

There was a crowded attendance at M'Kenzie's Hall, Balclutha, on Friday night (says the *Leader*), on the occasion of the Catholic concert. A very excellent programme was faithfully carried out to the entire satisfaction of the audience. The piano duets by the Misses Dunne and M'Corley were capitally rendered, as also were the violin selections by the universal favourite, Miss M'Neill. Mr. King has an excellent voice and his songs were loudly applauded. It is needless to say that Mr. Jago was a host in himself. He is always at home with his audience and had to respond to repeated encores. Mrs. Labatt possesses a very sweet voice, and is undoubtedly a great acquisition to the musical circle of Balclutha. Miss Mary Morrison has an excellent voice of which she has entire control and must take a leading part in any popular concert. Miss Nora Mahoney danced and sang very nicely. Mr. Parlant gave his comic recitations with good effect, while a couple of comic songs by Mr. J. P. Walls exactly hit the taste of the larger portion of the audience, and were received with loud applause. The 'Soldiers of the Queen,' which Mr. Jago had previously sung, was then repeated with chorus by the audience, and the concert was brought to a close by all joining in singing a verse of the National Anthem.

BISHOP VERDON IN ROME.

YESTERDAY (Wednesday) morning a cheery letter was received by Father Murphy, Administrator of St. Joseph's Cathedral, from the Bishop of Dunedin. At the date of writing (January 4) his Lordship was staying at the Irish College, Rome, with which he was so long and honourably associated, first as Vice-rector, afterwards as Rector. We make the following extracts from his Lordship's letter:—

'I dare say my letter and the two young Waterford priests arrived soon enough to put you in good humour for the Christmas celebration. The two young Thurles priests should by this time be near the New Zealand coast. I shall certainly bring one priest, probably two, with me when I sail in February. All have been highly recommended by their College superiors, so I expect my trip to Europe will prove beneficial to the Diocese.

'I was preparing to send off a full account of the opening of the *Porta Santa* and the Christmas festivities here, when I unexpectedly got a lot of work thrown upon my shoulders. On the eve of Christmas the Propaganda authorities requested me to put the *Acta* and the *Decreta* of our Provincial Council into shape and get them printed in full for distribution among the Members of the Congregation. Of course this meant a great deal of work, but I shall have all the printing done and the proofs revised before the end of next week. I hope to get the Decrees approved by the Congregation before I leave Rome in February.

'The Holy Father was suffering from a severe cold when I arrived in Rome. He had been confined to bed for a couple of days; but he soon gets over such attacks, and he gave me a private audience on December 11. Of course he was very gracious, as he is to every one who approaches him. He inquired about the clergy and the people of the diocese, and manifested a deep interest in their welfare, spiritual and temporal. He seemed greatly consoled when I told him of the zeal of the clergy and of the faith and devotion of the people, of their generous support of the Church, and their noble efforts to give their children a good, sound religious education, although heavily taxed to support a godless system of education which they condemn and abhor. His Holiness bestowed his Apostolic Benediction on each and every member of my flock, and wished them every blessing, spiritual and temporal.

'I have presented 3,500 francs (over £130) to the Holy Father in the name of my flock. When I made my offering the Holy Father prayed that God might reward all the contributors for their generosity. Money is not as plentiful in the Vatican now as it was a few years ago, and the Peter's Pence are indeed sadly needed by the Holy Father. Whatever is offered to him is not thrown away. At the close of my audience the Holy Father allowed me to present our good student, Mr. D. Buckley, of the Propaganda College. The Holy Father received him most paternally, and spoke kind words which, I am sure, will never be forgotten.

'A few days after my audience I saw the Holy Father again at the Consistory—accounts of which I have no doubt you have seen in the papers—and on Christmas Eve I assisted in cope and mitre at a most impressive and deeply interesting function, when the Holy Father opened the *Porta Santa* of St. Peter's and gave his benediction to a very great concourse of privileged people. For 75 years that 'Holy Gate' had been walled up and never been opened. The Holy Father—probably the only one of that vast concourse—had passed through it in 1825, and now, after 75 years, he passed through it again, and we were all deeply moved as we watched the venerable old man kissing the portals as he advanced with slow but firm step into the great Basilica. His frame is bent with the weight of years, but his eye is bright, and his intellect clear, and his will is as strong as it was during the best days of his long Pontificate. "Will he close that gate on December 24, 1900?" was a question which many asked, but few could venture to answer. He is now over 90 years of age, but to give you some idea of his vigour I may tell you that his voice was heard distinctly when he sang the prayers and invocations; and he wielded the golden hammer with such effect that he left his mark on the marble slab which he struck, and the ringing sound of his blows reached the very end of the portico.

