rennoldson and Sons, of South Shields, England, for the construction of a tug, the amount being £10,875, and the vessel to be delivered at the Bluff by August next.

CROPS in the South Island are looking splendid, and there is every prospect of an abundant harvest, according to reports received by the Agricultural Department. The dairy produce export for the current year, it is anticipated, will greatly exceed the quantity sent out of the Colony during any previous year.

THE distribution of prizes to the pupils of the Convent of the Sacred Heart, Timaru, will take place on Tuesday next at one o'clock. His Lordship the Right Rev. Dr. Grimes has promised to preside. A retreat for ladies, conducted by the Rev. Father Colgan, S.J., will commence on Monday evening, January 8. Ladies desirous of attending should apply to the Rev. Mother.

IN its issue of October 1 the *Commercial Appeal* of Memphis, United States, has a leading article on the destruction of forests in the district, and the consequent evils which result from such a course. The *Appeal* basis its comments on an editorial on the destruction of forests in this Colony, which appeared a few months ago in the N.Z. TABLET, and which it quotes *in extenso*.

IF virtue is not always its own reward then the virtuous in many instances run the risk of going unrewarded (remarks the *Christchurch Press*). It is stated in support of this that last Sunday a guard on one of the Sumner trams found a gold watch and chain and pendant, valued at £15, and restored it to the owner, through the offices of a boy. The overjoyed owner of the valuables offered the boy a shilling for his services, but the boy, in declining the proffered guerdon, remarked, 'Keep it, mister, until it gets larger.'

DREDGE masters and miners should be very careful that foreign substances do not get mixed up with their gold samples. Through some unaccountable means a small quantity of brass filings got mixed up with a sample of gold that a Chinaman sold to a bank in Cromwell the other day. The bank official being under the impression that he could purchase brass filings at a cheaper rate than gold invited the Chinaman to explain the matter at the Magistrate's Court. As the explanation was not considered satisfactory the seller was fined 10s with costs.

AN important announcement was made by the Hon. J. G. Ward in the course of his address in Invercargill last week. After enumerating the substantial reductions in railway rates made by the present Government, he stated that it was intended at an early date to reduce passenger fares to 1½d per mile first class and 1d second class ordinary single. Under this scale it would cost only 17s 4d first class to go to Dunedin, as against 29s under the existing rate, and 11s 7d as against 19s 4d second class. These liberal concessions, he remarked, were to be granted irrespective of low fares for special purposes, such as school excursions and holiday trips, which would, of course, still remain in operation. The intimation was received with cheers by the crowded meeting.

It appears to us (*Oamaru Mail*) that one of the regrettable episodes in connection with the election just past was the rejection of Mr. O'Regan, who had represented Buller in two Parliaments. There may have been some special circumstances to account for the preference given to Mr. Colvin; but Mr. O'Regan is a strong man whose heart is in the right place, and his Parliamentary career has been marked by blamelessness and ability. It is a pity, however, that Mr. O'Regan should feel so sore over his rejection. The same misfortune has been suffered before now by the greatest and best of men, and, as he is very young as well as vigorous, there is no reason why he should not at some future time occupy a high place amongst the statesmen of this Colony if he will only be tolerant and patient.

A highly interesting lecture was given at Waihai, near Morven, Canterbury, on Tuesday night, by the Rev. Dr. Kennedy, S.M., B.A., lecturer on natural science at the Meance Seminary. Dr. Kennedy is an enthusiastic entomologist, and has devoted a great deal of his time to the study of insects and insect life, consequently his remarks were full of interest. He is also a practical photographer and an adept in microscopy, and the views with which the lecture was illustrated were taken by him with the aid of a microscope. The various 'subjects' dealt with included pictures of the common house fly, spider, butterfly, moth, &c. The lecture was highly enjoyed, and being delivered in plain language devoid of technicalities, was the more thoroughly appreciated by the audience. It is likely that the lecture will be repeated in Waimate this evening.

AREAS of Flax which have been cleared at great expense by owners of land and dissipated in smoke would now be worth more than a dredging claim in Otago. Wherever there are a few acres of the green blade left in the Manawatu and Rangitikei Counties (writes the *Marton correspondent of the Wellington Post*) a mill has been started or is about to be established. The price paid at present for fibre evidently provides a sufficient margin to allow of millers sending far afield for the raw material. Small patches of flax are being cut in the vicinity of Feilding, carted to the station, and railed to mills near Foxton for cleaning. If the enhanced prices imply so much additional profit, too, it must pay to transport the green leaf for a considerable distance. One miller near Foxton just previous to the boom was selling fibre at £14 10s per ton, while at present he is executing a contract at £27 per ton.

