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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 AT HOME AND ABROAD.

A BAD BOOK. THE pyrotechnic and sensational Marie Corelli has surpassed all her previous exploits in her latest work of fiction, entitled—Heaven only knows why—*The Master Christian*. It is characterised by her usual hysterical declamation, and by the low moral tone and unwholesome sensationalism and blasphemy which she has so successfully borrowed from Zola and Maupassant. Despite a verbal disclaimer, the new book is an attack upon the Catholic Church as direct and vulgar as Hocking's *Purple Robe* and as brutal and unfair and ignorant a travesty of the Vatican and high ecclesiastical persons as Zola's *Rome*. A reviewer in the *Outlook* aptly describes *The Master Christian* as 'the vulgar no-Popery tract, which seemed to be dead, come to life again in cloth, bound and gilt, as a six-shilling novel.' 'Its plot,' says an English reviewer, 'is impossible, its characters imaginary, its teaching injurious,' and its heartless reference to the domestic grief of a great English nobleman 'would degrade and disgrace any story but the one she has just published.' Undoubtedly the most shocking feature in this bad book is the introduction of the Divine Saviour as one of the characters. The Son of God made Man is dragged into the company of libertines, sensualists, men about town, and women with a low idea of womanly virtue, and into His sacred mouth are crammed some hundreds of pages of the airy rubbish and silly vamping and lurid imaginings which blister the pages of *Barabbas* and the *Sorrows of Satan*, and which form the staple of the topsy-turvy ideas of life and duty adopted by this curious but clever apostle of the 'electric religion.' Catholics will naturally be disgusted at her presentment of the characters of the Abbé Vergmaud and Monsignor Gherardi, whom she coolly sets up as types of the clergy of the Catholic Church.

Miss Corelli's idea—and her animus—in writing this book are sufficiently indicated by her declaration that it was her intention to get admission to the pages of the *Index Expurgatorius*. Her wish has apparently been granted. The *Daily News* Rome correspondent says: 'What all the papers say is that no author ever displayed greater ignorance of the Vatican and of the Eternal City. The Vatican journals themselves observe a discreet silence on the subject, but the Cardinals who compose the Congregation of the Index have decided to put the book in the *Index* so that it is now a sin for any Catholic to read it.' We trust that New Zealand Catholics will keep their eyes off the venomous pages of this bad book. Meantime it is pleasant to find so well-known a literary figure as Mr. Hall Caine stating that the general impression left on his mind by his long visits to Rome is that 'nothing could exceed the devotion of its worship, and, speaking broadly, the sincerity and the purity, and often the nobility of its priesthood.'

A LEWD fellow of the baser sort has lately 'DIRTY FOES,' been trailing his controversial coat-tails and cutting sundry drunken capers on the Donnybrook Green of a small provincial paper. His whoops and antics have had a disquieting effect upon the mind of one of our readers, who wonders why we or some other of the

clergy don't descend into the arena and give the combative cobbler—or whatever he may be—the father and mother of a (strictly metaphorical) 'batin'.' Good old Samuel Butler supplies a bit of wisdom which fits such cases to a nicety. He makes Hudibras say:—

' . . . That man is sure to lose
That fouls his hands with dirty foes;
For where no honor's to be gained,
'Tis thrown away in being maintained.'

Don Quixote—the Spanish Hudibras—took a somewhat similar course of action in his dealings with 'dirty foes.' He gave the following friendly counsel to his squire, Sancho Panza: 'Friend Sancho, for the future, whenever thou perceivest us to be any ways abused by such inferior fellows, thou art not to expect that I should offer to draw my sword against them, for I will not do it in the least. No, do thou then draw and chastise them as thou thinkest fit. But if any knight come to take their part, then will I be sure to step in between thee and danger.'

A FRIENDLY WARNING.

THERE are two particularly heartless classes of fraud practised on the green and credulous public. The one is that of the Spiritists, who, for a fee, profess to put a too trusting parent into communication with the loved child that has gone before. Catholics are happily seldom or never caught by the silly platitudes and the clumsy conjuring of the Spiritistic tricksters, did these even charm with the cunning of the notorious Mrs. Mellon. As a set-off, Catholics are the victims of a parasitic class that is without a counterpart among our Protestant friends. We refer to cert un-oily-tongued agents who perambulate the country at long intervals disposing of a heavy Catholic book or a particular piece of pious lumber at a price that varies from four to ten times its intrinsic value. The stock-in-trade of such adventurers usually consists of some easily-learned pious talkee-talkie, plus a 'sample' of a gaudy and corpulent book or of some gimcrack and more or less useless article of small first-cost, offered at a price which would supply a family with thirty to sixty volumes of the publications of the *Ave Maria* or the Catholic Truth Society, or one and a half to two years' subscription to the N.Z. TABLET, or other benefits which would be of real advantage to the Catholic home. Bleeding people through their most sacred domestic affections is, in all reason, a nasty trade; but what shall we say of the glib-tongued sons of Atanias who, by strenuous lying or a cheap affectation of piety, extort enormous profits out of the religious feelings chiefly of the Catholic women-folk of New Zealand, and then flit from the Colony with little fortunes in their fob? We have learned that some persons of this class are again touring the Colony. We have time and again issued fair and friendly warnings regarding itinerant agents of this class. A newspaper can give good advice to the best of its ability. When it has done so its duty is discharged. It cannot give good sense.

TOURISTS.

THE tourist season is close upon us, and soon the traveller from afar will be amongst us 'to look at mountains and catch cold in spouting trash on lakes by moonlight'—as St. George says in *Vivian Grey*. Once upon a time British youth 'went abroad'

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