

THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

THIRTY-FIRST YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XXXI.—No. 21.

DUNEDIN: THURSDAY, MAY 21, 1903.

PRION 6D

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 Victorian Strike

The Victorian railway strike has happily ended. The loco-wheels spin round again, and the State's disorganised traffic is gradually resuming the even tenor of its way. The strike makes history as being, perhaps, the only 'call-out' in the story of the labor movement that was wholly unconnected with questions of wages or conditions of work. It paralysed, for the time being, the internal and external trade of Victoria, cost the State some £10,000 a day while it lasted, inflicted serious hardships on the poor by the partial cessation of factory and other employments and the greatly enhanced cost of living, and has resulted in making the last state of the strikers themselves worse than the first.

Kings alone formerly made war—this sacrosanct right was one of their little perquisites. For some decades after the rise of constitutional monarchies, Ministries succeeded to the function of national blood-letters. Then for a time—so far as Europe was concerned—the Rothschilds took a hand in the game. But during and since 1870 the great daily papers have been the arbiters of war and peace. For this reason Mr. Labouchere recommended the poisoning of newspaper editors, as a precautionary measure of public safety, when any grave trouble begins to arise between two nations. The big Australian dailies, which represent the capitalist interest, seem to have been the chief mischief-makers in connection with the recent railway troubles in Victoria. The difficulty that cropped up between the railway unions and the Government was capable of easy and pacific adjustment. But a large class of secular dailies cannot see the flicker of a small fire without jabbing a poker into it, pouring the crude petroleum of their murky thought upon it, and warming themselves at the blaze. They hastened from the outset to fan into a public crisis what began, and might have ended, as a passing departmental difficulty; they obscured the issues by party watchwords and much whooping and view-hallooing; they needlessly aroused angry passions on both sides; and their action set labor and capital for the time being at each other's throats over a question that did not properly belong to the domain of either. In public ferments sane people try to keep their feet warm and their heads cool. But the atmosphere with which the Australian capitalist press surrounded the railway dispute was not suited to cool thinking. It was as irritant as if charged with vapor of ammonia. To this circumstance were, no doubt, in great part due the needless bluster and the lamentable want of tact on the part of the Victorian Ministry which ended in that angry and peremptory ultimatum to the unions, when the whole question in dispute—the legal value and interpretation of Railway

Regulation No. 33—could and ought to have been settled by the simple resort of a friendly test-case in court, or set at rest beyond even the forlorn-hope appeal of a strike by the legislative voice of the very Parliament which was specially summoned to deal with the crisis. 'No,' said the Yankee quack to the anxious mother, 'I can't cure your boy's jaundice. But let him take this bottle. It'll give him fits. An' I'm death on fits.' The Victorian Ministry seems to us to have been a contrivance of the 'fits' from which the State has just been suffering. And we are by no means disposed to add a contribution to the 'cords of glory' which mostly party newspapers have piled upon them over the termination of this strange, eventful strike.

There can be no dispute as to the necessity and benefit of union among the workers. It has raised them up morally, mentally, and socially, improved their wages, shortened their hours of toil, brought about conciliation and arbitration in trade disputes, and ended those inhuman conditions of labor that made factory life in England a form of slavery from the early days of the industrial revolution till close on the middle of the nineteenth century. There should be no restriction on the workers' right of association beyond those that the service of the State and the best interests of the public clearly demand. But a strike is a dangerous weapon. It claps a brake on the wheel of national progress, it commonly furnishes an occasion for bitter enmities and grave disorder, and it usually inflicts hardships upon innocent poor who lie outside the scope of its immediate interests and operations. Like the war of rifle-bullets and shrapnel-shells, it should be entered upon only as the last remedy for serious wrongs when all other reasonable means have failed. In his 'Political Economy,' (one of the Stonyhurst Manuals of Catholic Philosophy), Mr. Charles S. Devas says:— 'Strikes are only justifiable when they aim at some benefit for the workmen which it is unjust in the master to refuse, and which can only be obtained in this way; and it is only too unlikely that these two conditions will not be fulfilled, and that the strike will in consequence be an injustice. And in some industries and employments which minister to the daily wants of society, strikes produce such inconvenience, that if they became frequent, no civilised Government could endure them: for example, general strikes of coal-miners, or dock-workers, or even local strikes of workers on railways, or tramways, or in gas-works.' It would be difficult to justify, on any grounds, the railway strike that has just come to an end in Victoria. But now that the state of war is over, men of prudence will find only words of condemnation for the undignified exultation and the intense party bitterness with which a section of the Victorian daily press adds a fresh and needless aggravation to a situation that requires a judicial frame of mind, tempered with that mercy which seasons justice.

Hancock's "BISMARCK" LAGER BEER

NEW ZEALAND'S
NEW INDUSTRY