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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET

Pergant Directores et Scriptorum 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

Police Recruits

The success achieved by grocers in securing seats in the Victorian State Parliament has been accounted for by their skill in handling soft-soap. Some statistical genius may, in a somewhat similar manner, find a common denominator for the various occupations followed by the 43 candidates for the police force who were taken on in New Zealand last year. Of the total number, 18 were laborers, 4 farmers, 2 storemen, 2 clerks, 2 blacksmiths, while the following occupations furnished one each: brickmaker, engine-driver, drover, platelayer, carpenter, bookseller and stationer, baker, prison warder, asylum warder, shop-assistant, storekeeper, contractor, miner, photographer, and bridgeman.

'Move on!'

A heavy blow on the epigastrium, or pit of the stomach, is sufficient to double a human being into a bow-knot—and all on account of the twin bunches of fearfully 'live' and branching nerves that have their centre there. Last week Mr. Sceldon smote the Bible-in-schools clergy in their collective epigastrium, or tenderest part, when he hurled at them the dread reminder that they 'have had opportunities for years and have failed to embrace them.' 'A great effort,' he added, 'is being made now to get some one else to do it,' and thus enable the clerical agitators to spend in political wire-pulling or in guilty idleness and ease the precious hours that ought to be devoted to instructing the children of their various faiths in Christian principles. Here and there throughout the Colony—in Dunedin, Nelson, Waimate, and other places—quiet and earnest workers of various Reformed creeds are showing the licensed and noisy idlers of the Bible-in-schools League how much can be effected in the matter of child-instruction by a little personal effort and self-sacrifice. One of those earnest men is the Rev. C. T. Bush, a North Island Presbyterian clergyman. In last week's 'Outlook' (August 27), he gives the following practical demonstration to a Bible-in-schools confrere who 'has not time':—

'The district I live and work in is some 77 miles inland from Wanganui and has no railway communication, and is, in other ways, a difficult one to work; yet I conduct Bible lessons in the various State schools in this district. The scheme has been adopted, I believe, in Oamaru, and a somewhat similar one pertains to Waimate, though of these I cannot speak from personal

knowledge. If my friend who writes the letter has more visiting to do than I have, then he has a very hard district, but the administrations of the sacraments have only an occasional demand upon our time, as also committee work. I think, Sir, the time now is when the ministry of the Gospel is being sifted, and those men who are quite willing—nay, glad—to sacrifice even physical ease and comfort for the Gospel's sake will be strengthened and fortified for their work, while those who are not willing will have to "move on."'

The pretexts advanced by the Bible-in-schools clergy for shirking a fundamental duty of the Christian ministry here referred to, are as many and varied as the excuses of the ill-mannered neighbors of the man in St. Luke's Gospel who 'made a great supper and invited many.' The real and unwholesome cause of their neglect is stated with perfect accuracy and refreshing candor by the Rev. Mr. Bush: they are not prepared 'to sacrifice physical ease and comfort for the Gospel's sake.' They find political agitation cheaper and more satisfying than imparting religious instruction to little children where the lime-light is not shining; and they desire to pick the public pocket and to get done by lay State officials duties which Catholics and earnest Protestants perform, as a matter of course, at their own expense.

In Victoria

In Victoria, despite the convincing answer given at the recent plebiscite by a majority of 26,000 electors, the Bible-in-schools campaigners are still clamoring to have the Protestant Bible and Protestant hymns and prayers taught to the public school children by paid State officials. The Premier (Mr. Bont) has, in consequence, brought forward a draft regulation which proposes that 'the Board of Advice may give permission for the formation of classes on one or two days in each week for religious instruction. Such classes must, however, be held either from 9.15 to 9.45 a.m., or from 11.45 a.m. to 12.15 p.m., or from 1.20 to 1.50 p.m., or from 3.30 to 4 p.m., and in any one school only one of these times shall be observed on any day.' A conscience clause is provided, and it is laid down that 'during the time when religious instruction is given in any school no secular instruction shall be given to children not attending the classes for religious instruction.' To these proposals the Archbishop of Melbourne replies: 'As far as the religious instruction proposed to be given before school hours in the morning, or after the school