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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 Lie Direct

Somebody has said that a little man may gain notoriety by throwing mud at a great man. A notoriety-seeker of this sort recently achieved his purpose by a side-splitting oratorical exhibition at the latest Orange demonstration in Melbourne. It is scarcely necessary to say that the orator is a clergyman. He has 'discovered' that the Archbishop of Melbourne has got his foot on the neck of the Victorian Parliament; that he spoiled the fun of the plebiscite on the Bible-in-schools; that he is the man who 'bent Premier Thomas Bent' to his imperious will, that he 'determined the decisions of the Victorian Cabinet' on the Scripture referendum, that he 'dominates' a State which ought to be Orange, with only a speck of green here and there upon it, and that he has perpetrated other enormities too numerous to mention. The speech was not, of course, so coherent as this. It was a delirium tremens of oratorical fury—a grand epilepsy of metaphorical kicking and yelling and frothy assertion. And 'there were visions about'—visions of the Scarlet Woman and the Beast and the Man of Sin and Jesuits in disguise and a whole menagerie of Roman 'tigers' and spotted pink snakes, all alive and their eyes open. And the Grand Screech was punctuated with enough big-drum thunder and applause and 'Kentish fire' to make the walls of Jerry shake. Taken all in all, it was probably as exhilarating an exhibition of verbal hysteria as our tawny friends across the Tasman Sea have ever enjoyed. And, no doubt, it has saved the world from 'Rome' till the next anniversary of the glorious, pious, and immortal memory of the little Boer monarch.

But there was a sequel to the affair. Premier Bent took a hand in the game. He struck the declamatory orator at high velocity. 'A man who talks like that,' said Mr. Bent, 'is not entitled to the reply courteous, but deserves the lie direct. And I give him the lie. What he has stated is a lie. I don't care for the Catholic Church any more than I do for any other Church. Archbishop Carr did not make any representation to me about the Scripture instruction referendum. The only Bishop I saw was Dr. Clarke, the Anglican Bishop. I am as good a Protestant as the accuser is, and what he says about Archbishop Carr and myself is a lie.' And there, for the time being, the July enthusiast lies—under a stigma that would wither

up any cleric, unless the color of his political skin were yellow. And this (we mean no pun) is the end of his tale.

'It's fate, so bit-bit-bitter,
Is a story fit-fit-fitter
For a sad little sigh and a tear in the eye,
Than a thoughtless tit-tit-titter.'

It is the librettist's lament over the amorous goldfish in the 'Gersha.' And in two obvious respects it is appropriate to the present case.

An echo of the Melbourne cleric's hysterical romance has just been made by a religious newspaper in New Zealand whose traditions would have led us to expect from it better things. However, even Homer nodded at times and the weasel has been known to snatch forty winks once in a way. The present 'break' is probably one of those accidents to which even the best-regulated newspapers are subject. In the present case, the story is practically a repetition of the Melbourne fiction, mutato nomine—with a change in the names of persons and places, and little more besides. It is laid down as a matter of sheer fact that our 'Archbishop and his creatures' 'bargain with political parties' for the disposal of the Catholic vote! With a spirit of fairness which does him credit, the editor of the journal referred to permits us to discuss the subject in his columns. Interesting developments may, therefore, be expected. For the present we make only these three remarks: (1) We know of no clerics in New Zealand, except those of the Bible-in-schools League, that are pushing and jostling 'political parties' and pursuing towards them a policy which looks remarkably like intimidation. (2) When a man has an optic of such piercing power that it sees, through a stone wall, the thing that is not, there is a bright future for him boring for oil for a company-floating syndicate. (3) It is, we think, more than a mere coincidence that the same painful yarn, in practically identical terms, was spun by an Orange candidate in Caversham in December, 1901. It is the same old tale (but sadly bedraggled) of the same old 'bargain,' with the same old tag requiring the Gov'tment to make railway surface-men (or some such thing) of a good part of the Catholic population, male and female, of New Zealand. The whole story of the Bishops' 'bargaining' has in it the same amount of historic and literal truth as the nursery tale of the cow that jumped over the moon. The Melbourne Orange platform is not the only place where 'there are visions about' during the fervid religious and political temperatures that rage in the middle of July.

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