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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., Pop

Current Topics

A Flaming Controversy.

The Rev. Dr. Gibb, President of the Bible-in-schools Conference, stands in sore need of a course of soothing syrup. When Mr. Seddon and his team were toilingly pulling the Referendum wagon through the House of Representatives, Dr. Gibb and his party applauded and passed votes of thanks to him for having kept his plighted word to do so. The Doctor even 'went one better': he invoked high heaven to bestow more power upon the Premier's massive elbow. But alack! the Upper House tossed the Referendum Bill out of the window, and since then Dr. Gibb and Mr. Seddon have not been playing in the same yard. For some weeks the champion of the Bible-in-schools League nursed his wrath to keep it warm. When it had reached the temperature of an electric furnace he hosed the Premier with its liquid fire at the Presbyterian Assembly, denounced the Referendum Bill as worthless, Mr. Seddon as guilty of insincerity, promise-breaking, 'telling taradiddles' (Dr. Gibb's expression, not ours), 'fooling the Bible-in-schools party all along the line,' and other more or less Bulgarian atrocities. As is customary with Dr. Gibb when he enters the arena of controversy, he suspended the rules of polite discussion and

'Did engage

In a warfare with the remnants of a palaeozoic age.'

The Premier did not turn the other cheek. He 'retorted' several of his antagonist's charges, accused him of garbling his quotations (an inveterate weakness of the impetuous Doctor's, as we have time and again shown), and struck back with odd bits of sarcasm that smote like chunks of old red sandstone. The League President returned to the charge of insincerity in another longwinded letter which turned a column of the New Zealand press into a fuming Vesuvius. The Premier threatens to 'stamp the country' against the Bible-in-schools scheme, should it ever become a 'live question.' And there, for the time being, rests what may be described as 'a rare purty bit of a fight.'

The outstanding and instructive feature of this interesting controversy is the fierce temper and violence with which it has been fought out by the chosen champion of the Bible-in-schools League. On his side it has been a driving squall of words—a fog-horn controversy. Search it with a microscope and you will find in it no

speck or trace of the ordinary courtesies of debate. In this respect at least, it has served as a useful lesson to the electors of New Zealand: it has enabled them to gauge the bitterness of feeling which—as we have often pointed out—would be imported by the Bible-in-schools leaders into a plebiscite, if it were ever granted, on the question of sectarianising the public schools. 'We hope,' says the Wellington 'Free Lance', 'this object-lesson is not being lost upon the public. It is a foretaste of the acerbity of feeling we may expect ad nauseam if ever the Bible-in-schools party get the thin edge of denominationalism introduced into our State school system. Mr. Seddon has gone out of his way to oblige the Bible-in-schools agitators. There has been no demand from the people for a referendum on that question. It was a gratuitous undertaking on his part to give them the means of obtaining a catch-vote on a subject for which the public are not prepared. If Dr. Gibb had obtained pledges from members of Parliament to support it those pledges ought to be made public. Let us know where we stand. It will be time enough to debate the Bible-in-schools seriously when the electors themselves bring it into prominence. So far all efforts in that direction have been confined to church conventicles, and the only noise we hear is the banging of the drum ecclesiastic. The Premier will place himself in a false position if he mistakes this ecclesiastical clamor for the voice of the people. On their part, the people would be false to their liberal and democratic instincts if, under any specious excuse, they allowed themselves to coerce a minority on matters of religion.'

A Mean Fraud.

'It is hard,' says the 'Catholic Times,' 'to acquit the French authorities of meanness and even dishonesty, if the story told by Messrs. H. Riviere and Co. in a letter to the "Times" be true, as we have reason to believe it is. When the French Government sent the monks adrift from the Grande Chartreuse they appointed a liquidator to arrange for the disposal of the property. The manufacture of the celebrated liqueur, it appears, aroused the covetousness of the Government. Acting on its behalf, and in virtue of powers which he temporarily obtained, the liquidator conceded the manufacture and sale of the liqueurs to a certain firm. But, if the expression be allowable, he gave away what he did not possess. The monks were not so simple as to let their enemies into a secret which they have so long and so jealously guarded. When they went to Tarra-gona in Spain they took the recipe and the necessary knowledge with them, so that the liqueurs now made in

For { COUGHS,
COLDS,
BRONCHITIS, Etc. } Take!

BONNINGTON'S CARRAGEEN IRISH MOSS