

THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

THIRTY-FOURTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XXXIV.—No. 4

DUNEDIN: THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 1906.

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

Lucifer Matches

A northern contemporary is decidedly 'onaisy in its mind' about the growing magnitude of the divorce evil. It sets forth defective training and the lack of good home influences as the fons et origo, the primal source, from which has sprung all that is a social menace in the growing business of the divorce mills. Surely, this is a purblind view of the situation. Why leave out of sight and out of mind such important contributing causes as the following—education without religion; the lessening hold of Christian faith upon a section of the people; the too great proneness of young people to enter lightly into the wedded condition without the equipment of the necessary qualities of mind and heart and soul to make it a success, or without any true conception of its duties, its sacrifices, and its responsibilities; and, above all, the lax teaching of all the Reformed denominations regarding the permanency of the marriage tie? Heaven is not the match-maker that a familiar wedding-day saying assumes it to be. Says Samuel Lover in one of his epigrams:—

'Though matches are all made in heaven, they say,
Yet Hymen (who mischief oft hatches)
Sometimes deals with the house t'other side of the way,
And there they make Lucifer matches.'

There is no sense in making heaven responsible for the culpable mistakes of earth. The first step towards a remedy of the divorce evil is this: Let the Reformed denominations experience a change of heart and return to the old Catholic teaching regarding the unity, sanctity, and inviolability of the marriage bond.

Football

Some of the American universities have (so the cables say) taken steps to suppress football within their boundaries until the game has been reformed. The prohibition has come none too soon; for the pastime, as played in the United States, is an infuriate riot in which—despite protective armor suggestive of Crecy or Poitiers—as much damage is often done to life and limb as in some of the set engagements of the South African war. The American university authorities have many precedents for their action. Six centuries ago the boisterous violence of the sport led to its temporary suppression by Edward II. That was in the year of grace 1314. Edward III. forbade the pastime in 1349, and Henry IV. in 1401. In the last-mentioned

century, the Parliament of James I. of Scotland forbade football—which seems to have been then a favorite pastime in the Land o' Cakes—in order that the common people might give the whole of their leisure time to the acquisition of a just eye and a steady hand in the use of the long-bow. James IV. of Scotland and Henry VIII. of England also tried their hands at the suppression of football. But the game survived them all—although in a crude and more or less sickly and surreptitious way. Queen Elizabeth's statesmen took a hand in the game of abolition, but without conspicuous success. So did some of her successors in the period between the Restoration and the Revolution. At that time headlong crowds used to pursue the flying ball through the filthy thoroughfares of London, often sending it smashing into linendrapers' shops, or into the Stygian abominations of the Fleet Ditch, where (as Jonathan Swift, an eye-witness, sang)

'Sweepings from butchers' stalls, dung, guts, and blood,
Drown'd puppies, stinking sprats, all drenched in mud,
Dead cats, and turnip-tops came tumbling down the flood.'

The kill-joy spirit of Puritanism was at the root of some of the attempts to kill off football. But in England, at least, it died at last, chiefly of its own violence. It was revived, and still survives, on the lines of reform. In America it is more barbarous than the Spanish bull-fight. And the sooner it is mended or ended, the better for the interests of clean and civilised pastimes.

The Cable 'Rigger'

When we read some of the stuff that appears as cable-news in some of the daily papers, we comfort ourselves with Artemus Ward's remark: 'There is one good thing about all such yarns—you needn't believe them unless you want to.' It is bad enough to have cable news 'rigged' at one end of the electric wire. But what chance has truth of running the journalistic blockade when there is a 'rigger' lying in wait for her at the other end also? The Sydney 'Freeman' gives the following illuminating sample of how a message, recently sent by the same service at the same hour and in the same terms, appeared on the same day in two Sydney newspapers:—

'Sir Charles Dilke's address to the electors of the Forest of Dean (Gloucestershire), which he has represented since 1892, consists of a single sentence: "I solicit with confidence a renewal of your trust."—'Evening News.'

'Sir Charles Dilke's address contained but a single sentence with regard to Home Rule, to the effect that the party solicit with confidence a renewal of trust.'—'Australian Star.'

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