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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 Toothpick Remedy

Our clerical friends of the Bible-in-schools League are now, like the other politicians, in recess. Are they evolving new schemes for the new year? Or will they still continue to mock the spiritual starvation of so many little ones among their various flocks with 'an emasculated caricature' of a Protestant version of the Bible, a vague, spineless, and unpractical Unitarianism, and desultory Scripture readings that are to be used merely as pegs on which to hang up lessons in grammar and geography? Up to this hour, they have been playing the part of Douglas Jerrold's 'wise philanthropists,' who, when famine came upon the land, fancied they had done their whole duty by voting the hungry people a supply of toothpicks.

Learning the Lesson

La Rochefoucauld's 'Maxims' is a book which sets one's teeth on edge. But it holds the mirror mercilessly up to so much of selfishness as there is in human nature. There is, for instance, an odious amount of truth in one of his best-known sayings: 'In the adversity of our best friends we often find something that is not exactly displeasing.' In the adversity of French Catholics, their Protestant and Jewish fellow-countrymen for many years found 'something that was not exactly displeasing.' Some of their organs (like many of those of their co-religionists abroad) were openly on the side of spoliation and proscription. Others among them were at pains to convince the persecuted Catholics that the Church would be all the better for being bled white and plucked to its wing-feathers. They remind one of Lapet's plea for nose-tweaking in Beaumont and Fletcher's 'Nice Valor':—

'LAP. For the twinge by the nose,
'Tis certainly unsightly, so my tables say;
But helps against the head-ach wondrous strangely.
'SHAMONT. Is't possible?
'LAP. Oh, your crush'd nostrils slakes your opilation,
And makes your pent powers flush to wholesome sneezes.
'SHAM. I never thought there had been half that virtue
In a wrung nose before.
'LAP. Oh, plenitude, sir.'

Well, in due course it became manifest that the French persecution was directed against all religion, al-

though the chief fury of the onset was against the Church of the Ages. And then our friends, who had long borne our trials with such equanimity, had to patch their own griefs with proverbs as best they could. The ducks of Pontus are said to have waxed round and corpulent by feeding on poison that would have incontinently 'laid out' any other members of the family of the anatidae. And Protestant and Jewish journals in France are now in dread that their communions will be utterly poisoned and undone by the very remedies—plunder and proscription—which, in their days of fancied safety, they declared would help the Catholic Church 'wondrous strangely' to future triumphs. French Protestants and Jews (says the Milwaukee 'Catholic Citizen') are now 'no less opposed than Catholics to the separation of Church and State, especially in view of the expropriation by the State of synagogues and temples erected by private subscriptions and donations, but brought within the meshes of law by the bestowal of slight subventions from public funds either of the State, the Department, or the Commune. It was pointed out by a deputy in the Chamber, that in one arrondissement in Central France, where £70,000 had been spent in church buildings, towards which a grant of £10,000 had been made by the public authorities, the whole of the sum would be confiscated, while in the case of the synagogue in the Rue St. Lazare, the discrepancy is still larger. A parallel is drawn between the present policy and that of the First Revolution, when churches were closed and confiscated on the most trivial pretexts. St. Eustache became the Temple of Agriculture, St. Roch the Temple of Genius, St. Merri the Temple of Commerce, St. Sulpice the Temple of Victory, and so on through a long list. One of the lately confiscated churches of the congregations, built recently for £8000, has been sold to contractors for £48, so that the State does not even make spoliation lucrative.'

Jews and Protestants now also feel where the shoe of persecution pinches. The experience may serve the cause of charity by generating among the victims of a common tyranny that fellow-feeling which is said to make people wondrous kind.

Slave Holders

Some evil traditions live long and die hard. Just a century ago, English Tories were making dramatic appeals to the British public against the abolition of slavery in England. To-day they are again on bended knees, beseeching the British voter to stay his hand and let servitude still endure under the shelter of the Union

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