

THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD.

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

SECOND EDITION—REVISED THROUGHOUT.

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MARRIAGE

DUNCAN—HERLIHY.—On October 16, at St. John's Church, Ranfurly, by rev. Father McMullan, Neil Duncan, of Katea, Catlins, to Sabina (Sis), youngest daughter of the late James Herlihy, of Patearoa.

DEATH

CLARKSON.—At Normanby, on November 3, 1907, Rosina Jane, the beloved wife of R. P. Clarkson; aged 39 years.—*N.Z.P.*

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, NOVEMBER 7, 1907.

SCIENCE AND PSEUDO-SCIENCE

ARLYLE 'pinked' with no gentle raillery the omniscient pretenders to whom the making of a world is no more a mystery than the making of an apple-dumpling. A flagrant example of this sort of pseudo-science is furnished by some contributions that have been appearing in a North Island daily contemporary. They are melancholy examples of unscientific dogmatism, undue assumption, of the mental rawness which fancies it sees into ultimate realities, and which professes to find the clearness of crystal where men of the calibre of Lord Kelvin and Louis Pasteur find mysteries deeper and darker than natural science can penetrate. The extremest of the shifting theories of some scientific men are gaily set forth as the fully demonstrated truths of science, and sundry hypotheses of evolution are declared to be shown 'in actual fact under the microscope, in the dissecting-rooms, in bottled preserves', etc. All this is, of

course, not science. It is unscientific romance. It is the pride and strength of true physical science that it 'demonstrates its teaching by means of observations and experiments, which can be repeated and verified practically at will'. It deals only with the aspects of material things; its instruments are the rule, the balance, the chronometer, and such-like standards of measurement; and its function is to describe the phenomena that it witnesses, not to undertake an explanation of the realities that lie beneath phenomena. Science is not a philosophy. The investigator steps beyond the frontier of exact science the moment he sets foot in the region of metaphysics. 'He has', says Dr. Aveling, 'left his balance and measuring-rod behind him, and finds himself in a new region of abstract thought, for which, in nine cases out of ten, his very scientific training and habit of mind have more or less unfitted him'.

Scientific theories have their proper use and purpose—which is strictly provisional. But to advance such speculations—as many callow dabblers do—as the demonstrated facts of science is to prove traitor to the principles of science; it is a violation of every law and canon of exact science. 'No ideas', says Merz in his 'History of European Thought in the Nineteenth Century', 'lend themselves to such easy, but likewise to such shallow, generalisations as those of science. Once let out of the hand which uses them, in the strict and cautious manner by which alone they lead to valuable results, they are apt to work mischief'. Fontanelle, D'Alembert, Condorcet, and Diderot were in their time (he adds) melancholy examples of the dangers of 'these hasty but brilliant generalisations', which 'did no good to the truly scientific cause'. They have left a numerous progeny in our day. Yet the movement among the ablest scientific men of our time is to get farther and farther away from the hard materialism of a generation ago. Even the Haeckelian school can only get away from the human soul by endowing every atom with consciousness. Huxley, for instance, in his 'Physical Basis of Life', described as 'utterly devoid of justification' 'the materialistic position that there is nothing in the world but matter, force, and necessity'. 'The higher mysteries of being', says Lord Rayleigh, 'if penetrable at all by the human intellect, require other weapons than those of calculation and experiment'. These are matters that are 'beyond the pale of science, though not beyond the grasp of reason'. And back of all the data of observation, back of all the phenomena of the material world, Lord Kelvin, with many other foremost scientists of our time, discerns the creative and directive purpose of a great Intelligent Being. And the devout Pasteur—one of the greatest scientists of any age—who died clasping a crucifix to his breast, saw the finger of the Creator in everything, from the stars of heaven to the tiniest microbe under the eye of his microscope.

'No pebble at my feet but proves a sphere;
'No chaffinch but implies the cherubim;
The hum of lily-muffled bee but finds
Some coupling music with the spinning stars.
Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush affire with God'.

'But', adds the poet, 'only those who see take off their shoes; The rest sit round and eat blackberries'.

Notes

Modernist Errors

The recent papal Encyclical on modernist errors—an interesting, grave, and lengthy document—will appear in full, in a translation, as a supplement to our next issue.

Social Suicide

In a recent issue, the New York 'Freeman's Journal' publishes melancholy figures as to the modern