

IN ITALY AND AUSTRIA: WAR'S AFTERMATH

A NEW ZEALAND SOLDIER'S IMPRESSIONS.

Writing to the *Tablet* from Rome, under date May 9, 1919, Mr. Frank Levin (N.Z.F.A.), of Tinakori Road, Wellington, gives an interesting account of life in Italy, of the people's joy and satisfaction at the termination of the war, and of the whole-hearted hospitality extended by them to the British and colonial soldiers.

Sergeant Levin was with the New Zealand Field Artillery, and prior to returning to England for demobilisation received furlough in France. He made an extended tour of the chief French centres, including Lourdes, also the principal towns of Austria and Italy, including Milan, Genoa, Rome, Naples, Florence, Bologna, and Venice. While at Rome he had the very special privilege of being received in audience by his Holiness the Pope, and was afterwards shown over the Vatican and the adjoining interesting and historical buildings. His intention was then to return to Paris along the Riviera, a stay being made *en route* at Nice and Lourdes. The Austro-Italian battlefields, Asiago, Piave, and Carso, were also visited. From Paris, Sergeant Levin was to go to England, preparatory to leaving for the United States, and then later intended to resume his journey to New Zealand. Writing of the plight of ruined Austria, the brutal force of the German hand was (he said) everywhere apparent. In his concluding remarks the visitor narrates:—Having at last penetrated well into central Austria, after the most cheerless and slow train journey that could be possibly attempted, I offered my temporary assistance to one of the many excellent Allied Red Cross Commissions—American I think it was—and then our relief train started off, its merciful purpose being to assist the distracted and hungry populace. As our train struggled on laboriously, across the great length of Austrian territory, stopping occasionally for a few hours in some of the more important towns, we realised the people's plight more fully than ever by the pictures of poverty seen in succession, each an eloquent reminder of what these people have had to endure during the earlier periods of the war. Everything had fallen into the most horrifying disrepair, even the trains in which we travelled were entirely without windows or lighting of any kind: poverty and hunger confronted one at every turn. Worst of all, the people seemed to have surrendered all hope, all ambition, and, lost in a miasma of inactivity and despair, appeared merely to be awaiting their destiny, whatever it might be. Comparatively speaking, the ruin of these towns was as complete as that of Northern France. The streets of each town that we visited were dirty, almost filthy, and rows of shops were shuttered and closed, whilst apathetic crowds stood idly about, and virtually no business seemed afoot. At every railway station and in the railway yards was a great quantity of rolling-stock, engines being very noticeable, but these, together with the freight and passenger cars, were, as all things else, idle, and simply left to rot. There were a number of fair-sized towns before we finally reached the destination where we were to hand out supplies to the people, and at each place along the route we made halts sufficiently long to find sure evidence that with little, if any, variation, the same apathy and despair were unfortunately only too faithfully repeated. And all the more amazed, if not saddened, must even the most casual observer feel, when he meditates on such a spectacle. He realises, though slightly, what the war has meant to such people, and pondering over the grim aftermath of totally expended energies, sorrows, and anxieties, and, over all, the blight of the German military machine, their complete disillusionment regarding the whole fiendish business can be readily understood.

The work of our lives may be summed up thus: To leave ourselves and all things, to take the Cross for our standard, arms, and recompense, and to attach ourselves for ever to Jesus Christ.

DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

(By telegraph, from our own correspondent.)

July 15.

The financial results of the social held on July 3 in the interests of the Catholic Women's Hostel were satisfactory. The prizes in the euchre tournament were presented by Very Rev. Dean Cahill.

At a social held on last Thursday evening in the Sacred Heart Hall, Ponsonby, Father Hunt was presented with a gold wristlet watch, as a mark of the esteem in which he is held by the parishioners.

The death occurred on Wednesday, July 2, at Coromandel, of Mr. B. Rockliff, J.P., after an illness of some weeks' duration. The deceased was a retired schoolmaster, and Father O'Byrne, who attended him in his last illness and afterwards officiated at the obsequies, relates the interesting fact that one of the names on the late Mr. Rockliff's school register is that of Matthew J. Brodie, now Bishop of Christchurch. The funeral was attended by practically the whole adult population of Coromandel. By the passing away of Mr. Rockliff, the Church has lost a faithful adherent and generous supporter.—R.I.P.

His Lordship Bishop Cleary presided at a large and enthusiastic gathering in St. Benedict's Hall, Newton, on Sunday, June 29, when matters connected with the formation of a Catholic Men's Club were considered. Among those present were the Right Rev. Dr. Brodie, Bishop of Christchurch, and a number of the local clergy. The meeting unanimously adopted proposals to establish the club, and a management committee of 18 members was appointed. Several donations (one amounting to £100) were promised, and it is intended to rent central premises until the club is completely organised.

A welcome home was tendered last week in the local public hall by the people of Waiuku to Father Skinner, C.F., on his return from active duty at the Front. During the social Father Skinner was presented by the townspeople with a solid silver tea service. Father Taylor officiated as chairman of the gathering, among those present being Rev. J. C. Fussell, Father Doherty, Major Aldred, and Lieutenant Rowe.

Solemn High Mass was celebrated on last Sunday at St. Patrick's Cathedral, in thanksgiving for the signing of the Peace Terms. Father Forde was celebrant, Father J. J. O'Byrne deacon, Father J. Buckley sub-deacon, and Father Bradley master of ceremonies. The choir, under Mr. Cyril Towsey, sang Mercadante's Mass. Father Doyle preached the occasional sermon, and at Vespers in the evening the pulpit was occupied by the Very Rev. Chancellor Holbrook.

On Sunday, July 6, his Lordship Bishop Brodie imparted the Sacrament of Confirmation to nearly 100 candidates, at the Church of the Immaculate Conception, Ellerslie. The Right Rev. Mgr. Hackett and Very Rev. Dean Cahill assisted at the ceremony, others of the clergy present including Fathers T. McCarthy (Marist Missioner), Forde, and Bradley. Bishop Brodie afterwards blessed and formally opened the recent extensions to the parochial school buildings. The proceedings were participated in by a large gathering. Songs of welcome to the Bishop were sung by the children, and speeches were made, eulogistic of the splendid work accomplished by Mgr. Hackett, the outcome of his zealous efforts in the interests of Catholic education.

We have been requested to state that the drawing of the Christian Brothers' Art Union in Australia is now definitely arranged for September 30. Owing to the general disorganisation caused by the influenza outbreak, the original date appointed for the drawing could not be adhered to.

Life, in the spiritual sense, is not meant to be up and down. It is meant to be up and up; and beyond the steep ascent lie the tablelands of God. The heights we climb we should keep.

CYRIL K. WHALE,

Jeweller, Cashel Street, Christchurch, (Ballantynes Buildings)
Engagement and Wedding Rings. All Stones Guaranteed.