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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

The Great Land Bill

'And one by one in turn, some grand mistake
Casts off its bright skin yearly, like the snake.'

The 'grand mistake' of the British Government in Ireland was the substitution of the feudal for the old clan system of land tenure in Ireland after the days of the Violated Treaty of Limerick. That great blunder is, it is fervently desired, to be remedied by the great Land Bill which brings more of hope for the most distressed country than any measure which has been tabled since the connection between the two countries began over seven centuries ago. At present it is, so to speak, upon the anvil of the House and is being battered and shaped by the sledge-hammer of discussion. What its final form will be nobody but a prophet or the son of a prophet can at present say. One point of vital importance has, however, been secured. Mr. Windham's proposal for a perpetual rent charge has been abandoned in committee. But another illiberal provision has been allowed to remain: namely, that the amounts of rent-reduction under the new Act shall be only between ten and thirty per cent for second-term rents, and between thirty and forty per cent for first-term rents ('First-term rents' mean rents that have been fixed once, and 'second-term rents' mean rents that have been revised a second time, by the Land Courts since the passing of Mr. Gladstone's Land Act in 1881.) Mr. Redmond's amendment to abolish the maximum limit of reduction, and to extend the minimum, was rejected last week by 217 votes to 176. If this clause be allowed to remain in the new Act it will work a great hardship on a large number of rack-rented and other estates in Ireland where the haphazard decisions of more or less incompetent Land Courts made paltry and inadequate reductions and enabled the landlord to squeeze a heavy rental on values created by the toil and sweat of the tenant farmer.

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To the Irish tenant farmer the present Bill, halt and lame though it may be, offers a way out of the evils of a system of dual ownership that has long been intolerable. As to the landlords: by far the greater part of them are the descendants and heirs of the old fox-hunting, loud-swearing, heavy-listed, hard-drinking, roystering squires who beggared themselves and their tenants and left to their children legacies consisting of the most part of debts and mortgages. Land in Ireland has long been an asset of fast-diminishing value. If estates were put up at auction to-day and sold for their market value, we should witness a repetition of the bargain-counter transactions that took place under the operations of the Encumbered Estates Act in 1851. To the Irish landlords, then, the new Act will be a gift of the gods—a golden windfall poured into their expectant

lap by a new M'Lady Bounty. But they are the daughters of the leech, and they will keep on crying: 'More, more.' 'It may be,' says London 'Truth' of May 7, 'that we are wise in agreeing to pay blackmail in order to free Irish tenants from their landlords. But we must not run away with the notion that we are not paying it. Let us suppose a landlord with an estate bringing in £1000 per annum net—i.e. £1000 after deducting 10 per cent for cost of management, etc. Most estates in Ireland are heavily mortgaged. We will suppose there is a mortgage of £18,000 on this estate, bearing 4½ per cent interest. This would absorb £810. The income of the landlord would consequently be £190. For this estate he receives twenty-eight years' purchase on net annual value—i.e. £28,000. If he pays off the mortgage there remains £10,000, and this at 3½ per cent would bring him in £350. His income, therefore, becomes £350 instead of £190. But the market value of Irish estates is certainly not more than twenty years' purchase. The real value, therefore, of an estate bringing in £1000 a year is, at most, £20,000. The tenant pays five years' purchase in addition to market value, and the taxpayer three years' additional purchase, or, in other words, the landlord receives a present of £8000 for being good enough to sell his estate. We are bound to give the Irish landlord a substantial equivalent to what he derives from his estate. In the case of mortgaged estates he gets more than the equivalent. So does he when the estate is not mortgaged, in the shape of better security. In strict justice this is almost as absurd as it would be to give the owner of a mine returning an income of £1000 on an investment of £10,000 a sum sufficient to return him the £1000 in gilt-edged securities. It seems to me that, by parity of reasoning we ought to have made good to every Irish landlord whose rents were mulcted in the Land Courts, a sufficiency of Consols to make up the reduction in his income.'

The Kishineff Atrocities

The great volcanic outburst of Krakatoa in 1883 set up a gigantic ocean-wave which swept around the entire earth. In an analogous way the atrocities of the Turkish irregulars (the Bashibazouks) in Bulgaria a few years previously (in 1876) aroused a tidal-wave of horror that circled round and round our globe. In two provinces alone (those of Philippopolis and Tinnova) 58 villages were destroyed in a short time and 12,000 persons—men, women, and children—were massacred with every accompaniment of savage ferocity. Mr. Disraeli then 'held the ribbons' in the British Parliament. He was the hand and champion of the Turkish Government, sneered with superior credulity at the reports of outrage and massacre, pool-pooled them as mere 'coffee-house babble' and cracked odious jokes about Oriental methods of despatching criminals to the Land of the Hereafter. But the country was in a virtuous mood. It rose up in an incandescent glow of indignation against

Hancock's "BISMARCK" LAGER BEER.

NEW ZEALAND'S
NEW INDUSTRY