

THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

TWENTY-NINTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XXIX.—No. 12.

DUNEDIN: THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 1901.

PRICE 6D

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.

A THIRSTY LAND.

POETS frequently wax sentimental about the patter of rain upon the roof or on the swathes of fresh-mown hay. But a few days spent upon a cattle station in Queensland just now, and the sight of the death and desolation that are spread over the grassless wastes, would knock a good deal of the rain-sentiment out of their heads. 'Poetry!' exclaims a *vaquero* (cowboy) in a recent story; 'poetry about rain ain't worth a cent. Let a man that's losin' about thirty head a day write about "the patter of the rain-drops on the roof." He'll put beef into it.' The chief trouble about the rain in Queensland and elsewhere is the same as that about wealth—its unequal distribution. It is said that on a wide range of the Peruvian littoral not a drop of rain has ever been known to fall. So at least we are informed by the author of *The Peruvian at Home*. Queensland's average is tolerably high—especially on the northern coast, where it ranges from sixty to seventy inches a year. During 1898 over sixty inches fell in Brisbane. But the plains of the interior are sometimes swept by long and merciless droughts, such as that which has turned great tracts of country during the present summer into wild wastes of dust, covered over with the festering carcasses of horses, sheep, and cattle. Over an area of 1,219,600 square miles of Australia the average rainfall is under ten inches annually. In the North Island of New Zealand it ranges from forty to fifty inches; in the South Island from thirty to forty—Hokitika was sprayed with as many as 124 inches in 1898. Sierra Leone has a record of 312 inches in one year; Matoula Gaudalupe (West Indies), 292 inches; Vera Cruz (Mexico), 278 inches. 'The wettest place in England,' says Mulhall, 'is Seathwaite, 145 inches, and in the world Cherrapungi, South Western Assam, where the average for fifteen years is 493 inches, reaching in 1861 up to 905 inches.' This was about the climate for De Quincey, the opium-eater; for he says in his *Confessions*: 'I can put up even with rain, provided it rains dogs and cats.'

SLICING UP CHINA.

THE partition of China may be said to have informally commenced. Russia is tightening her grip on Manchuria, and the other Powers are securing, to the best of their respective abilities, 'spheres of influence.' And all the world and his wife know what that means. Almost two years ago this inevitable ending of the Chinese difficulty was foreseen by a gay rhymist of the *Sunday Chronicle*, who took down his harp and sang the following strain:—

It was a battered Chinaman,
A worried look he wore,
He had been used extensively
For wiping up the floor:
His heart was very heavy, and
His bones were very sore.

He was a heathen Chinaman.
To superstition prone,
A poor benighted infidel
Who worshipped wood and stone:
The joys of Christianity
To him were all unknown.

And righteous souls in Christendom
Were deeply pained to gaze
Upon such ignorance; they felt
Their duty was to raise
That heathen and convert him from
The error of his ways.

So Briton, Russ, and Mallyphist
Devised a pious plot
To lead him to salvation, and
They taught him quite a lot.
They speedily knocked spots off him,
And each retained a spot.

GLADSTONE once said to the boys at the OUR GIRLS: AN Hawarden Grammar School that the true OLD TROUBLE. business of such institutions is 'man-making.'

Our convent day and boarding schools discharge a corresponding function for a large class of our girls. But, unfortunately, current social standards and the fashion of the time require that a hopelessly undue prominence be given to the ornamental over the useful in the training of our budding maidens. The 'isms' are favored; the 'ologies' are patted encouragingly on the back; fragments of Livy or Uhland or Chateaubriand, and concentrated tabloids in the shape of figures, formulae, and facts from a dozen branches of knowledge, are stuffed into their brain-cells—against time; for it is an age of hurry, and our education methods are doing a frenzied and undignified sprint to keep pace with it. Sufficient time cannot, under present conditions, be given to that all-important factor of intellectual work, assimilation. The whole process is akin to that which produces in the Strassburg goose the monstrous diseased liver which, under the name of *paté de foie gras*, finds such favor with the *gourmets* of Paris. But the 'accomplishments' are ever set in the forefront. The social circle in which she moves will dance and sing around your brilliant executant or your smart sayer of airy nothings, while, in her presence, her less showy companion must be content with relative neglect, even though she may have in her mind the grace and refinement of a Margaret Roper. The remedy for this condition of things lies, in its last resort, with parents. Unfortunately, as a class, they have acquiesced in the puzzled-headed system which savors of the methods of the Circassian house-father who devotes his undivided energy to the cultivation of those physical qualities of his favored daughter which are likely to win most attention on the marriage market.

Cardinal Vaughan had the courage to tell the girls of a London convent school that he would very much rather they could cook a good dinner than play on the violin. Brillat-Savarin said some wise and many foolish things in his curious book, *Physiologie du Goût*. But there is an element of truth in his aphoristic saying: 'The destiny of nations depends upon how they eat.' In another place this *fin gourmet* says: 'The discovery of a new dish contributes more to the happiness of the human race than the discovery of a star.' 'Every nation,' says a recent writer, 'has the government and the cookery which it deserves. Thus, the French are the worst governed and the best fed people in Europe, for the reason that the majority of Frenchmen are perfectly indifferent to politics and keenly interested in food. The English are the worst fed and

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