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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.

THE
ANTI-STOKE
PRESS.

THERE is, for Catholics, a sweet significance in the attitude of the hysterical portion of the New Zealand Press towards the Stoke trouble. So long as the case was being whooped against the Marist Brothers, the anti-Stoke newspapers published columns of sensational reports, stuffed odd corners with rabid correspondence, and emphasised the whole with blistering editorial articles. But the whirligig of time brought swift revenge. The prosecution broke down in a way which the *N.Z. Times* describes as 'absolutely staggering.' From the emotional point of view all this was splendid 'copy.' But the triumph of innocent men over persecution was dismissed by those hysterical organs with a few brief and snappy telegrams supplied by the Press Association. The loud halloo of June-November dwindled suddenly into a still, small voice which was not the voice of conscience. We have looked in vain to some of the newspapers that took a prominent and discreditable part in raising the hue and cry against the Marist Brothers and in indecent and cowardly comments or insinuations on the cases while still *sub judice*, for any expression of editorial opinion on the happy termination of what some of them habitually referred to as 'the Stoke scandal.' The newspapers in question are themselves responsible for the widespread conviction which found expression in the editorial columns of the *N.Z. Times* (Wellington): 'It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that a certain section of the Press of this country wished above all things that these charges were true, and is disappointed in consequence.'

It is a singular coincidence that the same papers which sent up the most sky-piercing shrieks over the conduct of the Dreyfus courts-martial, were precisely those that took the most prominent and disgraceful part in aiding and abetting the rabid fanatics of Nelson in their endeavor to prevent the Marist Brothers securing a fair trial, and to have the verdict decided by an artificially created popular clamor. The American 'pious editor' of Lowell's *Biglow Papers* thus begins the first article of his political creed:—

I du believe in Freedom's cause,
Ez fur away ez Payris is;
I like to see her stick her claws
In them infarnal Pharisees;
It's wal enough agin a king
To dror resolves and triggers,—
But libbaty's a kind o' thing
That don't agree with niggers.

We have evidently among us some of the 'pious editor' class who believe in fair-play, 'libbaty,' 'an' things o' thet description' when they are 'ez fur away ez Payris is.'

ANOTHER
NEWSPAPER
VERDICT.

THE Wellington *Free Lance* says of the Stoke cases: 'No trial could have been stricter or more searching. Every possible effort was put forth to secure a conviction. The evidence was collected by clever detectives, skillful lawyers conducted the prosecution, and every care was taken to obtain a jury panel that could not be suspected

of any religious bias in favor of the accused. Some of the cases were heard before Mr. Justice Edwards, and some before the Chief Justice. And in each and every instance the result has been the same—a verdict of acquittal for the accused. Now there has been a disposition in many people's minds to believe the very worst that has been urged against these men, merely because they were members of a monastic order. In some quarters there has been an inclination to take it for granted they were guilty for the simple reason that they were Roman Catholic monks, and to hold them up to public odium and execration in consequence. But those who have followed the trials must now admit, however strong their prejudices may have been, that although the prosecution was skillfully conducted, it would have been surprising if the jury on such evidence had found any other verdict than that which they did. So contradictory was the testimony, that in one case it elicited from Mr. Justice Edwards the remark that he would not hang a cat upon it. . . . These men have submitted to the most rigorous tests the law could apply, and have emerged from the trial unscathed.'

JUDGE JEFFREYS is said to have decided ROTTEN STICKS. the guilt or innocence of accused persons by the size and cut of their beards. 'My Lord,' said one of his victims, 'if you measure consciences by beards, you have no conscience.' The little coterie of self-constituted Jeffreys in Nelson, and their mouthpieces in Press and Parliament, judged the Marist Brothers, of Stoke, not by evidence, but by the shaven chin and the cross and the long cassock and the other signs which proclaim them unpaid members of the great army of charity of the Catholic Church. It would be difficult to imagine tools better fitted for the work than those selected by the Nelson fanatics and the Crown to throw an air of decent legality over this discreditable persecution of the Stoke Brothers. Nearly all of the Crown witnesses belonged to the 'committed' or criminal class, who had been apprehended by the police and sent to the Stoke Industrial School by the sentence of the courts.

It was Cardinal Newman who said that a certain class of fanatics would no more dream of pausing to consider the character of the weapon which they use against Rome than they would of stopping to examine the geological formation of the stone which they pick up to throw at a dog. The nature of the weapon used against the Marist Brothers was sufficiently well known to their enemies in and about Nelson. It was a rotten stick. And it has broken in their hands. They and their blowing-horns in the Press passed over in significant silence the grave moral delinquencies which have been time and again laid to the charge of certain State Industrial Schools and other institutions of a similar nature, under Government control, in the Colony. And their maudlin sympathy with the caning of a youthful horse-thief in Stoke reminds one of Catullus writing an elegy, in heroic numbers, on the death of an impudent pet sparrow, and of Sterne shedding salt tears over the corpse of a kicking donkey.

A SPLENDID
REBUKE.

THERE is 'many a gem of purest ray serene' in the writings of Father Sheehan, the gifted parish priest of Doneraile. Here is one, from his *Triumph of Failure*—a splendid rebuke to those spineless, and by no means rare, Catholics who are

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