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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

'An Unholy Alliance'

The Rev. R. S. Gray, of Christchurch, is one of the local standard-bearers of the Prohibition movement. His views on no-license are his own affair. Some of his recent remarks on the local option poll are our affair. In an interview with the representative of a Christchurch daily paper on last Thursday, the good man spoke, at least in part, under the stress of feelings that had been beaten black-and-blue. 'Mr. Gray,' says the interviewer, 'also dwelt upon what he called an unholy alliance between the Liquor Party and the Roman Catholics in the North Ward and elsewhere, a combination of which the righteous sentiment of this Colony would, he believed, without doubt express its strong disapproval.'

In discussion, as well as in cookery, you must first catch your hare. Mr Gray ought to have been sure that he had his facts in hand before he placed the alleged 'unholy alliance' upon the griddle. And he is not to be excused for this grave omission by any plea that his feathers were ruffled as a result of the Local Option poll in Christchurch. As matters stand, he has cruelly maltreated simple truth. The story of the new dual alliance is a piece of fiction—'all carved from the carver's brain'—The manner of its telling, too, indicates sufficiently a slipshod method of thinking, an intemperateness of utterance, and an eagerness in attack upon Catholics for which many of the lay and clerical leaders of the Prohibition party have won an evil notoriety. In the present connection, for instance, an 'alliance' necessarily implies a positive bond, compact, agreement, treaty, or league entered into by 'the Roman Catholics in the North Ward and elsewhere' on the one side and 'the Liquor Party' on the other side. The public are entitled to demand of the Rev. Mr. Gray the essential details of such bond, compact, or agreement—when, where, and by whom was it drawn up? But these are precisely the particulars that the reverend enthusiast cannot furnish, for the simple reason that his whole story has just the same amount of objective truth as the tale of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves. Yet he assumes, without so much as a scrap of evidence, the existence of this mythical compact. But he carries the mouldy old fallacy of undue assumption even further than this; for he applies to this imaginary alliance the question-begging epithet, 'unholy'—which, as the

context clearly enough shows, is intended to convey the impression that it was an impious and sinful violation of the moral law. But wherein does this appear? The Rev. Mr. Gray must first catch his hare—that is, he must establish the fact of the alliance before he proceeds to give it, like a dog, a bad time. Let him begin by setting the alliance on its legs and establish beyond reasonable doubt its standing and character as an actuality. A non-existent contract cannot be a crime against the laws of either God or man. When he has fully proven the alleged compact to be a fact and not—as it is—a fiction of his own imagination, and furnished us with the details of its provisions, then, and not till then, will a discussion as to its morality be in order. And, on his own principles as a Protestant, our verdict upon this matter at its worst, will be at least as good as his at its best. And on the whole question, both of fact and of inference—and, generally, on all matters affecting Catholics—his judgment is subject to serious discounts by reason of the prominent part which, we understand, he took in the Stoke affair. A man does not cast his religious or political skin in four-and-twenty hours.

The fact of the matter is this: The sundry disappointments at the Local Option polls that have made the Rev. Mr. Gray get afire all over have been due to a variety of causes that are sufficiently obvious to thoughtful observers. Some of these were contributed by the Legislature, some by 'the trade'—to wit, its better general conduct of business during the past three years, some by the impression which this improvement created in the minds of the large class of voters that are labelled, in reference to the licensing question, Moderates, and some, again, were furnished by the electioneering methods pursued by the Prohibitionists themselves, and particularly by the manner in which many of the clergy in the movement used their pulpits as political 'stumps.' He is a mole-eyed observer and a bankrupt philosopher who must needs fall back upon the phantom of a Catholic-cum-publican 'alliance' to explain the recent Local Option vote. There was no 'alliance' either with 'the trade' or with any political party during the recent electioneering campaign. Catholics voted on the licensing issue, as they voted on the political issue, without dictation from any source, and as their fancy, or personal preference suggested. They were not influenced in their choice, as so many of the Rev. Mr. Gray's co-religionists were, by whoops and entreaties and emotional appeals from political pulpits.