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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.
 Dis 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

'Keep on Boring'

To make a small stream turn a large wheel you must confine the waters in a narrow race. 'Fault is sometimes found,' says the 'Ave Maria,' with Catholic papers for pouncing so persistently on such subjects as divorce, religious education, etc. The critics apparently do not complain because political papers beat the same old partisan drums evermore, nor do they realise that the only way to strike oil under the rock is to keep on boring. No competent person will assert that the reiterated plea for religion in the schools has been without effect, or that the campaign against divorce has been wholly in vain.

Wanted, a Microbe

There is the prospect of a fortune for the man that has sufficient acquaintance with microbes to 'invent' and cultivate one that will lay out the rabbit pest 'without endangering lives—presumably the lives of domestic animals, human beings, and such-like 'feathered game.' At any rate, Australian pastoralists are trying to raise the rabbit to the level of a Federal Question. They are urging the central Government to offer a reward of £100,000 to any person who will harness some sturdy microbe to slay bunny according to specifications, and without the risk that was deemed to be run by the bacillus which Pasteur offered to let loose among the rodents. A few years ago the rabbit was unknown in Queensland. But it went marching in myriads towards the border, and the Government erected a sort of Chinese Great Wall—of wire netting—to keep the creature out. But as the Great Wall and the Stockades failed to keep out the Tartars from the north, so the Queensland barrier of meshed non-wire failed to arrest the course of the swarming plague of burrowing rodents from the south. Only a few weeks ago the Queensland Premier informed a deputation that the Government had spent over a million and a quarter sterling in fighting the rabbit pest—and the rabbit had won. Some curious figure-wizard has estimated that this four-footed plague has cost Australia £16,000,000. It is a nation's ransom. And with the swift multiplication of the rodent and the far from roseate prospects of making him continue to pay 'de sa personne' the cost of the campaign against him, New Zealand farmers and flock owners will also probably welcome any reasonable microbe that will take the contract of extermination at a not exorbitant cost.

A Reading Habit

What is so gentle as a whiff of moving air, and what so soft as a drop of water? Yet the constant action of moving air and dripping rain-drops rounds the hills at last and grinds the rocks to powder and carries the raspings or detritus along and with them fills the valleys smooth and spreads them out to form broad plains like those of Canterbury. A single issue of a secular newspaper is also a small thing—even when its columns are anti-Catholic in tone and its news department is in great part a record of vice and crime—of murder, suicide, robbery, and scabrous divorce cases. But the constant and sole reading of this sort of 'literature' is a solvent that must in time wear down the instincts of faith, Catholic sentiment, and the higher moral sense which it is the object of the Church to preserve and foster. The cultivation of a conscience in the matter of reading and the active support of the Catholic newspaper press are among the conditions of first necessity for the hardening-up and preservation of faith and the instincts of faith against the destructive action and the glaring evils and moral shortcomings of so great a part of the secular press. Catholic books, newspapers, and periodicals, if rightly and abundantly employed, would at least tend to provide

'More swords and shields
 Than sin hath snares, or hell hath darts.'

'A Catholic paper in a parish,' says the 'Columbian' in a recent issue, 'is, as an aid to religion, next in importance to the parochial school. Look at the people in a congregation who subscribe for a Catholic paper. As a rule, they are practical Catholics—they frequent the Sacraments, they send their children to church schools, they belong to pious societies, and they co-operate with the priest in his pastoral labors. They know their religion, they can give reasons for it, and they can defend the Church against its traducers. But look at the folk who do not have a Catholic paper enter their homes. They are not interested in the news of the Church. They cannot reply to objections made against their religion. They are inclined to criticise the pastor for this and to find fault with the Church for that. They do not perceive the harm in mixed marriages, or in a non-religious education, or in societies that are under ecclesiastical ban. The daily journals have all the news they want. They are disposed to think that one religion is as good as another, and that it does not matter what a person believes so long as he "acts on the square." They cannot understand why



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