

FEATURES OF THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

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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 Justitiae causam promoveri per vias Veritatis et Pacis.

LEO XIII, P.M.

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, Pope.

The New Zealand Tablet

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 1925.

FREEMASONRY

DURING the past week we were treated by a daily paper to a mild and by no means accurate apologia for Freemasonry, and, as the topic is always cropping up in one shape or another, a few remarks concerning the Catholic objections to this secret society may be apposite. The propaganda is perhaps more insidious to-day than ever. If it has not yet reached our own country, we know of two English-speaking nations in which in recent years attempts are being made to induce Catholics to join the Lodges. As we shall explain presently, there is no question about the Catholic attitude. The Church has forbidden her children to become Freemasons, and there is no exception. A Catholic who has given his name to a Lodge cannot go to the Sacraments. He is simply outside the pale.

If persons in high places set the fashion for non-Catholics, it is well to remember that King George is not a Mason, and that King Edward cut off his Masonic associations when he came to the Throne. Non-Catholics who ought to know what they are talking about agree with us in holding that no member of any secret society ought to be allowed to hold a public position. Professor Robison, who had attended many meetings of the Lodges in Belgium, Germany, and France, came to the conclusion that "not only are secret societies dangerous, but all societies whose object is mysterious. The whole history of man is proof of this position. In no age or country has there ever appeared a mysterious association which did not become a public nuisance." France supplies a proof of his words. We all know how the

scandal of the *fichés* (index slips) was exposed there twenty years ago, and the world learned that the whole French army was involved in a network of espionage organised by the Freemasons. Officers who were true to their religion or who sent their children to Catholic schools, were indexed and duly victimised by this "harmless" society. In the editorial to which we have referred, our local editor had, of course, a word to say about Mussolini, who in addition to saving Italy from Bolshevism saved it from Freemasons. But long before Mussolini's time events had come to light to show that the Lodges were undermining the army and using it to supply jobs for their friends. Mussolini was hardly heard of in 1913, when General Spingardi, the Minister for War, declared war on the Freemasons because of their baneful influence on both army and navy. At that time the Minister's action was applauded by the Italian press, and it was openly pointed out that there must be a conflict between Masonic principles and military discipline. The present Government has only done effectively what was then begun; and its beginning and completion were undertaken for the safety of the country. In other countries of Europe a similar state of things has existed, and there is no need to produce proofs that Portugal was brought to its present plight by the same underground forces. If we are told that British and American Freemasons are quite different from the Continental brand, we ought to remember that English-speaking Masons who ought to know tell us another story. But, in any case, the objections of the Church apply to features of the society which are certainly found everywhere. She objects to Freemasonry as a sect inculcating theism and indifferentism, from which logically follows rejection of the divine claims of Christianity; she condemns the secrecy of the aims and methods, whereby the lower members are obliged to support what is hidden from them, and possibly may be evil; she cannot sanction the confirmation of this position by an oath; and she recognises the solidarity between English-speaking Masons and the nefarious Continental Lodges. For these reasons, any one of which would suffice, the Church forbids Catholics to become Masons under pain of excommunication. The prohibition is absolute, and it is founded on clear principles. If we are asked, as we have been, if a Catholic may be a Freemason, there is but one answer: a categorical NO!

According to an Indian newspaper, the Anglican Bishop of Calcutta, preaching at the Annual Masonic Service, denied that Freemasonry is a religion. A standard work of Freemasonry by Churchward, however, asserts emphatically that it is "the old time religion of the world, without dogmas or sects. Masonry upholds belief in God as the architect of the universe, and asserts that this limited belief is sufficient, in this manner opposing all religious sects and creeds." By way of comment on the question we quote Father Hull, in the *Bombay Examiner*:—

"But in allowing that Freemasonry is not

sectarian, at least we must maintain that it is anti-Christian. For according to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, Christ is the one Saviour of the world, and belief in His redemptive office is the one sole basis of salvation. To deny this doctrine of Christianity is to repudiate Christianity itself, and to offer to mankind a religion which claims to satisfy all man's requirements without Christianity.

"The tolerance with which Freemasonry admits Christians to membership, without requiring them to repudiate their faith, cloaks over the disguises, but does not efface its constitutionally anti-Christian character.

"When a Christian joins the Freemasons he does not necessarily give up his own belief in Christianity. But by enrolling himself in a society which holds the anti-Christian principle that Christianity is not necessary, he is distinctly disloyal to Christianity.

"To take an analogy. No Englishman who believed in the authority of the king would join a Socialistic society which denied the authority of the king. For such a society is by its very nature an enemy to the king, and it is a breach of loyalty to give countenance or patronage to it. In the same way no Christian, believing as he does in the divine character of Christianity, and in the necessity of being a Christian, can without disloyalty join or patronise a society that professes to offer a religion which is complete without Christianity, and repudiates the divine character of Christianity, and denies the necessity of being a Christian. But such disloyalty is a sin against religion; and for this reason the Church condemns it.

"This matter is well illustrated as follows:

"A correspondent, 'Once a Mason,' in a letter to the *Church Times*, tells the following story:—"Many years ago when I belonged to a Lodge," says the writer, "I was at a Masonic banquet when the chaplain ended the grace with the words 'through Jesus Christ Our Lord.' For this inadvertence (!) he was sternly taken to task by the Worshipful Master. That was the time when we were fighting the battle against undenominational religion, and I perceived, as I still maintain, that a Catholic could not consistently associate himself with a system which professes a religion that forbids mention of the Name that is above every name. So I at once resigned my membership of the Craft, and the chaplain also resigned. The brethren solemnly rebuked me for plainly stating to the W.M. the reason of my withdrawal.' Such an incident as this is a further testimony to the wisdom of the Church's prohibition against Catholics joining Freemasonry."

I must strive with all my heart to overcome—but if I don't succeed, not petulance, not anger, not bitterness, but contrition, humility, and courage.—Father Dignam, S.J.

IRISH COMPETITIONS

The date for the Irish History Competitions is December 15. Please send in applications for examination papers immediately.

Ed. N.Z. Tablet

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