

## THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

BY THE REV. T. LE MENANT DES CHESNAIS, S.M.

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### DEATH

**McGILL**.—Of your charity pray for the repose of the soul of Florence, fourth dearly beloved daughter of Patrick and Sarah McGill, who died at Christchurch on Thursday, October 10; aged 30 years.—R.I.P.

### MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET.

*Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiae 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, OCTOBER 24, 1907.

## THE CHURCH AND THE LABORER



**LAST** week there took place at the Anglican Synod in Auckland what—for lack of a better name—was called a 'discussion' on 'the Church and Labor'. Discussion implies collision of sentiment, the clash of fact and argument on fact and argument, like the clash of spear upon shield in olden warfare. But in the oratorical conference of last week there was scarcely, if at all, such a thing as the serious shock of debate. A number of speakers (most of them non-Catholic clergymen) dealt with the subject in a dilatory and superficial way, and along lines which,

whether strictly parallel or not, failed to touch each other on a level crossing. There was no definition of the somewhat vague term 'labor'. One of the speakers (Mr. Tillet) dealt with the designation, 'The Church', as the All Blacks dealt with the flying football in muddy ground; the clerical orators flew it as a toy balloon; none of them defined it; all of them apparently treated it as a synonym for the sundry hundreds of independent organisations, great and little, old and new, that Christianity is divided into to-day, and which no more constitute one corporate body ('The Church') than do the scattered nations of the world form one vast organisation called 'The Empire'. All the speakers were strangely reticent about the one ancient Church that has been, of all the creeds of all times, the friend of the laborer and the artisan. A rare opportunity for the serious treatment of a great subject was thus allowed to go to waste by those most interested in placing the Christian side of the question in its true light before the gathered workers. And in its upshot, the bout of oratory on 'the Church and Labor'—despite the earnestness and goodwill of the speakers—ended in a sort of mental impasse, so far as its ostensible object was concerned.

'Honest labor', says Dekker, 'bears a lovely face'. But when a large gathering of laborers and artisans assembled to hear the relations of Christ's Church to the worker set forth, it was, we think, a crying pity that such facts as the following were not placed before them by the Christian ministers who professed to deal with the theme: Lovely as is the face of honest manual labor, it bore the band of slavery till the Catholic Church emancipated it. Even in the early days of persecution, when people worshipped in secret in the catacombs, slave and master knelt side by side before the altar, equal in the sight of God and His Church. For her, there was no distinction of Jew or Greek, bond or free. History, too, recalls how the monks of the early Church ennobled and dignified manual labor, tamed the wild barbarian, and raised the foundations of modern Christian civilisation among the virgin forests and swamps of Continental Europe. The Church, too, gave to the toiler a sweet, holy, and independent home-life; threw the highest ecclesiastical dignities open to his children; saved him full many a time from the proud baron and the autocratic king or emperor who would ride rough-shod over him and reduce him again to the slavery out of which he had been slowly and painfully drawn. The Catholic guilds of the middle ages were, perhaps, the best protective institutions ever formed for the benefit of labor. Under them, the artisan long had his eight-hours' day. He had, for his time, high wages—represented by the high purchasing power of the modest coins that he won by his toil. Here, for instance, is a verse from the Percy Reliques which describes the golden age of the medieval worker in England:—

'I'll tell you what, good fellow,  
Before the friars went hence,  
A bushel of the best wheat  
Was sold for fourteen pence;  
And forty eggs a penny,  
That were both good and new.'

The artisan, too, was protected by his guild against arbitrary dismissal; he was insured against the ordinary accidents of life; he had the reasonable hope of one day becoming himself an employer; he was secure of his Saturday half-holiday, of his Sunday rest, and of many other festivals scattered through the year; and the low fixed rents of the time contributed greatly to his prosperity.

Even in the rough transition Saxon days, poor Gurth, the born thrall of Cedric was sure of his simple and abundant fare—even of his parings of pork. In later and better Catholic days, the farm-laborer had his inalienable rights of commonage and bosage—grass for his