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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

That Great 'Catholic Petition.'

A couple of months ago a most extraordinary and mysterious cablegram, headed in many of the papers 'An Important Catholic Petition,' appeared in the daily press of this and all the other colonies. The cable, as it appeared in the New Zealand papers, was in this form: 'An important Catholic petition has been presented to Parliament. It declares that the Pope and the sacred Catholic congregations claim jurisdiction in regard to ecclesiastical property in England amounting to £50,000,000. The monies were subscribed for one purpose, and afterwards diverted to another. The petitioners ask that secular and regular property be controlled by ecclesiastical commissions appointed from the clergy and laity. The petition adds that the difficulties in Ireland and elsewhere would be avoided if the Government exercised the power of veto in the appointment of bishops.' The message was certainly a puzzler, but Catholics in this part of the world are too well used to the vagaries of the cable-tigger to take any cabled items of alleged Catholic news very seriously. It was obvious at once to any intelligent Catholic that either this 'petition' was a bogus one, got up by somebody hostile to the Church, or that its purport had been hopelessly muddled and distorted by the 'cable crammer'; and most Catholic readers were content to leave it at that, suspending further judgment until fuller information was available.

The full text of the document and whatever particulars could be ascertained as to its origin are given in our Home exchanges just to hand, and from these it is abundantly evident that this precious 'petition' is the work of an enemy and of a very cunning and unscrupulous enemy at that. The anti-Catholic animus of the author is manifest throughout. Thus, after pointing out that the total value of Catholic Church property in the United Kingdom would probably come to fifty millions sterling, the author of this 'Catholic' petition goes on to say: 'No account of how these enormous sums are managed is ever given to the public. On the contrary, the present Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark, in a Pastoral to the clergy in 1899, declared that he was not bound to render any account of how he managed the monies of the diocese, except to God and the Holy See!' And he proceeds to lament that, as things stand, Catholics have no choice but to admit this 'absolute despotic power' of the Pope even though they 'know it to be dangerous to the country.' After some making some insulting insinuations as to how 'Roman Catholic ecclesiastical property in this Kingdom has been mismanaged, how trusts have been created, how secret trusts, forbidden by law, have been created, and how monies subscribed for one purpose have been diverted to other purposes,' he makes the generous intimation: 'We do not ask for new Statutes, or new penalties. We ask for safeguards;' and the modest safeguards he requires are that all the Catholic ecclesiastical property in the United Kingdom, the value of which he estimates at fifty millions sterling be placed under the control of ecclesiastical commissioners 'chosen by the Crown from the Roman Catholic clergy and laity,' that a Concordat be established with the Holy

See, whereby fixity of tenure shall be given to all parish priests, and that the Government shall avert 'grave difficulties in Ireland and other parts of the Empire' by securing the right of veto over the appointment of Catholic bishops. It is evident at once to both the Catholic and Protestant reader that the man who makes demands like that is no friend or loyal member of the Catholic Church.

And just as the matter of this 'petition' shows the animus, so the manner of getting it up shows the cunning and unscrupulousness of the author. In the first place the document is absolutely anonymous. No name or names are given, and there is no indication of any kind as to whence the petition comes. It was not taken round for signatures as *bona fide* memorials invariably are, but was sent to Catholics anonymously through the post with the following suggestion: 'This petition may be signed by one or any number of persons and then sent to the Member of Parliament for the division in which the signatories live, with the request that he would present it to the House.' It was posted, too, at the end of the week, so that the Catholic papers—all weeklies—would not be able to condemn it until it had got about eight days' start. The whole thing was a cunning and contemptible attempt to take unwary Catholics 'on the hop' and make it appear to the world that there was serious and widespread discontent among the Catholic laity of England. Of course the attempt completely failed. Yet in spite of the fact that this bogus memorial was absolutely anonymous and obviously anti-Catholic the Press Association agent at London does not hesitate to cable it out to us as 'An Important Catholic Petition,' adding the entirely unwarranted statement that the petition had been actually presented to Parliament. Fortunately all classes in the community are now pretty well on their guard against the absurdities of the cable fiend, and his latest freak, while it will amuse Catholics, will do no serious mischief even among our Protestant friends.

The Image of Christ on the Holy Shroud.

The Holy Shroud of Turin has long been remarkable not only for the interest which attaches to it as being the traditional garment in which our Redeemer was buried, but also for the fact that it bears on it an imprint or exact likeness of the Sacred Body of our Saviour. The authenticity of this last phenomenon has lately been the subject of a very interesting investigation by some of the leading scientists of Paris and the question is also receiving the careful attention of high scientific authorities in England where the recent publication of the phenomenon as a scientific fact has, according to the London correspondent of the *Otago Daily Times* 'created a considerable sensation.' Under these circumstances a few particulars—for which we are mainly indebted to the *London Tablet*—regarding the sacred garment itself and the present position of the question as to the genuineness of the imprint upon it, will probably be of interest to our readers.

The Holy Shroud of Turin, it appears, is a large piece of linen, four metres ten centimetres long, by one metre forty centimetres broad. It has turned yellow by the action of time, and was considerably injured by a fire in 1532. The shroud has belonged to the Royal House of Savoy since the middle of the fifteenth century, and has been known in Europe since