

THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

THIRTY-THIRD YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XXXIII.—No. 33

DUNEDIN: THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 1905.

PRICE 6D

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

France and England

Baron Verulam (commonly called Lord Bacon) was, like Johnson and La Rochefoucauld, somewhat sceptical on the head of personal friendships. But no age and no philosopher that we know of cherished illusions about friendships between nations. Like Sidonia in 'Coningsby,' nations have no friends. The cheap and mostly interested courtesies that pass between country and country, and the passing public opinion that holds them together with bonds of straw, are not even good counterfeits of what, in private life, would pass for friendship. That which now passes between England and France is known as an 'entente' or 'understanding,' based in the main upon commercial interests—the ruling consideration in the international politics of our day. It is a welcome change from the hot animosities that raged around the mud-walls of Fashoda and brought the two nations perilously near their hundredth bout of blood-letting. The good understanding between them has been, we hope, greatly strengthened by the grand festivities that welcomed the French fleet to British waters during the past week. Nothing like it has, we think, been witnessed in England since the Crimean War and the visit of the French Emperor and Empress to their former allies behind the white cliffs of Albion. Popular huzzas count for very little—they are like the Bagdad Khalif's favor, that showed itself on Monday in gifts of gold and costly robes of state, and turned on Tuesday to burning pitch and flaming faggots of dried bulrushes. But we hope that the present 'entente' between England and her ally of fifty years ago will make for a long peace, and for so much of good-will as nation may have for nation.

The vast tidal wave that was raised by the great eruption of Krakatoa, in the Eastern seas, in 1883, sped round the earth and rocked vessels that lay at anchor at Bordeaux and Brest and Panama. In an analogous way, the epoch-making events that have lately taken place on the face of the ocean in the Distant East have stirred the course of international politics in the West. The Anglo-French 'entente' is one of its early results. In a manner, the two Powers need each other. England has a great naval superiority. It is needed to protect her commerce and her colonies. Their warships are almost in sight of each other across a narrow channel of sea. France's navy is the second in the world. She is

greatly superior to England in military strength. Together, the two nations could probably impose peace on Europe. But a French army could never surround London; nor could a British army, without one or more Continental allies, ever circle Paris with a ring of iron, as the Germans did in 1870. It is doubtful if Mr. Atkins could even effect a hostile landing. And even if he did, he would be pounded into bonedust before he would see the spires of St. Omer or Rouen. A war nowadays between the two Powers would—even if confined to them—be a calamity of the first magnitude. Yet, only eight years ago easy-chair warriors on both sides of the Straits of Dover were busy fanning the flame of ancient national antipathies that for eight centuries have time and again found vent in blood. A dozen closed or closing sores were opened by both sets of disputants—disputes in the West Indies, fishing rights in Canada, the occupation of Egypt, and chafing spots in Tonquin, Madagascar, and the islands of the Pacific. French, like German, colonising is on a small scale as compared with that of Great Britain; but the magazine and newspaper war that circled around it in the Fashoda days was more than sufficient to revive, and in a dangerous form, the traditional jealousy of neighbors who (as a recent English writer says) 'have known each other too long and met each other too often.'

No very lasting good-will has existed between Frank and Briton since the Normans landed on the coast of Sussex in 1066. A long and ingrained hostility has separated them. Few nations have hacked and hewed each other with greater zeal. But for the past eighty years and more there has taken place between them that steady, if slow, approach towards similarity in matters of politics and social customs which furnishes one solid groundwork for the hope of a better understanding in the future. Hamerton, in one of his books, has, indeed, expressed the conviction that 'there will never be any firm friendship between England and France.' In the Sidonian sense, at least, that would be quite true. 'All I hope for,' said he, 'and all that seems to me really desirable, is simply mutual consideration. That is possible, that is attainable. In the higher minds of both countries (with a few exceptions) it exists already.' But, as is well known, no such friendly feeling towards Albion has got its grip on the mass of the people. The opposition to England is particularly keen among the convinced Republican proletariat of France. And (says Hamerton) 'it exists in degrees exactly proportioned to the degree of democratic passion in the Frenchman. When he is a mode-

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