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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.

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., P.M.

LEO XIII, Pope

Current Topics

The Commonwealth and Ireland.

Senator Stewart, a Labor Member in the Commonwealth Senate, has given notice of a motion which, although it has been conveniently ignored by most of the daily papers, is yet undoubtedly of distinct and far-reaching importance. It is a motion protesting against the recent revival of legalised tyranny in Ireland by the Imperial Government and is worded as follows:—

1. That, in the opinion of this Senate, the suppression of public meetings in Ireland at a time when that country is practically free from crime of an agrarian character, and more especially at this most critical period in the Empire's history, when every endeavor should be made to cement all sections and denominations in a union of hearts, is not only a serious invasion of the free speech which is the birthright of every Briton, but is highly detrimental to the best interests of the British people.

2. That a copy of this resolution be forwarded to the Prime Minister of Great Britain and Ireland.

The importance of the motion lies not so much in its subject-matter as in the question of principle involved. The resolution has been objected to, strangely enough, by certain ardent Imperialists on the ground that Australia has nothing to do with the Irish Question and that it is presumption on the part of the Commonwealth to suggest to the Imperial Government what they should do in the matter. Coming from men who call themselves Imperialists this is certainly very remarkable. The very essence of Imperialism is that all the parts are interested in the welfare of the whole, and now that the parts are called upon to share in the burdens and responsibilities they are surely entitled to some little say, at least by way of respectful suggestion, in the management and government of the Empire. This principle has been already clearly and emphatically recognised in connection with the present war. When Mr. Seddon sent his famous cable, on behalf of the people of New Zealand, endorsing the Imperial policy in South Africa, it was recognised on all hands that the message was a historic one, and Mr. Seddon gained great kudos for having done the right thing at the right time and in the right way. Precisely the same principle applies as to the right of the Colonies to express an opinion on the present state of things in Ireland. It is surely the duty of all parts of the Empire to resist disintegration from within as well as from without, and a policy of coercion in Ireland undoubtedly tends to disintegration from within. According to a true Imperialism, therefore, the Colonies are clearly entitled to give voice to their feeling, in a respectful and constitutional way, as to the present action of the Imperial Government towards Ireland. If Mr. Seddon was justified in endorsing the Imperial policy in South Africa, the Commonwealth Senate are equally justified, so far as the principle is concerned, in condemning that policy in Ireland. To say otherwise is equivalent to saying that the moral influence of the Colonies must only be exerted in the direction of supporting, and never in the direction of checking or restraining, Imperial policy—which is surely absurd. Senator

Stewart's motion has unfortunately been placed at the bottom of the Order Paper, and so may never be discussed, but if it should come to be debated the result will be awaited with great interest.

Catholics an Easy First.

One of the surest signs of decaying vitality in any religion is to be found in the falling off in the attendances at its regular services, and, tried by this test, the Protestant sects appear to be in a very bad way indeed. The decline in Church-going among Protestants in recent years has been rapid, continuous, and universal—alike in Germany and in America, in England and in Australia, Protestant Churches have the same woful tale to tell of the ever-increasing number of empty benches and vacant pews. Even in Scotland, where the people were, a generation ago, almost universally religious, and where Presbyterianism was so strongly entrenched there now exists a most deplorable state of things. The Rev. Dr. Howie, of Govan, who is declared by the Edinburgh correspondent of the *Otago Daily Times* to be the greatest living authority on the subject of Church attendance in Scotland, recently submitted to the Free Church Assembly some statistics he had gathered, and, according to the *Daily Times*, these figures 'showed as their net result that there is in Scotland to-day a churchless population of 1,000,000, or 37 per cent. of the whole population.' Nor is this state of things confined to the grown-up people. Sunday school statistics show that the children are following only too faithfully in their elders' footsteps. Thus, according to the figures of Sunday school attendance recently published in the *London Christian World* the Sunday schools of the Established Church have a decreased attendance of 7000 scholars, the Wesleyan of 4500, the Baptist of 7000, the Calvinistic Methodists of 4200, and the United Methodists of 3000. The same dismal leakage amongst the children is apparently going on, on quite as large a scale proportionately, in the Protestant Sunday schools of this Colony. Only the other day the Rev. C. H. Laws in presenting the Sunday Schools' Report at the Wesleyan Conference in Dunedin had to point out to the Conference the extreme gravity of the condition into which their Sunday school work had now drifted. 'It will be at once noticed,' he said, 'that we have again to report decreases in almost every column. An occasional decrease may be accounted for by extraordinary circumstances, and may be nominal rather than real, but such a steady decrease, year by year, as our returns have shown can only be set down as ominous, and I cannot conceive of any way in which this conference could better serve the Church in this Colony than by patiently and thoroughly going into this matter. I find that the total decrease in scholars for the past 12 months has been 1024, or nearly 5 per cent., while the decrease in teachers has been 3½ per cent.' And there is every reason to believe that what is taking place amongst the Wesleyans is taking place, to a great or less extent, amongst all the other Protestant sects.

* In marked contrast to all this is the steady and robust vitality of the Catholic Church as everywhere shown by church attendance statistics, even when the enumeration is made by Protestants. In the United States, for example, the members of the Catholic body are, in the matter of regular church

Hancock's "BISMARK" LAGER BEER.

NEW ZEALAND'S
NEW INDUSTRY.