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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.

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

A Fiji Incident

According to Chesterfield's maxim, 'the scholar without good breeding is a pedant, the philosopher a cynic, the soldier a brute, and every man disagreeable.' It is a pity that our New Zealand Parliamentarians or their guides did not remember this on the occasion of their recent visit to Father Rougier, his confreres, and his tribesmen at Naililili, in Fiji. As it was, their treatment of the Catholic missionaries and their hospitable people was marked by an exhibition of boorish disregard of good manners that must have left in the minds of the bronze-skinned islanders a contemptuous estimate of the tact and social standing of the law-makers of New Zealand and their travelling friends. An unpleasant significance can hardly fail to be locally attached to the incident by reason of the fact that one of the leaders of the expedition adopted (as reported by the cables) a strongly partisan attitude towards the Catholic party during the course of the agitation about the alleged holocaust of Wesleyan Bibles at Naililili—an agitation which began in a hurricane and ended in an 'audible smile.' We have awaited an explanation of this wretched incident. None has been forthcoming; and from private sources we have learned that the following account, by the special correspondent of the 'Otago Daily Times,' is, so far as it refers to the unpardonable slight cast upon Father Rougier and his people, quite correct.

'We landed,' says the writer, 'at Naililili Mission Station. This is the scene of the now historical Bible-burning episode. Here a rather unfortunate incident occurred, for which, however, none of the New Zealand party were in any way responsible. Word had been previously sent by the Colonial Secretary to Father Rougier, head of the mission, notifying him of our intended visit, and that our party would land their on the way up to Nanvuso. As we drew near we could see the Union Jack and other flags waving gaily over the mission buildings, and an abundance of refreshments and a native brass band were awaiting our arrival, and we could see from the launch that extensive preparations had been made to hospitably entertain the party. Instead of landing, as intended, the launch was slowed down, and Mr. Duncan, the Union S.S. Company's Suva agent, shouted to Father Rougier and his two confreres, who were awaiting us at the landing, that we would call on our return, and the launch steamed on up-stream. When we returned to Naililili there was no band to dis-course sweet music, no refreshments, no flags flying, and Father Rougier and his confreres were conspicuous by their absence. Instead of a pleasant welcome, as antici-

pated, we saw only a few sullen-looking Fijians. (These, by the way, were from another district, and had come to sell curios to the visitors. 'The local natives all stood by the missionaries in their protest against this unpardonable breach of faith. Ed. 'N.Z.T.'). The reason given for not carrying out the original programme was that the river was rapidly shoaling, owing to the ebbing tide, and if a halt was made, as originally intended, the launch would have been unable to make Nanvuso. Had this explanation been given to Father Rougier on our upward journey, as it undoubtedly should have been, a great deal of irritation would have been avoided. Apart from this incident, which our party deplored very much, a most pleasant day was spent on the Rewa.'

It will be admitted that Father Rougier and his people administered a severe but well-merited rebuke to the inconsiderate and ill-mannered visitors who were directly or indirectly responsible for this grievous offence against the laws of hospitality and good breeding.

The French Penal Code

Lecky sums up in one contemptuous sentence the character of the groups of stunted and knock-kneed politicians that have ruled the destinies of France since the days when the Second Empire met its death on the field of Sedan. In his 'Democracy and Liberty' (vol. i, p. 43), he says of them: 'Few French Governments have produced or attracted so little eminent talent, or have been, for the most part, carried on by men who, apart from their official positions, are so little known, have so little weight in their country, and have hitherto appealed so feebly to the imagination of the world.' They have waged a constant and fatuous war against the Church and against some of the natural rights of man that were respected even during the whirling storm and fury of the great French Revolution. The persecution of the Church reached an acute stage during the late administration of M. Waldeck-Rousseau. It has culminated in the bitter, far-reaching, and relentless proscription and spoliation which have marked the rule of his successor, M. Combes. M. Waldeck-Rousseau was a mere opportunist—a political marionette that had to dance and posture as his violent Republican, Radical, and Socialist manipulators pulled the string. He is by religion a Protestant. He was a persecutor of nuns, yet his daughter is a pupil in a convent in Rome, and his wife was recently a patient in one of the hospitals conducted by the Sisters in Paris. Like his predecessor, M. Combes is also an opportunist. He is worked by the same 'machine' and is bound to serve his anti-clerical masters by a course of proscription, confiscation, and exile for priests and nuns. Like Russell Lowell's 'pious editor,' he can sing:

'It ain't by principles nor men
My prudent course is steadiest.'

Pliancy, and not political principle, directs his policy.

Hancock's "BISMARCK" LAGER BEER.

NEW ZEALAND'S
NEW INDUSTRY.