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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 Man that Spoilt the Music.

Two or three weeks ago the Melbourne cables in our daily papers made reference to the fact that something of a 'breeze' had occurred to ruffle the serenity of the Melbourne Methodist Conference during the discussion on the education question, and it was intimated that one of the members had even been openly accused of 'Popery,' but the account of the incident was otherwise very meagre, the information supplied being only sufficient to raise curiosity and whet the appetite for more. Our contemporary the Tasmanian *Monitor*, just to hand, contains further particulars of the episode, and they certainly make very interesting reading. It appears that the Conference had set up a committee to report on the Scripture lessons proposal, and the committee asked the Conference to adopt a resolution expressing deep regret that 'the excellent selection of Scripture lessons prepared by Royal Commission had not yet been brought into use in the State schools of Victoria,' and intimating that the delay was 'owing mainly to the political influence of what is known as the Catholic vote,' and requesting the Conference to 'instruct the Scripture Education League Committee to take into consideration the steps necessary to be adopted to counteract that vote, so as to secure the object in view.' Then the fun began. The recommendation of the committee gave every promise of a thumping 'No-Popery' debate, and the brethren were laying themselves out for no end of a good time when a misguided man from Ballarat arose and spoilt everything by flinging aside humbug and hypocrisy, and throwing at the heads of his astonished brethren chunk after chunk of the plain and brutal truth. Mr. Kirton, M.L.A., the delegate referred to, began by strongly objecting to the recommendation, and in place of denouncing the 'sinister designs of Rome,' denounced instead the chuckle-headedness of the committee who had been guilty of such 'an egregious blunder.' Warming up to his subject he declared that 'the Bible had been kept out of the State schools of Victoria not by the Roman Catholics, but by the week-kneed Protestants, and primarily by that secret society known as the Loyal Orange Institution ('no, no'). Speaking advisedly, he repeated that the Bible had been kept out of the State schools of Victoria primarily by the Loyal Orange Institution ('no, no'). It was so. He was speaking his honest sentiments, and, having looked all round the question, he was satisfied that there was not so much to fear from the Roman Catholic Church. He had yet to learn that the Roman Catholic Church was an organised political force.' Mr. Kirton continued his remarks in the teeth of persistent interruption, and made a really courageous and manly speech. He gave his testimony as a public man that he 'had never yet been able to ascertain that the Roman Catholic Church was an organised political force in their midst.' He knew the opposite to be the fact. He had 'found that not seldom it was a divided vote, that he had found in different electorates.' He opposed the resolution because it would, in his opinion, only tend 'to widen the gulf between Protestants and Catholics.' A bigoted brother ejaculated a pious 'Thank God' at this statement, whereupon Mr. Kirton turned suddenly on him and flattened him com-

pletely out: 'He had expected more charity from a church-goer than was contained in that interjection. They should be Christians before being Orangemen or Protestants.'

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Altogether it was a very remarkable deliverance and the sensation it created can be more easily imagined than described. As soon as the brethren had recovered from the shock they proceeded of course to pour out their wrath on the outspoken Kirton, and one rev. gentleman, a Mr Porteous, did not hesitate to describe him straight out as 'the avowed champion of Popery.' How he escaped being called 'a Jesuit' under the circumstances is the only thing that puzzles us. The Rev. Porteous was ultimately compelled to withdraw the violent expression he had used and he substituted therefor a plaintive statement as to 'the difficulty he had in trying to reconcile Mr. Kirton's confession of his position as a Methodist, Protestant and Orangeman with his attitude towards the committee's recommendation.' In that respect we can all sympathise with the injured Porteous. It is a big contract to try and reconcile Mr. Kirton's honest frankness with the customary crookedness of the loyal Orangeman. For ourselves we don't intend to make any such attempt but are content to remain quietly thankful that at least one honest Orangeman can be found and that the Methodist Conference and the Melbourne public got a little more light on the Orange Society and the 'Catholic vote' than they had probably ever had before.

The Bogey of an 'Organised' Catholic Vote.

To us the most noteworthy feature of Mr. Kirton's remarks was that they are so entirely sensible and so entirely true with regard to the state of things in this Colony as well as in his own. This bug-bear of an 'organised' Catholic vote is being continually resurrected, especially when a Parliamentary election is pending, by interested individuals to promote their own personal or party ends. Even as we write, a contemptible attempt is being made in Dunedin by a would-be politician to raise the same old bogey and secure his own political advancement by rousing the demon of bigotry and sectarianism in the next Parliamentary contest. In a sort of hysterical hotch-potch addressed to the *Otago Daily Times* this political 'reject' has the following:—'The Romish priesthood is the only religious organisation in the Colony which intrudes religion into politics, and they determine and have organised their religious block vote, and order the Catholic secular vote to be given to this or that person solely for the distinct furtherance of their religious objects.' So far as our readers are concerned it is quite unnecessary that we should contradict this utterly groundless and unwarranted assertion. There may be some, even many, outsiders who imagine that the Catholic Church is one gigantic political organisation, that at every election the candidates are, somehow and somewhere, all sorted, classified, and duly labelled; that somebody in some mysterious way conveys instructions to the rank and file of the Catholic body; and that thereupon the Catholic voters to a man vote according to the directions received. There may be, we say, outsiders who imagine that this is the case, but Catholics themselves know well that it is not so, and that no political organisation of any kind exists within the Church. There is a certain amount of cohesion, it is true—sometimes more sometimes less—about the Catholic vote, but that is due not to the iron hand of the priest