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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET.

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religiosis 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 Education Question in Victoria :

The Catholics of Victoria, by their long-proven earnestness and consistency, by their solidarity, and by the resoluteness and immense ability of their great leader, Archbishop Carr, have succeeded in gaining the respect of all political parties and have won for themselves a recognised right to a voice in any proposed settlement of the perennial education problem. This right they have freely exercised and have thus been able on more than one occasion to defeat certain ingenious schemes which have been advanced the effect of which would have been to completely Protestantise the schools of the colony and still further aggravate the hardships and injustice under which the members of the Catholic body already labor. The Protestant leaders, who are anxious that the education system should be altered so as to permit of the precise form and measure of religious instruction which they desire being given but who are even more anxious that no concession whatever should be made to the Catholics, resent the legitimate political influence which the Catholic body has acquired and have devised a new scheme for overthrowing what they are pleased to call 'the domination of the Roman Catholic vote in regard to Scripture education in the State Schools.'

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The history of this latest development is recorded in full in the issue of the *Melbourne Advocate* just to hand. We learn from our contemporary that the new movement had its origin in a resolution proposed by Professor Harper, one of the most prominent Presbyterian leaders, at the annual meeting of the Presbyterian General Assembly held in Melbourne in November last. The resolution was in the following terms:—

'That the Public Questions Committee consider whether means cannot be devised to organise in the Presbyterian and other churches a permanent opposition to the domination of the Roman Catholic vote in regard to Scripture education in the State schools and kindred questions, and report to the Commission.'

The resolution, though strongly opposed by Dr. Rentoul and others, was ultimately carried, and after a considerable period of incubation the 'Public Questions Committee' have at last presented, at the sittings of the Commission just terminated, what they call an interim report. The report is as follows:—'In accordance with the instructions of last General Assembly, your Committee beg to report to the Commission as follows: "That in their opinion it is desirable that steps should be taken to unite all Protestant Denominations and organisations in a Protestant Union for the purpose of securing united action on great public questions such as Scripture reading in State schools. They request authority from the Commission to communicate with the bodies mentioned, and to take such other action as may be deemed advisable."'

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Professor Rentoul protested against a matter of such great importance being considered at a late hour and when there was a very thin house, and moved that it be deferred to the full General Assembly in November next, but this was over-ruled,

and the convener of the committee formally moved the adoption of the report. Whereupon Dr. Rentoul proposed the following very sensible and weighty amendment: 'That the General Assembly has for many years consistently urged upon the Government and the people the great wrong and hurt done to the young, mentally, morally and spiritually, and to the national well-being, by the exclusion of religious knowledge from the curriculum of training in the State schools, and has sought to convince the political leaders and the public that this is no denominational, sectarian, or ecclesiastical struggle. Further, that in pursuance of this aim this Assembly has repeatedly declared its desire to act in friendly concert with all the Christian Churches in securing such a settlement of the vexed question of the religious element in the training given to children in the State's schools as would satisfy all parties; and the Assembly cannot, therefore, approve the sectional and divisive action recommended in the committee's report. The Commission, therefore, instructs the committee rather to use its earnest efforts to attain such a solution of the question (whether by the Canadian system modified to Victorian conditions or otherwise) as shall ensure harmony between all the Churches and the approval of Parliament and the people.'

Contrary to the established practice of the Presbyterians, who usually make a boast of their readiness to let in the full light of day on all their doings, the discussion was carried on with closed doors, and after a somewhat bitter debate, in which it is understood Dr. Rentoul made a gallant fight for his proposal, the motion in favor of the new Protestant war policy was finally carried.

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There can be little doubt in any intelligent and thoughtful mind that Professor Rentoul's suggestion was at once the most statesmanlike and most Christian of the proposals submitted to the Commission. If there is one thing more than another that has helped to keep the baneful curse of secularism entrenched in our colonial education systems it is the 'sectional and divisive attitude' which the non-Catholic religious bodies have persisted in taking on this question. Speaking for New Zealand we can safely say that the question of making statutory provision for definite religious instruction in our schools would be brought within the range of practical politics in a month if even any one considerable religious body would join hands with the Catholics and pledge themselves to cast a solid and united vote for men who would support their just demands. Unfortunately our non-Catholic friends prefer the fatuous and ignoble policy of the dog in the manger. If they cannot get help for themselves at least they can keep others from getting it, and so they solemnly assemble for the purpose of establishing an organisation—not to secure their own demands but to prevent Catholics from gaining theirs! An attitude like that is surely unworthy of a man with the scholarly instincts and wide intellectual outlook of Professor Harper; and we cannot but hope that when the General Assembly comes to deal with the matter, as we presume in due time it will, wiser counsels will prevail and Presbyterians will set the seal of their disapproval on a proposal which is so entirely tactless, unstatesmanlike, and unchristian.

'On a Certain Silliness.'

Whenever a public controversy arises on any point connected with the Church's doctrine or discipline—and especially

Hancock's "BISMARCK" LAGER BEER.

NEW ZEALAND'S
NEW INDUSTRY.