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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

A Warning

We warn our readers against the wiles of sundry itinerant strangers who are endeavoring to dispose of a cheap and tawdry religious object of a 'fancy' kind at a price far in excess of its proper selling value. Those who are wise will show such oily-tongued vendors, without parley, to the door. Others, no doubt, will read our friendly warning and then, like Poor Richard's friends, will act as if our words were never written. In this matter the old proverbial saying, 'Once bitten, twice shy,' seems to have little or no application. People who make sheep of themselves will find plenty to shear them. And it is high time for New Zealand Catholics to cease placing themselves under the blades of every adventurer who sets out to fleece them by wheedling appeals to two of their finest sentiments—love of country and love of faith. As for us, we can only give good advice. We cannot give good sense. But for those that are wise, a word ought to be sufficient.

Posthumous and Living Charity

Lavater, the physiognomist, says in his 'Aphorisms on Man,' that 'the manner of giving shows the character of the giver more than the gift itself.' In the matter of charity, posthumous giving, especially when it is not the continuance or grand finale of living giving, oftentimes reveals a character that is miserly towards God and the poor till the relaxed fingers can grip the hoarded gold no longer. The Lord commended the man who made friends with the shekels while his day of life was still in its noon. Fuller couches the advantages of living over posthumous charity in quaint and happy phrase that looks like a triple-tiered proverb in rhyme:

'Silver from the living
Is gold in the giving,
Gold from the dying
Is but silver a-flying;
Gold and silver from the dead
Turn too often into lead'

Throughout our country there are so many good works that cry for aid—to-day! For such the silver bestowed now 'is gold in the giving.' The bearing of these observations lies in the application.

In France

We have to go back to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for a penal code of such callous injustice as that which now disgraces the statute-book of a country

whose official sign-board bears the words: 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.' Verily, France is in a parlous state.

'O nation miserable!
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,
When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again?'

There are prophets a-many who see amidst the gloom of persecution the morning star of the 'wholesome days' that are to come. Cardinal Manning was one of the seers. 'It would,' said he, 'be a good thing for the Catholic Church in France if it had not a centime from the Government.' So may it be! For it seems as if the last grudging centime will soon be paid. But if the plundered Church in France were freed from the shackles of State interference and control, she might enter with a light and happy heart upon her new career.

Charlatans

Some superstitions are like fashions. They have their brief day, die, are buried six feet deep, and in due course are exhumed again. But the fortune-teller we have always with us. The Cumæan Sybil, the Roman augur and haruspex, and the witches, wizards, and necromancers of later date, all have their representatives in the class of usually wandering impostors who nowadays style themselves variously fortune-tellers, futurists, psychomants, astro-mathematicians, and so on. And have we not to-day the same old superstitions, under slightly altered forms—the chiromancy and the cartomancy of the days of Merlin and Nostradamus, the good old crystal sphere of Dr. Doe, and the magic mirrors and magic circles of other times under new shapes, and a faith in dreams, as strong as that of Dr. Dee and Archbishop Laud? Ages of flabby faith and religious indifference have ever been ages of rampant credulity. So, in effect, did Lecky the rationalist write. And so it happens that our materialising age is, perhaps, par excellence, the age of superstition. Its agnosticism is dominated by the tyranny of the mascotte. And for the life of us we cannot see what difference in folly there is between those who long ago sought to wrest the secret of the future from the entrails of cows and the quacking of geese, and those who nowadays seek to read the decrees of the Almighty in the grounds of Balua coffee and the turn of an ace of spades. And on what grounds can a crystal-gazing statesman or coroneted society leader of our day look down upon a Cicero sitting in the midst of the college of augurs, and closely observing—as an index of the future—the manner in which the sacred chickens pecked up the grain that was scattered among them?