

THE POPE AND THE ALLIES

A sensation has been caused in Rome (says the *Universe*) by the eloquent sermon of Father Draghetti, a Franciscan friar, which ended with a prayer for a victorious peace for Italy and the Allied armies. The peculiarity of this event is that for the first time such a sermon has been openly preached in the Pope's own diocese, and, as the Franciscan friar gave his congregation to understand, with more or less direct approval by the Pope. The sermon was delivered in the church of Sant Andrea della Valle, before a crowded congregation, and the preacher, after thrilling his hearers by his words of patriotism, faith, and enthusiasm, was applauded spontaneously by the entire congregation, who rose to their feet as he concluded with an impassioned appeal that all the blood shed on the battlefields for the cause of humanity and Christian civilisation by the Allies should not be shed in vain.

Such a demonstration is extremely unusual in Catholic churches, and is all the more striking because it occurred in Rome. Many officers and soldiers were in the congregation, and they were the first to rise and applaud. The preacher's concluding words, as he turned towards the image of Christ, were:

'I pray for our soldiers and sailors on land and on sea, who, for their fathers and their mothers, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, for their country, and for true Christian civilisation, face the enemy like walls of steel, and I pray that they may have victory which will bring peace to our country, a victorious peace for all the Allies.'

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DOMINION DOINGS

An effort is being made to establish the fruit industry on Banks Peninsula as part of the scheme for assisting returned soldiers. Many years ago Akaroa exported considerable quantities of fruit to southern markets, but the advent of the modern orchard pests and the cancellation of a regular service of cargo carriers to Dunedin put an end to that trade.

The managers of a number of picture entertainments applied to the Dunedin City Council for permission to open their theatres on Good Friday and show subjects suitable to the occasion. Cr. Patton moved and Cr. Thompson seconded that the application be declined. Comment was made on the nature of some of the programmes shown on Good Friday last year, and it was decided, by 16 votes to 5, to refuse the applications.

There is every indication that the dredging industry in Otago is going to be severely handicapped by the want of first class dredgemen, many of the best men having either volunteered for service or been called up by ballot (says the *Otago Daily Times*). It is very questionable whether some of the dredges will be able to secure a sufficient crew to commence operations. We understand that at the present time there is a shortage of dredgemen in both the Cromwell and Alexandra districts.

A rather novel sight (says the *Otago Daily Times*) was witnessed near Maungatua a few days ago, when the locomotion of 50 years ago met that of the present day, the former proving more reliable. A West Taieri farmer, who owns a motor car set out on a journey with his lady friends, but forgetting for a moment that the steering gear, if manipulated the wrong way, might turn the car off the track, found himself and friends firmly deposited in a creek. All efforts to restore the car to the track failed; but happily a teamster and his bullocks came in sight. The bullock team, being hitched to the car, soon righted matters, and the car again sped on its way.

The Canterbury Museum has acquired a decidedly interesting exhibit in the shape of a black swan's feather, on which are the following words in white:— 'From the wing of a wild black swan, New Zealand food gift to Belgium, War Time, 1915.' Under this the Belgian arms are executed in color. This memento was received by Mr. Quealy, who acted as secretary to a swan drive held in 1915, when a number of these birds were shipped to Belgium, and the feather has been sent to him by some grateful Belgian. Mr. Quealy handed the token to Mr. Tisdall, who subsequently sent it to the Museum as an historical memento.

A gentleman who takes a keen interest in this district (states the *Alexandra Herald*), writing to us says, *inter alia*:— 'As the day is not far distant when our timber supplies will gradually begin to fail, I think that the waste places of Central Otago should be made use of by planting trees which would be suitable to make fruit cases. Later on nearly every class of timber will be deemed suitable for that purpose. Poplars should do well in the district, besides which they do not harbor so many birds as do fir and other trees. As the dredging industry in your district is practically a back number, I think that your townspeople ought to organise a tree-planting bee once a year to plant poplars and willows amongst the tailings wherever any silt has been deposited. As the trees grew up they would arrest more silt and fine sand, so that in a few years a great extent of the unsightly heaps of tailings would be relieved by having patches of green spread amongst them.' The suggestion is a good one, and is one which could be taken up by the local Expansion League.

We direct attention to the Easter Holiday timetable of the Dunedin Section of the New Zealand Railway which appears in this issue....