

THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XXXIII.—No. 32

DUNEDIN: THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 1905.

PRICE 6D

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

Putting on Airs

In one of his delightful books Lewis Carroll makes the Duchess say to little Alice: 'Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it.' The moral of the following story is not far to seek. It was told in the London 'Times' some years ago by Canon McColl in the course of a controversial letter on the evergreen subject of Ritualism. 'A friend of mine,' said the Canon, 'once shared the box-seat with the driver of a stage-coach in Yorkshire, and, being a lover of horses, he talked with the coachman about his team, admiring one horse in particular. "Ah," said the coachman, "but that 'oss ain't as good as he looks; he's a scientific 'oss.'" "A scientific horse!" exclaimed my friend, "what on earth do you mean by that?" "I means," replied Jehu, "a 'oss as thinks he knows a deal more nor he does.'"

The true scientist and the cultivated scholar are gifted with the inborn modesty which is about the best setting for either virtue or learning. It is mental rawness that is proud, and empty vessels make the greatest sound. Catholics are, more than any other religious organisation, the victims of the empty and far-resounding amateurs who, without ever having seen so much as the cover of a treatise on our theology or asceticism or canon law, stand on (metaphorical) barrel-ends and profess to teach these sciences to the Pope and the College of Cardinals and all the highest experts of our Faith. This curious and eccentric phase of current polemics is incidentally touched upon by the scholarly Dr. O'Riordan in a timely and remarkable work just issued from the press ('Catholicity and Progress in Ireland'; Kegan Paul, publishers). 'It is curious,' says he, 'that, whilst a physician will not presume to lecture lawyers on jurisprudence, or a properly trained lawyer lecture physicians on therapeutics, a geologist lecture bacteriologists on the ways of germs or lecture engineers on the building of bridges, a carpenter lecture a tailor on how to cut a suit of clothes, persons are to be found in every walk of life who, drawing out an idea from their inner consciousness and fixing that pet idea immovably as on a pedestal, make it the test of theological truth, and pass sentence, without a suspicion of being ridiculous, on all theologians and metaphysicians who have written, from St. Augustine to Rosmini.'

That is a good 'sizing-up' of the sort of 'scientific 'osses' that draw the rickety tumbrel of cheap No-Popery controversy in our day. Artemus Ward poked some quiet humor at such know-alls in his report on the speeches of John Bright, Earl Derby, Lord Stanley, and W. E. Gladstone. He earnestly trusted that Earl Bright, John Derby, Wm. E. Stanley, and Lord Gladstone would 'cling inflexibly to those great fundamental principles, which they understand far better than I do; and I will add,' he continues, 'that I do not understand anything about any of them whatever in the least; and let us all be happy, and live within our means, even if we have to borrow the money to do it with.' Many of our press and platform assailants have even less knowledge of what they attack than the Genial Showman professed to have of English politics. A man who knew nothing whatever of the science of bacteriology once ventured to lecture Pasteur on his art in the columns of a London daily. People merely raised their eyebrows and speculated as to which lunatic asylum the critic's friends would remove him. But a varlet in a yellow scarf, who knows nothing of the history or teachings of the Catholic Church, may make a coarse tirade upon her, and he will be greeted with rounds of applause by the sort of people who like that sort of thing. God forbid that we should condemn any man merely for lack of book-learning. Illiteracy, whether partial or total, is in itself no crime. Even ignorance is not. 'It only becomes wrong,' says Loofts, 'when it presumes to judge where it is incompetent to judge. And when it states its baseless judgment in a form which would merit severe censure even if its grounds were good, it becomes despicable.'

That is just the position of some of the vehement enthusiasts who have lately been yapping at us from sundry pulpits and platforms throughout New Zealand. We have only respect for the decent mediocrity or unlearning which knows its limitations and is careful to remember that the first lesson of liberty is to respect the liberty of others, and the first duty of social intercourse is to have proper consideration for the feelings of others. But we confess to a sense of contempt or of amusement—according to circumstances—for the vociferous meddler who rushes out in broad daylight, with smoking tallow 'dip' in hand, to teach the sun how to shine in the heavens. Newton was one of the most modest of men. So was Cardinal Newman. Of the latter Justin McCarthy wrote: 'He had no scorn for intellectual inferiority in itself; he despised it only when it gave itself airs.' And there is a good deal of

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