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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 Long and Short of it.

The Apostle declared that the glory of a woman is in her hair. A good deal of man's stock of the same quality resided in the same quarter until these latter and more hurried days when he began to career over the surface of the earth with a sandpapered poll stuck into a hat of the chimney-pot or the 'boxer' type. In olden days the bard roamed through the land,

Loose his beard, and hoary hair
Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air.

So late as the days of Charles II. and Queen Anne, and well on into the Georgian era, lank-haired men and men with a natural head-covering as thick as a patch of gorse, alike eked out nature's tresses with huge wigs that fell in curly cataracts of corkscrew ringlets on their shoulders. Our judges and barristers still follow the ancient custom. The pig-tail of Nelson's days was a similar survival. Our male artists and poets and music professors still wear a sort of natural counterpart of the old bob-wig. The American Indian braves still stick to the ancient fashion of our race, and wear their jet-black locks in graceful 'falls' about their copper-colored necks. But Commissioner Jones, of Indian affairs, has just promulgated an ukase compelling the Indians in the realms of Uncle Sam to shear their locks and keep them shorn. And people are beginning to think that it is about time that the Republican party in the United States removed their pet donkeys from office and attended to more serious concerns than arranging the toilets of the Red Man by legal enactment.

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Except in the case of convicts and such-like gentry, no State regulation has ever been in force in Australia or New Zealand regulating either the male or female fashion of wearing the hair. Such things may be safely left to settle themselves, and the male fashion in heads among us is rapidly evolving towards a trimming which reproduces the shape of the Aberdeen turnip. Well, nature, after all, generally knows what she is about—and this is chiefly a Scottish community. The Anglo-Norman law of 1295 against the wearing of long tresses (called the coulin) by Irishmen gave rise to the Bardic song of 'The Coulin,' one of the sweetest in the country's literature. America began early to legislate about coifs and curls and flowing tresses. The New England Puritans could not abide, especially in women, those wiles of Satan. Perchance they felt, as Pope did at a later day, that

Fair tresses man's imperial race insnare,
And beauty draws us with a single hair.

They fined tennis-players twenty-five shillings for each 'offence'; they forbade smoking as vigorously as James I. of England—or as the Wahabee Arabs, who regard tobacco-puffing and idolatry as the unforgiveable sins; they regulated the cut of coats, the shape of skirts, the 'poke of bonnets'; but they made things particularly lively for be-wigged men and women that dared to wear their tresses as God and nature made them. In Massachusetts the magistrates declared that the wearing of long hair was 'contrary to the rule of God's word, which says it is a shame for a man to wear long hair,'

and that it was also 'a thing uncivil and unmanly.' And they called upon the elders to exercise vigilance so that the church members 'be not defiled therewith.' This, however, did not seem to have had a sufficiently satisfactory result. Sterner action was deemed necessary, and in 1675 the Grand Jury was empowered to hale before the courts 'such men openly appearing amongst us in long hair like women's hair, either their own or others' hair made into periwigs.' They were likewise ordered to hale before the courts all 'women wearing borders of hair,' and all who practise 'cutting, curling, immodest laying out their hair, which practice,' they add, 'doth prevail and increase, especially among the younger.

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But fashion overcame the stringency of repressive legislation, and periwigs and 'borders of hair,' and 'cutting, curling,' and such-like vanities were almost as common in New England by the close of the seventeenth century as they were in Britain and France.

Spiritist Frauds.

A cable message that appeared a few days ago in the daily papers ran as follows:—'Detectives in Berlin arrested Frau Rothe and other spiritists for mechanically producing deception known as flowers from the spirit world.'

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In all the cities of New Zealand little knots of eccentric or credulous people meet from time to time in dingy halls to witness the 'manifestations' of some cunning medium. We do not know if mediumistic frauds have formed the subjects of prosecution in New Zealand. But across the Tasman sea mediums have been 'presented at court' in charge of the police for various forms of heartless imposition on credulous 'believers.' Some time ago, for instance, a medium named Charles Baily was fined £5, with £4 4s costs, in the Fitzroy court, Melbourne, for a piece of flagrant imposition practised by him in pretending to call up the spirit of Dr. Whitcombe and inducing him (of course for a consideration) to prescribe for supposed lameness in Detective McManamy, who probably had never limped in his life. A short time ago another medium appeared before the same court charged with having induced a widow, by means of 'spirit-voice' from beyond the grave to hand her jewellery, money, and goods valued at £100, to make over to her, by deed of gift, property worth about £1000, and to give her a free trip to England.

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A lengthened study of the methods of the spiritists enabled us to be the first (or at least among the very first) to expose the *modus operandi* of Mrs. Mellon, whose 'manifestations' set all Sydney by the ears some years ago. Mrs. Mellon was at last caught *in flagranti* at a séance in the act of producing her 'spooks' by means of gauze and masks. Shortly afterwards another noted medium was one evening calling up ghosts and making them talk the usual ungrammatical twaddle in a squalid parlor in Gore street, Fitzroy. While supposed to be seated in a trance in her cabinet, a 'spirit,' purporting to be that of a male American Indian, stalked about among the audience in the semi-darkness. A young lady in the audience rushed at the 'spook,' tore off some light gauze, a black feather boa, and a black veil, and discovered—the medium. About the same time there was a similar, but more sensational