'Making use of the Holy Father's great concession, I enjoyed the rare privilege of pontificating at the midnight hour which marked the close of the old and opening of the new year. In presence of the Blessed Sacrament enthroned on the altar at that solemn hour, I offered up the Holy Sacrifice for my flock, thanking God for all the blessings showered down upon them during the past year, and begging for additional favours and blessings during the year that was commencing. The 'Te Deum' and the 'Veni Creator Spiritus,' with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, concluded our

solemn function. Thus you see that my first thoughts and prayers as the year A.D. 1900 began were for my people. But I have, indeed, thought of them during all my travels, and at many holy shrines I have offered up my prayers for their spiritual and temporal wellbeing. I feel very happy in Rome. I am occupying the very rooms which I occupied for many years during my term of office in the Irish College. But much as I enjoy Rome I am longing for home—my adopted home—longing to be back again in my diocese of Dunedin. I have travelled through some of the richest countries of the world during the last nine months, I have visited some of the greatest cities of America and Europe, I have seen very magnificent buildings, but I have not seen a more beautiful country than New Zealand, or a more picture-quely-situated city than Dunedin, or a more faithful, fervent people than our own good, faithful people of the diocese of Dunedin.

'Dean O'Leary talks of leaving Europe in February. Possibly he may sail in the Omrah with me, but he has not decided yet.

'Tell Father Cleary that the *TABLET* is greatly praised by all who see it in Ireland and elsewhere. I am proud of it. I shall present a number of it to the Holy Father before I leave Rome, and ask his blessing on the good work.'

NEW ZEALAND: GENERAL.

WE have received the sum of 10s from Mr. John Deegan, Wiamatuku for the Very Rev. Father Lighthouse's Maori mission.

WE have received parcels of used postage stamps for Rev. Father Kreymborg's mission from Mr. B. Leydon (Kensington), G. O'K. (Greymouth), and Miss Mary A. Doody (West Oxford).

THE Very Rev. Father Lighthouse acknowledges, with thanks, receipt of the sum of £4, for the Maori mission, collected by a lady in the Balclutha district, and forwarded through this office by the Very Rev. Father O'Neill.

MR O'REGAN, ex-M.H.R., was entertained in the Princess Theatre, Reefton, on Thursday night, and presented with a purse of sovereigns by his supporters. In the course of a lengthy speech he said that there was apparently not the slightest intention on the part of the Government to abolish the crushing taxation on food and clothing through the Customs. He was therefore better pleased to be out of politics for the present. This is the fourth presentation made to Mr O'Regan since his defeat.

A MEETING of the committee of the Ashburton St. Patrick's Day Sports Association was held on Tuesday evening of last week. A programme of sports (says the *Mail*) was adopted. This included a Sheffield handicap of 135yds, value £15 5s; four bicycle races, including a wheel race of £17 10s; tent pitching competition, fire brigade events, dancing, jumping, and wrestling competitions, and also other cash and amateur running events, so that all classes of athletes are well catered for. Substantial prizes are being given for all events, and a grand meeting can be looked forward to.

AT the last meeting of the Ashburton Catholic Literary Society a contest was held between the junior members, and for which Mr. Mui-on contributed three and Mr. Jones one trophy for the respective winners. As was expected there were a large number of competitors, and the judges—Messrs. McSherry, Burgess, and Cooper—had their work cut out in selecting the winners, as the recitations of one and all were delivered in an excellent manner, and they were a credit to the young elocutionists themselves and to the Society generally. First honours fell to J. Moriarty for his rendering of 'The Execution of Montrose,' with D. Moriarty second, F. Hanrahan third, and P. Hanrahan fourth. Mr. L. Hanrahan in a neat speech presented the winners with their trophies, and the respective winners duly responded, thanking the donors of the trophies for their kindness.

THE departure from our midst of any well-known personage (writes a Hokitika correspondent) is always a matter for deep regret; but when it is one of our co-religionists who is compelled to say farewell the loss is doubly felt, as our community is so small that even one from amongst our numbers is of great moment. On Wednesday (31st January) Mr. and Mrs. Flannery and family left for Napier. For the past three years Mr. Flannery has been in charge of the local gaol, and during that time he, as well as Mrs. Flannery and family, had won for themselves golden opinions, and when it was made known that he had been transferred to Napier, expressions of regret at his departure were heard on all sides from Catholics as well as non-Catholics. Ever upright and devout members of the Church their loss is deeply felt, and whilst regretting that Napier is to profit at our expense we can only wish Mr. Flannery and family every happiness in their new home.

PREACHING on Sunday (writes a Waimate correspondent) the Rev. Father Regnault referred to the introduction of the new catechism into the diocese, and exhorted parents to see that their children studied it. The enemies of the Church throughout the world and particularly in France, he said, were doing their utmost to destroy the Catholic Faith by attacking the schools, but with the help of God the Church would maintain the schools in spite of all her enemies. Referring to the *N.Z. TABLET* the rev. preacher said that Catholics should not forget the services rendered by the rev. editor in connection with the Slatery crusade. He urged the congregation to take the *TABLET*, and assist it in every way they could.—Catholicism is in such a flourishing state in Waimate that the church is far too small to hold the congregation. A larger one will be a necessity in the near future—Harvesting is now in full swing, but the weather has been anything but favourable. The crops are all looking well.