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## MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET

*Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiæ causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.*  
Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

LEO XIII., P.M.

*TRANSLATION.—Fortified by the Apostolic Blessing, let the Directors and Writers of the New Zealand Tablet continue to promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.*  
April 4, 1900.

LEO XIII., Pope.

## Current Topics

### The Course of War

It is the tendency of modern war to keep on increasing in numbers, armament, and expense. And it seems as if we are rapidly approaching the military ideal of 'a nation under arms'—which, by the way, is merely a return to the principle of savage life that made it the chief business of every adult male to be a warrior. A body of 23,000 men changed the course of the world's history at Pharsalia 48 years before the Christian era. It took only 31,000 to alter the map of Europe at Crecy in 1346. The total number of combatants engaged at Waterloo was about 180,000, and they, too, changed the face of Europe. The numbers rose again during the brief campaign of 1866, when 425,000 Prussians and Austrians faced each other at Koeniggratz to decide nothing in particular. Four years later, also, nearly half a million wisps of cannon-fodder raged and fought round about Gravelotte, and the line of battle extended over 30 miles. And last week, about Liaoyang, a good round half-million Russians and Japanese are reported to have been pounding each other at long range and skewering each other at close quarters to determine which is to have 'influence' in the eastern Sleepy Hollow of the Hermit Kingdom.

The battle of Plassey (1757) made Clive master of Bengal and virtually secured the establishment of British power in India. Yet it only lasted about an hour and was almost bloodless. Two years later was fought the brief, but more sanguinary, battle between the French and English on the Heights of Abraham, Quebec. The rain of bullets, like the fall of a sunshine shower, lasted only half an hour, yet it completed the conquest of Canada. Ramillies (1706) and Prestonpans (1745) were further instances of important battles being won in minutes. Under modern conditions, battles may, (as at Liaoyang) run into days—three or four (says the French Captain Nigote), or even into a fortnight. The well-known military expert, Fritz Hoenig, thinks it probable that we are even returning to the epoch of long sieges, and that the stories of Belgrade, Mantua, and Plevna may be repeated. The world is not likely to witness again such an experience as befell the British at Futtehpore, during the Indian Mutiny, when Sir Henry Havelock routed a great force of Sepoys, after a lively battle, and captured eleven guns, without the loss of a single life. Still more curious was the Abyssinian campaign of 1868, in which the British army fought two

pitched battles without having even one man 'lose the number of his mess.' The opposite extreme was reached at Koeniggratz, where 50,000 men were slain, and at Gravelotte, where the death-roll amounted to over 32,000. A like number of antagonists in Manchuria, armed with much deadlier weapons of war, seem to have produced far less carnage in a given time than marked the campaigns of 1866 and 1870. The old-time spear-fighting Maori chief hated the musket—it was not deadly enough to meet his idea of what a proper and respectable battle ought to be. Perhaps, in like manner, the new scientific man-slaying machines are, after all, more humane than the mitrailleuse and the chassepot and the needle-gun of 1870.

### At it Again

The Rome correspondents of the secular papers have been 'at it' again. Tuesday's daily papers contained the preposterous announcement that 'the Vatican propose to appoint the Bishop of Dijon Vicar-Apostolic of Australia'! The statement must have been invented by somebody who was qualifying for a padded cell. Monsignor O'Haran spoke mildly when he described it as 'an absolute absurdity.' 'There can never,' he added, 'be such an office as Vicar-Apostolic of Australia. Such a personage is usually a titular bishop, and they are either stationed in countries where episcopal sees have not yet been established or where the succession has been broken.' But the insane story furnishes fresh evidence of the extent to which the channels of intelligence have been captured by agencies that are open to the gravest suspicions by Catholics. Catholic news coming to these countries at first or second hand through Reuter or the Agence Havas is always, like Hood's doubtful oyster, 'open to suspicion.' And in the matter of Vatican news especially, the secular press of Great Britain, Australasia, the United States, France, and Italy, is abominably served. Some Rome representatives of great daily papers are merely grotesque and farcical in their unreliability. To this class belongs the author of the fantastic absurdity about the 'Vicar-Apostolic of Australia.' The correspondence of others—especially when it is merely an echo of the anti-clerical and Masonic press—is commonly marked by singular malevolence and mendacity. To such writers truth is, in a real sense, stranger than fiction. We sorely need an active Catholic News Agency in these countries to circumvent the Ananias of the cables.