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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.

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 Results of the Congress

The session of the Second Australasian Catholic Congress is over, and the full reports now to hand go to show that the rich promise of its earlier sittings has been amply fulfilled. The interest, enthusiasm, and high intellectual standard which marked the opening meetings were maintained to the close, and it is recognised on every hand that the gathering has been a complete and magnificent success. Of the papers read at the later sittings the most notable were those delivered in connection with the medical section, the subjects being 'Catholic Physicians' Position in regard to Craniotomy,' by Dr. U. O'Sullivan, L.R.C.P., 'The Decline in the Birthrate' by Dr. Nash, M.L.C., a member of the New South Wales Birthrate Commission, and 'Catholic Teaching and Medical Practice' by Lieutenant-Colonel Dr. Aherne (Queensland). In the course of the discussion on these subjects Father Coffey (South Dunedin) took the opportunity to give the Congress an interesting account of the memorable controversy on craniotomy which raged so fiercely in Dunedin some time ago. Before the session terminated the whole of the resolutions submitted at various stages of the Congress were formally adopted in globo and the terms of these important decisions are given in full in another part of this issue.

The results of the Congress and the practical benefits which may be expected to follow from its deliberations could not be better expressed than in the admirable summing up given by his Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne at St. Patrick's Cathedral on the Sunday after the session had closed. After pointing out that the Congress had been attended by Catholics from every State in the Commonwealth, and that the interest in its proceedings would embrace the whole of the English-speaking world, his Grace remarked that it was difficult, where so much was beneficial, practical, and trustworthy, and calculated to do an immensity of good, not merely for the present but for future generations, to single out particular portions of the work. He desired, however, to refer to—(1) The splendid vindication of the Irish priests and the Irish people during the nineteenth century; (2) the establishment of the Australasian Catholic Truth Society; and (3) to refer to the great good which he thought would follow from the dis-

cussion in the medical section. The Catholic Truth Society would afford the best and most effective means of promulgating Catholic doctrines. These, they knew, were distorted among non-Catholics to a shameful extent. There was often misrepresentation, not through malice, but because of ignorance, and one effect of the society would be to give to Catholics and non-Catholics alike an opportunity of learning what Catholic doctrines were on every point of importance. He hoped that the information given in the medical section would do a great deal to preserve the people from practices which were undermining the very foundations of human society. Wherever the laws of nature were violated; wherever men stood up in opposition to the decrees of heaven and took on themselves to introduce a new code of moral practices, although the Almighty might not inflict instant punishment, the day would come, as it came to the sinful cities of the plains, when God's anger could no longer be restrained, and He would send down punishment, if not in the form of fire, in the shape of war, pestilence, or famine, which would mark His disfavor in some terrible manner. The life of the Church in any country resembled very much the life of an individual. During infancy it had to be protected from danger. The first thing required was material aid in the building of churches, convents, and schools. Then the spiritual progress of the Church must be attended to. Priests must be provided, and the Sacraments administered. But when the Church was fully established it was not content to supply merely the spiritual or moral wants of men, but it sought to provide those sources of knowledge which would make the Catholic people equal in learning, dignity, power, and influence to the professors of any other form of Christian belief. This had been the work of their Congress, and it marked the highest point of Christian faith and Christian progress; and not a word was uttered from the beginning to the end of the Conference that could offend the most fastidious non-Catholic. This example of fair play, of consideration, charity, and good feeling toward those who differed from them should be taken as a model by themselves and others; and it was further an answer to the charge sometimes made against Catholics that they were wanting in feelings of tolerance or charity towards other people. He hoped that the results of the Congress might be lasting; might be for the advancement of charity amongst men; for the vindication of truth in the Catholic Church; for the enlightenment of those who differed from them, and finally lead them to live as good citizens and good Christians in this fair land which God had given to them.

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