Writing after the General Election the *Otago Daily Times* said: The Colony as a whole, however, is manifestly disposed to entrust Mr. Ward once more with the control of the Treasury department. We are not inclined to join in the chorus of alarm with which this prospect has been received. Mr. Ward has retrieved his position to a very large extent, and it is most unlikely that he will repeat any of his former mistakes. His financial ability is undeniable, and the grasp which he has of the state of the finances of the Colony is unequalled on his own side in politics. His administration of the Postal department, when he was formerly in the Government, was admittedly most successful, and there will hardly be a dissentient voice to his again returning to it. When he does, a new period of progressive management will be inaugurated, and amongst his earliest acts will probably be the institution of the system of inland penny postage.

IN the November number of the *Austral Light* it was announced that that magazine would cease publication at the end of this year. We are pleased to notice by the December issue to hand that this is not to be the case. A new proprietor has been formed, with his Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne at its head, for the purpose of continuing the *Austral Light* in a new and improved form. It will be considerably enlarged, and will be issued directly under ecclesiastical authority. It is intended also to have two or three pages of illustrations, so that it should command that support which was denied to it in the past, and without which it is impossible for a magazine or newspaper to be a success. The old proprietor was severely handicapped for want of capital, but still it did remarkably well, thanks to the gratuitous assistance received from nearly all the contributors. We hope the *Austral Light* will be a great success in the future, and that it will long continue to illumine the minds of its readers.

How temperate and orderly the great bulk of the people of this Colony are was shown by the manner in which the General Election was conducted last week. There were immense crowds in the streets of Dunedin on Wednesday night and up to the early hours of Thursday morning, yet there was not a single individual looked up for drunkenness in the police cells. In a word there was not a single arrest for drunkenness in Dunedin from the Tuesday evening before the election until the Thursday evening after. At the Christchurch City Police Court on Thursday the presiding magistrate said that there were 40,000 people interested in the late election and not one of them had been brought up for drunkenness. This was a complete answer to the prohibition party, and showed clearly that Christchurch was not a drunken community. He expected that at least one dozen might have overstepped the mark. Sub-Inspector O'Brien said the election was a most orderly one. He did not hear an angry word pass between two persons all day. He agreed with the chairman as to the sobriety of Christ church.

THE WAR IN SOUTH AFRICA.

WITH the exception of that received on Tuesday morning, the war news of the week has been meagre and unimportant.

News received here on Tuesday reported another serious British reverse. General Gatacre, with a force of 3000, including the 2nd Northumberland, the 2nd Irish Rifles, 800 mounted infantry, and the 74th and 77th Batteries of Artillery, marched on Saturday night from Molteno with a view of surprising 2500 Boers at Stormberg, the junction of the branch railway connecting the East London and Port Elizabeth railways. When within two miles of Stormberg he encountered the enemy, who opened a sudden fire on the front and right flank. The British sought cover behind a kopje, but, being still within range, they shifted thence, the batteries covering the retreat. Boer reinforcements appeared, and the Northumberlands and the Irish Rifles were sent to intercept them, but suffered heavily from the fire of the machine guns. The enemy were underestimated and occupied an impregnable position. The infantry were unable to assail the Boers, while the enemy's two 40-pounders harassed the retreat. The Northumberlands and Irish Rifles behaved splendidly, but it is feared the losses are heavy. General Gatacre telegraphs his regret at the serious reverse, and says he was misled as to the enemy's position by the guides. He found them on impracticable ground. The British force was followed for three hours by the enemy's artillery. It is feared this disaster will intensify the Cape disloyalty. It is said that over 670 of General Gatacre's force are missing, and are supposed to be prisoners.

We regret to learn that on Sunday last (says the *Freeman's Journal*, December 2), Mr. J. J. Fitzpatrick, of Windsor (father of the M.P. for Rylstone and of Mr. O. Fitzpatrick, C.P.S.), died suddenly of heart weakness. The deceased gentleman had for over a generation been identified with Windsor. Some years ago, after more than 30 years' service in the police force, he retired on pension, his rank at the time being Inspector; and since then has taken a prominent part in the advancement of the old town. He was buried in the Windsor Catholic cemetery.

On the evening of October 31, the school hall at Waverley, Sydney, was well filled with the Catholics of the district, the occasion being a presentation to the Rev. A. S. Mullan, O.F.M., who for twelve years past has laboured in the Franciscan mission, which embraces the districts of Woollahra, Bondi, and Paddington. Father Mullan has been recalled to Ireland by his superiors. Although presentations are not encouraged in the religious Orders, it was found impossible in this case to oppose the warmly-expressed will of the people. An address and purse of sovereigns were presented to Father Mullan.