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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.

THE CORONATION OATH.

In the days when the late Queen was a sweet young maiden of eighteen summers, and before the date of her coronation, Dr. Lingard published his remarkable *Letter to the Lord Chancellor* on the 'Declaration against Popery' which her Majesty had been obliged to subscribe in Parliament on November 20, 1837. The Catholic voice in England in those times was still and small—much weaker in volume than it is in our day. And times have greatly changed since then. Dr. Lingard's protest against Catholic worship being described on oath by the Sovereign as superstitious and idolatrous was wasted on the empty air. It was renewed under happier auspices in 1901, but on a wider scale and with greater effect. The most decisive action taken in the matter was by the Dominion Parliament. It has resulted in the appointment of a commission to amend the Accession Oath, and we may now hope that the degrading formula that occurs in it will never again be heard at the coronation of a British Sovereign. 'A large measure of liberty is, no doubt,' says the *Dublin Freeman*, 'permitted in the declaration [again Popery]. It might be subscribed by the Sultan or a Dancing Dervish; it would not offend the scruples of the worshipper of Mumbo-Jumbo; and a Brahmin or a Hindu might subscribe it without doing violence to his conscience. None of these venerable beliefs of the subjects of King Edward VII. will be offended by this declaration. . . Catholics are, at least, entitled to the same consideration as Jews, Hindus, Mahomedans, and Negroes. It is not a large claim. We shall not insult the intelligence or good feeling of the King by supposing that the declaration is anything but offensive to his sense of what is due to the Catholics of the Empire. And the offensiveness is perfectly gratuitous. There is no Catholic Pretender now to be warned off the English coast, nor is there likely to be. . . The time has come when the Constitutional Ritual should be purged of such gratuitously offensive language. Let the Protestantism of the Monarch be ensured if the doctrine of toleration has not yet reached the heights where the King's conscience may be allowed to go free. But it is not necessary to ensure the Protestant succession that a declaration should be extracted from the reigning Sovereign which millions of educated Protestants would refuse to subscribe, because of its false description of a faith which, if they do not share, they have at least the intelligence to understand.'

ON Monday next April Fools' Day will be again upon us. Exuberant youth pretty well all over the world will set up a general fooling. La Rochefoucauld said that no fool is so troublesome as the clever fool. April day passes off uneventfully because there are no clever fools about. They are all dead. Why the first of April was selected for all-round practical joking it is impossible to say. But the day seems to have been consecrated to the long-eared cap and jingling bells away back to a hopelessly remote antiquity. In Chambers' *Book of Days* we read the following: 'The Hindoos have in their Huli, which terminates with the 31st March, a precisely similar festival, during which the great aim is to send persons away with messages to ideal individuals, or individuals sure to be away

from home, and enjoy a laugh at their disappointment. To find the practice so widely prevalent over the earth, and with so near a coincidence of day, seems to indicate that it has a very early origin amongst mankind.'

At long intervals the dull and silly monotony of 'sending the fool farther' is relieved by a bit of deception that, in this particular branch of amusement, makes history. In such cases the usual retail folly is simply worked up on a wholesale scale. In the book quoted above we find the following story in point: 'In March, 1860, a vast multitude of people received through the post a card having the following inscription, with a seal marked by an inverted sixpence at one of the angles, thus having to superficial observation an official appearance: "Tower of London. Admit bearer to view the Annual Ceremony of Washing the White Lions, on Sunday, April 1st, 1860. It is particularly requested that no gratuities be given to the Wardens or their Assistant." The trick is said to have been highly successful. Cabs were rattling about Tower Hill all that Sunday morning, vainly endeavoring to discover the "White Gate."

On the Continent of Europe the practice of April fooling is very prevalent. In the Latin countries the unwary victim is designated—heaven knows why—an April fish (*poisson d'avril*, *pesce d'aprile*, etc.). A curious historic instance of successful April fooling in France is thus recorded: 'It is related that Francis, Duke of Lorraine, and his wife, being in captivity in Nantes, effected their escape in consequence of the attempt being made on the first of April. Disguised as peasants, the one bearing a hod on his shoulder, the other carrying a basket of rubbish at her back, they both at an early hour of the day passed through the gates of the city. A woman, having knowledge of their persons, ran to the guard to give notice to the sentry. "April fool!" cried the soldier; and all the guard, to a man, shouted out: "April fool!" beginning with the sergeant of the post. The Governor, to whom the story was told as a jest, conceived some suspicion and ordered the fact to be proved. But it was too late, for in the meantime the Duke and his wife were well on their way. The first of April saved them.'

Perhaps the most ludicrous and memorable practical joke of this kind—though not played on the first of April—was the famous Berners street hoax, which set all London by the ears in 1809. It was the work of Theodore Hook, whose turn for quizzing and practical jokes has almost overlain his reputation as a dramatic writer. 'By despatching several thousands of letters to innumerable quarters,' says an author before us, 'he completely blocked up the entrances to the street by an assemblage of the most heterogeneous kind. The parties written to had been requested to call on a certain day at the house of a lady, residing at No. 54 Berners street, against whom Hook and one or two of his friends had conceived a grudge. So successful was the trick that nearly all obeyed the summons. Coal-waggons heavily laden, carts of upholstery, vans with pianos and other articles, wedding and funeral coaches, all rumbled through and filled up the adjoining streets and lanes; sweeps assembled with the instruments of their trade; tailors with clothes that had been ordered; pastry-

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