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ANSWER TO CORRESPONDENT

'SOLD.'—You have been sold, beyond a doubt, in paying over £2 for such an article. Have you not been reading the 'Tablet' lately?

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.



THURSDAY, MARCH 28, 1907.

THE FRENCH PERSECUTION

IV. FROM BUONAPARTE TO COMBES

IN our last issue we treated of the Franco-Papal Concordat of 1801 and of the circumstances out of which it arose. We told the story of the 'atheism by establishment' that was ushered in by the French Revolution; of the red Reign of Terror; of the confiscation of the property which was held by the Church by as sound and sacred a title as that which is held by any religious denomination in New Zealand to-day; of Napoleon's despair of ever ruling a people bereft of religion; and of his consequent Concordat or solemn agreement with the Church, in the person of its visible Head on earth. This was a bilateral treaty or contract in which, in return for certain considerations which have ever been faithfully observed by the Church, France pledged its national honor to accord Catholics 'full liberty of worship', and to contribute to the support of the clergy and the maintenance of public worship an annual budget amounting to only a little more than one per cent. of the values appropriated by the State during the storm and strife of the Great Revolution. These payments and stipends were not, however, dependent on the Concordat. Twelve years before that treaty was signed, this partial act of justice and restitution had been solemnly pledged by the Constituent Assembly. The Concordat merely embodied the pledge of the revolutionary Parliament in a formal treaty between two sovereign Powers.

Freedom of association and of teaching was secured by the Act of 1790, by the Charters of 1815 and 1830, by the republican Constitution of 1848, by the Primary Education Act of 1850, by that of 1875 on superior instruction, and by the vote of the Senate on the conferring of degrees. For a time after the fall of the Empire at Sedan in 1870 and the suppression of the

Communards in 1871, the Church in France enjoyed comparative peace. During Marshal MacMahon's term as President of the Republic (1873-1879) the passing tranquility was not broken. Then the revolutionaries rose to power. Their watchword was given by Gambetta: 'Clericalism—that's the enemy!'—a cry which another Minister of the Third Republic (Briand) now voices in the new and more outspoken catch-word: 'We must make an end of Christianity!' It was a mighty fall from what was—considering all its circumstances—the relatively liberal Association Law of 1790 to Grevy's decree of March 30, 1880, ordering the dissolution of the various Jesuit communities throughout France. Another decree was published at the same time requiring all 'unauthorised' religious Associations to secure a legal sanction to exist, which sanction it was nevertheless rather plainly intimated—they were not likely to receive. Sixteen hundred lawyers entered a solemn protest against these decrees. They declared them a violation of French law, and pointed out that, by virtue of the 'droit public', religious congregations had the same right to exist as associations of any other kind, without special authorisation, and that the only duty which they owed to the State was due obedience to its laws. But the Government, urged on by the Freemasons, the Radicals, and the Socialists, had unsheathed the knife and was bent upon reaching the throat of the religious Orders. It was an open and undisguised war upon the Church in France. Orders were given to push the campaign of expulsion in every Department throughout France. Monasteries were closed—after four hundred magistrates had refused to perform the function of evictors; convents were besieged and taken by storm; nuns were driven at the point of the bayonet from the hospitals—many of them old and tottering and infirm—amid disgraceful scenes of official ruffianism, which were generally received with striking exhibitions of popular indignation. The Grevy campaign proved to be a highly unpopular measure. A swiftly moving procession of flabby Ministries followed—twenty-three in twenty years. Most of them displayed a disposition to use fang and claw against religion. But until the advent of M. Waldeck-Rousseau none of them hazarded a repetition of Grevy's rough-and-tumble crowbar campaign against men and women the head and front of whose offending was the faith which they professed and the noble lessons of Christian charity of which their lives were a daily sermon. A more ingenious mode of compassing the destruction of the religious Orders was then devised. The Waldeck-Rousseau Ministry imposed upon them—and upon them alone of all associations in the land—a special and crushing burden of taxation. This new form of confiscation is known in the history of legislative failures as the 'loi d'accroissement'—the Increment Act. It soon went the way of many another well-laid scheme of mice and men.

The 'loi d'accroissement' was followed in 1901 by the Associations Law. This was, in its general purport, Grevy's old weapon of 1880, but furbished up and sheathed in a decent showing of legality. At the time the Bill was before Parliament the 'Temps', one of the decenter of the Paris anti-Catholic organs, said:—

'The leaders of the Extreme Left make no pretence of denying that it is against the Catholic religion itself that they are making an attack. They proclaim aloud that the suppression of the Congregations, which they so passionately long for, will be, to their thinking, not only the first blow of the pick in the structure of the Concordat, but the first step in the work of the radical extinction of the religious spirit, or (as it is called) in the de-christianising of France.'

This is, in fact, merely a mild paraphrase of the actual demands put forth editorially at the time in the columns of the 'Radical'. We are now witnessing the development of the Freemason-Radical-Socialist policy of 1901. The Waldeck-Rousseau Ministry was, in the matter