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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

Inspecting Our Schools

From the time of Father Cummings the North Canterbury Education Board has been wearily besought to undertake the inspection of the Catholic schools in the district that is under their jurisdiction. Till last week their reply was a monotonous refusal, aggravated in some instances by an altogether needless display of high temperature in discussion. We have now at last the pleasure of congratulating them on acceding, though so tardily, to the reasonable and repeated requests of the Vicars-General of the Christchurch diocese. Only one Education Board in New Zealand now stands in opposition to the Catholic demand. It will, we assume, be again approached on behalf of the Catholic schools in its district. The motto 'nil desperandum' ('never despair') has been translated: 'Never mind; at them again!' The constancy of purpose and the persistent policy of 'pegging away' in the face of every discouragement, displayed by the two Vicars-General of Christchurch, have had their reward. And their success furnishes a good leverage for a fresh application to the last Education Board that still offers a churlish refusal to the claim for the inspection of Catholic primary schools.

The New Syllabus

It is a sound axiom in education to let the child's brain go at an easy pace in the early years of its life. Professor Huxley, lately deceased, even went so far as to say that a boy's education should not begin till his tenth year. At any rate, 'racing' a child's brain, like 'racing' a gas engine, usually leads to rapid wearout and an early and inglorious stop. The elaborate system of cramming devised in our new State school syllabus may have been merely intended to create a tribe of 'infant prodigies' in New Zealand. It would be much more likely to work havoc among 'young idea' by developing the internal structure of their brain at a faster rate than its external growth and general development. It may now be regarded as certain that the cumbrous and unworkable system devised by Mr. Hogen will be seriously modified while passing between the hammer and anvil of discussion. He has struck out hard at the present system of cramming children's brains with words, words, words—mere vocables, as Carlyle puts it—instead of things, and has strongly emphasised the need of cultivating the faculty of observation. So far, he has done a good work. But his system is, in

many respects, overloaded beyond workability or endurance. Like Tom Moore with his ideal garden, the revisers will, we trust, 'reject the weeds and keep the flowers' of the new system. And then, perhaps, a real advance will have been made in our educational methods.

Counting the Cost

'I hear of peace and war in newspapers,' says Sidonia in Disraeli's 'Coningsby,' 'but I am never alarmed except when I am informed that the sovereigns want treasure; then I know that monarchs are in earnest.' Japan and Russia seemed, externally at least, to be less bellicose than usual for a few days lately. But the preparations of men and treasure are going feverishly forward, and each negotiates with its eye on its antagonist's optic and its right hand upon the revolver-grip in its back pocket. They are probably restrained from drawing on each other by reason of their unpreparedness, by the knowledge that an armed struggle would be the Armageddon of one or the other, and by lack of sufficient funds to enter upon so costly a game as that of war. The Napoleonic campaigns added 350 to 400 millions sterling to our national debt. Next in order of costliness came the great American Civil War of the sixties, which cost some 700,000 men and cost in treasure fourteen hundred million pounds. The foolish and blundering campaign of the Crimea ate up about £350,000,000, and the Franco-German war, in round numbers, £500,000,000.

To the vanquished a modern war spells ruin. To the victor, it is a disaster second only in intensity to defeat. In his recently published memoirs, Lord Wolseley tricks out war as an exhilarating sport. To Wellington and Napoleon Buonaparte, far greater captains than Lord Wolseley, war was a hideous scourge and the soldier, in effect, one of the gladiators of history. Some of our readers may have seen the fearfully realistic scenes of war, from the brush of the artist Verestchagin, that form such a ghastly attraction in the Musée Wiertz in Brussels. Verestchagin's eyes rested on all the horrors that preach peace with a thousand fiery tongues from the walls of that noted Musée. 'It is all very well,' says he, 'to say that war is grand and heroic and that fighting is a glorious thing. So it is—to read about. But I have seen war; I have fought for my country; and I have killed a man and many men in the terror and excitement of battle. I know what a horrible, savage, inhuman thing it is, and it is my busi-



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