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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

Australia's Song-bird.

Everyone has heard of Amy Castles and everyone knows how naturally and pardonably proud Australians are of their latest queen of song. Miss Castles has had a brief but brilliant career. It is only three years ago since she first attracted notice as a pupil in a convent school in Bendigo. Through the influence and under the direction of the Rev. Father Robinson of Melbourne—himself a great musical enthusiast—the gifted school-girl was brought prominently before the public and was received with such enthusiastic appreciation that in a few months she had earned the handsome sum of £4000. Having thus provided the 'sinews of war' she set out for Paris to undergo a course of study and careful training in the niceties of the vocal art. She at once took up her residence with the Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Paris, and placed herself in the hands of the famous teacher, Madame Marchesi. All the Australian critics and authorities who had heard Miss Castles were agreed in regarding her as a pure soprano but Madame Marchesi decided that her voice was a dramatic contralto and proceeded to train her accordingly. For a time the young pupil deferred to Madame's supposed superior judgment but at length, feeling satisfied that the great teacher had made a mistake, she left her and commenced to study, as a soprano, under Monsieur Fouby. It is significant of the position which the convent pupil had attained in the musical world that her decision to leave Madame Marchesi was considered of sufficient interest to be sent as a cable message all over the world. Miss Castles continued under M. Fouby until last year when she made her first appearance in London at one of the Boosey concerts. Her London *debut* was a complete success and even the staid and sober *Times* predicted for her a splendid future and an assured place as one of the world's greatest singers. After a successful London season Miss Castles engaged with Mr. J. C. Williamson for a concert tour in Australia and for this she receives, it is said, the magnificent fee of £5000.

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On her return to Melbourne the other week Miss Castles was accorded a grand public reception, at which the Governor-General, Federal Ministers, and all the celebrities of the city took part. Her first concert was given on the following night, and the Melbourne and Sydney papers, without exception, are enthusiastic over her success. The *Sydney Morning Herald* says: "There was only one opinion as to the wonderful richness of her voice, and musical experts who are able to compare the present with the past are agreed that she has made substantial progress during the past two years in fixing the vocal tones and technique, and that further progress in the same direction will ensure a splendid career." And the musical critic of the *Melbourne Argus* thus describes her singing:—"Miss Castles's voice is still what it was when she left Victoria. It is a soprano of peculiarly captivating quality. The vocal tone is firm, broad, and resonant. Her notes are insistent in acoustic effect without being too incisively penetrative. The texture of the voice is—to use a term sanctioned by such a great musician as Thalberg—"velvety." The tones caress the ear rather than strike it. She gives you the idea that she must

sing though she die for it. Nature has favored her with a marvellous gift, and she revels in its use. When she sang in Melbourne three years ago she was immature, but her singing promised to improve under tuition. The promise has been more than fulfilled. She returns midway in her studies, to give Australians an opportunity to note her progress, and, having regard to the advancement already accomplished, we may confidently expect that on the completion of her training she will take a high position in the musical world. Miss Castles has very frankly offered herself for consideration in the role of a student. She might well have claimed a hearing on any terms, but it is as an advanced student of course that her efforts call for criticism. The audience was not satisfied with one song; Miss Castles was called and recalled several times. Miss Castles commences this week a very brief concert tour in this Colony, and we are sure she will receive everywhere the enthusiastic welcome to which her history and her merits entitle her.

A Word to Laymen.

There can be little doubt, we think, that however zealous and devoted our Catholic laity are in giving themselves to church work they are, in the matter of taking an active part in public affairs, seriously behind hand and decidedly apt to hide their light under a bushel. There are some bright and highly creditable exceptions, it is true, but, on the whole, our laymen have a distinct tendency to keep themselves to themselves and to imagine that they have fulfilled the whole duty required of man if they are faithful to their direct Church obligations and their religious duties. The result is that Catholics are apt to be looked upon as a somewhat negligible quantity in all that relates to public affairs, and thus we are deprived—or rather, we deprive ourselves—of our proper share of public weight and influence in the community. As Archbishop Ireland, the most progressive of American prelates, has put it: "Men judge by what they see. If the Catholic laity remain on one side quiet, saying their prayers, no matter how well they say them, if they do nothing else, the country will move along without them; will move along without being influenced in the least by them; will move along, believing that they are half dead, or believing that they take no interest whatsoever in the welfare of the mighty nation. And, if I do not mistake much, the American likes to see people at work for America. He likes to see tangible results, he likes a fair, courageous fighter, and if the Catholic laity of the country come forward with the full courage of their convictions, determined to do the best for their Church and for their country, he will say, 'Well, you are a good fellow and you ought to have your rights!'"

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In this Colony Catholics have everything to gain and practically nothing to lose by coming into closer social and civil contact with the rest of the community. We have known it tried in more than one country town in New Zealand by priests as well as laymen the result in each case has been that, one by one, old-time prejudices against Catholics were broken down, and the Church has received a measure of fair treatment—and indeed of generosity—from the local Protestant community which is not commonly her portion. There is really no reason in the world why our various local bodies, our borough and county councils, our public literary societies

Hancock's "BISMARCK" LAGER BEER.

NEW ZEALAND'S
NEW INDUSTRY.