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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

'Errors' and 'Abominations'

A Northern correspondent sends us a newspaper cutting, the date and source of which are not stated. It contains a brief report of a July sermon in which a vociferous and reverend illuminator lays to the charge of the 'Romish' Church Dr. Martin Luther's doctrine that the end justifies the means, and sundry other 'errors' and 'abominations' besides. The good man's pulpit manners—or, rather, lack of manners—towards the first and most ancient Christian creed constitute the most flagrant 'abomination' in the report, and the worst 'error' contained therein is the calumnious imputation, to the Catholic Church, of doctrines and tenets which she utterly repudiates and abhors. The preacher seems to belong to a class of clerics of low brain-power or limited education, who cannot keep the domestic pot boiling unless they throw on the dying embers beneath it, from time to time, a straw effigy of the Pope. Their proper vocation is cabbage-growing, not preaching. At any rate, they would be more honorably and usefully occupied in raising Drumheads or Early Yorks than in outraging truth and the decencies of social life from pulpits that are called—too often, alas! by courtesy—Christian.

A Plague of Mice

Locust and mice plagues are visitations from which we are, happily, wholly free in this favored country. Some idea of what a plague of rodents is like may be gathered from the following paragraph which appeared in a recent issue of a Victorian paper:

'A resident of the Donald district, Victoria, killed 17,027 mice during the seven weeks ending June 15.'

Some twelve years ago we personally witnessed a plague of mice (they were really voles) in Western Victoria. They swarmed in fields and barns and stables and dwellings along the path of invasion. They were a dire calamity to householders, although they never attained the capacity for inflicting annoyance which was achieved by the rats of Hamelin, which (according to Robert Browning)

'Fought the dogs, and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cook's own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,

Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spolloed the women's chats,
By drowning their sneaking
With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.'

In 'Bab's' ballads, Ferdinand underwent a long and toilsome search to find out, for his curious Elvira, who wrote 'the pretty mottoes which you find inside the crackers.' A French savant went still farther afield—in the hinterlands of Algeria—to discover the original centre from which locusts went forth at irregular periods in devastating swarms. But scientists in Victoria were nonplussed by the onward march of myriad voles that came from nobody knew where, and went no one knew whither. Even the omniscience of 'the oldest inhabitant' was forced to capitulate to this eerie triple mystery of sudden fecundity, of migratory instinct, and of Providential compensation in nature, which scientific men find so deep a riddle. In far-off Norway there are big cousins of the Australian vole (lemmings) that gather periodically and march steadily westward in vast hordes. They fling themselves boldly into the rivers that bar their course, they scale the high hills, they swarm through towns and hamlets, swerving neither to right or left till they reach the shores of the ocean. They plunge into its waters and swim out ever westward until they are drowned, down to the last. Ships have sailed through miles of the dead migrants. But even Romanes, for all his keen guesses and ingenious theories, has been unable to solve this strange mystery of migration.

Organised Slander

It used to be said that the Ten Commandments had no currency east of Suez. But there are apparently regions to west of the city of riff-raff cosmopolitanism where their operation is likewise suspended—as regards at least the precept which places a discount on bearing false witness against one's neighbor. Some years ago we gave particulars of a bureau of anti-Catholic slander that was conducted by a Swiss criminal and had its headquarters in Milan. His methods were a complete departure from the usual style of no-Popery calumny, with its studied vagueness, and its careful suppression of names of persons and places, dates, and other circumstances that would facilitate investigation. The Swiss gaol-bird's bureau filled in the minutest details and rounded off a tale that would deceive the elect and make Ananias green with envy. Inquiry, however, almost invariably elicited the fact that the names were all fictitious, the dramatic personae of the bureau's anti-

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