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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.

SOME lies have been described by Shakespeare as 'puny.' Others are said to be 'the raw material of poetry,' or 'those pretty arabesques which light up the plain surface of fact.' But there is only one way of describing the falsehood uttered by Miss Morant in the *Nineteenth Century* for November regarding indulgences: it is gross, palpable, direct. This imaginative lady permitted herself to pen the following wild story regarding Josef Mayer, who represented the part of Christ with great power and dignity in the Passion Play of Oberammergau in 1890:—

His Holiness has bestowed upon him [Josef Mayer] a pardon not only for all his own sins, past, present, and future, but also, with a truly lavish generosity, for those of all his children. It is with a face of genuine pride and wholesome satisfaction that this grey-bearded child of Rome shows to a few favored visitors the slip of paper signed by the Pope which means so much to him and his.

When this story reached these colonies we promptly denounced it as 'wholly untrue and calumnious,' and added: 'The imaginative writer in the *Nineteenth Century* is probably attempting to describe the customary papal blessing, with plenary indulgence at the hour of death, which the Holy Father frequently bestows upon devout Catholics, sometimes *proprio motu*, but far more frequently in response to a request or *supplica*.' It is tolerable safe to prophesy when you know. And our prophecy has been amply verified by a postscript in the *Nineteenth Century* for January to an able exposition of the doctrine of indulgences by the Bishop of Newport. From this editorial note we learn that immediately after the appearance of Miss Morant's bit of romance in the *Nineteenth Century* Cardinal Vaughan wrote the following letter to the editor:—

Dear Mr. Knowles,—Please read *Nineteenth Century*, page 824, twelfth line from top of page, a shocking case of ignorance or malice. The thing is just simply impossible. Will you print a short contradiction of it in your next issue? Yours sincerely,
HERBERT CARD. VAUGHAN.

The editor forwarded the Cardinal's letter to Miss Morant, and wrote:—'I assume you would not have made such a statement as you have done without a full and entire knowledge of the facts. May I ask you kindly to send me at once and in detail the proofs of it, that I may transmit them to the Cardinal?' Miss Morant replied saying that she had not seen the document herself, but that a friend had done so, from whom she derived her information, and who now wrote to her: 'I cannot quite remember the words!' A big percentage of the calumnies against the Catholic Church have no better foundation than this—the hollow sounding shell of common hearsay. And we cannot refrain from the expression of a regret that Miss Morant and others like her who launch gross charges against the moral character of their neighbors as M. Ollivier launched the French people into a ruinous war—with a light heart—do not take good old Dr. Routh's motto to heart: 'Verify your references! Verify your references! Verify your references!'

'Meanwhile,' says the editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, 'I had received through the kindness of another correspondent—who had been greatly vexed and distressed by Miss Morant's article—the subjoined copy of the document in question. I gladly publish it in correction of the misleading account of it sent me by Miss Morant. Mr. Lang, who is himself an Ammergau, had communicated direct with Herr Josef Mayer, the Burgomaster of Oberammergau, who had replied to him as follows: 'The document in question, with a portrait of the Pope, has been hanging in my sitting-room since the year 1890, when I received it. It is there for anybody to see or read who cares to and understands Latin. It is nothing but a "special blessing by the Holy Father," which blessing also confers, I believe, what we call an "Abliss"—but a pardon for sins to be committed is simply inconceivable.'

The indulgence runs as follows:—

'Beatissime Pater: Josef Mayer ad pedes Sanctitatis Vestrae provolutus humillime petit Benedictionem Apostolicam cum Indulgentia Plenaria in articulo mortis pro se et suis consanguineis et affinis usque ad tertium gradum inclusive, secundum formam ab Ecclesia praescriptam. Et Deus, etc.

'Vigore specialium facultatum a SS.mo D.N.P. Leone XIII. tributarum, S. Congregatio Indulgentiarum benigne annuit pro gratia juxta preces absque ulla Brevis expeditione, contrariis quibuscumque non obstantibus.

'Datum Romae ex Secretaria ejusdem S. Congregationis die 4 Julii, 1890.

(Seal)

TRANSLATION.

'Most Blessed Father: Joseph Mayer, prostrate at the feet of your Holiness, most humbly asks for the Apostolic Blessing with a Plenary Indulgence at the moment of death for himself and for his relations by consanguinity and affinity to the third degree inclusively, according to the form prescribed by the Church. And may God, etc.

'By virtue of special faculties given by our Most Holy Lord Pope Leo XIII., the Sacred Congregation of Indulgences has graciously granted the favor as requested without any issue of Brief, notwithstanding anything to the contrary.

'Given at Rome on the 4th day of July, 1890.'

The imaginative Miss Morant had promised a 'very sincere apology' to Cardinal Vaughan and the editor of the *Nineteenth Century* in the event of her statement as to the forgiveness of sins 'past present and future' proving to be untrue. On December 21 her tardy reply came—like the whining schoolboy 'creeping like snail unwillingly to school.' It contained a copy of the alleged forgiveness of 'sins past, present and future,' identical with that which appears above. But, says the editor, 'I confess that I cannot find in it the "very sincere apology" which, under the circumstances now established, might have been expected.' And after having published Miss Morant's letter, he in fair, set terms tells his readers, in the words of Cardinal Vaughan, that it was either 'a shocking piece of ignorance or of malice.' There is an obvious comment which might be written on this and such-like calumnies. But the law might stand in the way of its publication.

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