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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 Cost of the War.

The National Budget was delivered last week in the House of Commons by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the figures he submitted and the increased taxation proposed will bring home very forcibly to the British taxpayer the enormous cost of the present war. According to the official figures, the cost of the war up to the end of the financial year 1899-1900 was £33,000,000; at the end of the financial year 1900-1901 the total had reached £96,000,000; and, according to Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, up to March 31 last, the aggregate expenditure on the war had mounted to £165,000,000. This, be it remembered, represents only the direct war charges, and takes no account of indirect expenditure. Some idea of the amount of indirect expenditure which this struggle has involved may be gathered from the fact that the total expenditure of the nation has more than doubled itself in the last three years. In 1898-9 it was, roughly speaking, £96,000,000; and in 1901-2 it was £196,000,000. To meet this growing expenditure there has been a heavy increase in the burden of taxation every year since the war began. In 1900 the income tax was raised from 8d in the pound to 1s, and heavy duties were placed on beer, spirits, tobacco, and tea. Last year the income tax was increased to 1s 2d, and fresh duties of 4s 2d per cwt on refined sugar, and 1s per ton on exported coal, were imposed. This year another penny has been added to the income tax, and new stamp duties, together with duties on corn and flour, have been imposed. Even with all this increase of taxation, the anticipated revenue falls short of the estimated expenditure for the year by £41,000,000; and to meet this the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been compelled to issue Treasury bills for £9,000,000, and to raise a loan for the remaining £32,000,000. Nor is this increase in the burdens of the people a merely temporary charge, to be withdrawn as soon as ever peace is declared. Competent authorities have gone into the question as to what the future has in store in connection with the administration of the new territory which is being annexed, and their estimate is that even after the war is over there will be an annual charge of about £20,000,000, left as a permanent legacy which the taxpayers at Home will be called upon to meet. Little wonder that John Bull is looking round for someone to help him, and that the Imperial Government are inviting the Colonial Premiers, during their Coronation visit, to consider a scheme by which the colonies will be called upon to share in 'paying the piper' in all the Empire's future struggles.

Heavy as has been the mere money loss, the awful loss in men is much more serious. Month after month brings its fresh quota of victims and the terrible total steadily mounts up. In the official returns up to the 31st of January last the total casualties were set down at 86,459, but this does not include casualties among Colonials, civilians, and others of which the War Office takes no account. Nine hundred and fifty one officers and 18,735 men were represented in this list as having been killed in action or died of wounds or disease. That was nearly three months ago and there have been heavy losses

since then. Altogether it is safe to say that considerably over 30,000 officers and men have lost their lives in the present struggle, to say nothing of the wounded, or the large number of men who have had their health and usefulness wrecked for life through the hardships they have undergone. No friend of humanity who reflects on these facts and figures can do other than express the hope that a settlement may be soon arrived at and that the present negotiations may be the immediate prelude to an honorable and lasting peace.

Savonarola.

During last week a lecture on 'Savonarola' was delivered in the leading Baptist church in Dunedin by a clerical visitor from America in the person of the Rev. John R. Ward, of Chicago. As this is one of a series of lectures regularly given by Mr. Ward while on tour and will probably be repeated at all the other centres of the Colony yet to be visited by him, it may be well that we should make some brief reference to the matter and clear away some of the misconception and misunderstanding commonly current amongst our Protestant friends regarding the career of the great Dominican. As to the main facts of Savonarola's life there is little room for dispute. He was born at Ferrara in 1452. At the age of 23 he entered the Dominican Order in the Convent at Bologna, and six years later, in the year 1481, he was appointed to the Convent of San Maro in Florence. At first his preaching at Florence was an utter failure but, later on, his penance, zeal, and prayer were rewarded and his audiences outgrew the capacities of even the largest churches in Florence. The people flocked in thousands to hear him; the confessionals were crowded with penitents; the very streets were filled with the music of hymns and psalms. He gained so complete a hold on the hearts of the people that at length, though nominally only a Dominican friar, he became virtually and by his influence the lawgiver and ruler of the whole city. Then came the inevitable reaction. His enemies, both ecclesiastical and lay, whose bad lives he had denounced, accused him to the Pope of heresy, of which he was undoubtedly innocent; of disobedience; and of imprudent zeal. He was forbidden to preach. For a time he obeyed, but believing, and with no little truth, that the Pope had been grossly deceived regarding him, he considered the inhibition as void and entered the pulpit again. In this he undoubtedly erred, and gave his enemies real ground for appeal to the Pope. In 1497 Alexander VI. excommunicated Savonarola, not on the ground of heresy but solely on account of his disobedience. He was subsequently arrested, tried before the Pope's Commissioners by the magistrates of Florence, and sentenced by them to be strangled and then burnt. The sentence was duly carried out. Savonarola was done to death; the Medici and the licentious young nobles who had been driven out of the city returned, and 'things went on pretty much as before.'

The Rev. Mr. Ward's statement of the facts of Savonarola's life, is, so far as we could judge from the Press summary, reasonably fair and moderate. The only point that calls for criticism is his statement as to the significance of that life. The usual Protestant view is that Savonarola was the 'harbinger' or precursor of the Reformation, whose special merit was that he prepared the way for the great upheaval of Luther's