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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

Dr. Gibb as Political Opportunist

We learn from the 'Outlook' that a letter was sent to the Premier the other day by Dr. Gibb on the subject of the Referendum Bill, from which we make the following extracts:—

I am instructed by the executive of the Bible-in-Schools Conference to express their earnest hope and desire that notwithstanding Wednesday night's voting in the House, the Referendum Bill may become law this session. You are of course aware that the interest felt by the Executive and the very large number of citizens whom they represent in the fate of the bill is due almost exclusively to the fact that it makes provision for submitting, by simple resolution of both Houses, the question of Bible-lessons in schools to the decision of the electors. It seems to us a thousand pities that our clear-cut and definite issue should be complicated by being mixed up with the variety of issues in the bill now before the House. We would have held our peace about this, however, if the bill had gone through without a hitch. For the sake of the matter which we have so much at heart, we shall be thankful if the Legislature accepts the bill in the form in which it was submitted by the Government.

In other words, Dr. Gibb and his party are prepared to support a bill which—quite apart from the religious education issue—will have most momentous and far-reaching effects and which will, in fact, alter the very constitution of the country, on the single solitary ground that it will give them what they want in the matter of Bible-teaching in schools. There is some sort of consistency in the party which supports the Referendum on broad democratic principles and as part of a general body of democratic policy, but a party which is prepared to alter the constitution and to support a measure without the slightest regard to its merits or demerits simply for the sake of getting its way on a particular question, shows a very inadequate sense of its political responsibilities.

The Dogger Bank Trouble

The reference of the claims arising out of the Dogger Bank outrage to arbitration—obviously the most sensible and satisfactory solution of the difficulty—is rather an interesting illustration of the 'bread cast upon the waters returning after many days.' The International Court, or Commission, of Arbitration, under whose auspices the inquiry is to be conducted is practically the creation of the Czar, inasmuch as it is the direct outcome of an appeal made by him to the Powers some six years ago with the view of promoting

peace. In August of 1898 Nicholas II. sent a formal and earnest letter to all the Powers drawing attention to the crushing burden imposed on the peoples of all countries by the necessity, which every nation at present labors under, of keeping up heavy armaments, and suggesting that a Conference should be held at the Hague for the purpose of considering whether the Powers could not agree to take some step towards disarmament and make some arrangement for the settlement of international disputes by arbitration. The Conference was held in the following year and was attended by 101 representatives of all the leading nations of the world. Eight proposals were submitted to the Conference for discussion, of which the most important were a proposal not to increase the present effective armaments, and to provide for a reduction of them in the future, to prohibit the use of new arms and explosives, to prohibit submarine/worpedo boats and the use of projectiles or explosives from balloons, and to accept in principle mediation and facultative arbitration in cases lending themselves thereto.

The difficulties in the way of disarmament proved insuperable and it was found impossible to devise any practical measure in that direction. The real work of the Conference was accomplished in the elaboration of a project of arbitration, which provided for the establishment of a permanent arbitration court. After much discussion the project was adopted, the following conditions being laid down: that each signatory Power was to nominate not more than four members of the court; Powers desiring arbitration were to choose any number of arbitrators out of the list of members so appointed; and non-signatory Powers were to have the right to make use of the court under certain prescribed conditions. An International Arbitration Court was then organised, with a Permanent Bureau, and the Court was declared duly constituted on April 14, 1901. The only States which at that time had not ratified the proposal for such a Court were China and Turkey. The British members of the Court are Sir E. B. Malet, Sir B. Fry, Professor Westlake, and Sir John Ardagh. The majority of the members are, of course, foreigners, but the cables make it clear that England and Russia have come to an agreement as to the particular arbitrators to be selected in the present case. As we have said, settlement by arbitration is undoubtedly the proper solution of the difficulty, but Russia seems likely to benefit most by the proposal. England cannot get more from the Court than she had already demanded from Russia, and there is a distinct possibility that she may get less.