

# THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

TWENTY-NINTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XXIX.—No. 9.

DUNEDIN: THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 1901.

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.

### A BOYS' BRIGADE.

THE question of Juvenile Branches was turned over and over and examined from various points of view on last Sunday at the Communion breakfast of the Hibernian Society in Dunedin. Such branches are in operation in Auckland and Wellington. They deserve the flattery of more widespread imitation, (1) because they furnish the best recruiting ground for our only Catholic Benefit Society; and (2) because they offer a partial solution of the aching difficulty of dealing with the dangers surrounding our boys who, at the close of their schooldays, are—as Cardinal Manning puts it—'cast headlong into the vortex of modern life, with no other stay and security than the half-digested instruction they have received in early childhood.' During their schooldays we cram and stuff them like Strassburg geese. But at or about their thirteenth year we suddenly drop them. We turn them adrift to shift for themselves during the most dangerous and impressionable period of human existence, and—in Carlyle's words—'when the hungry young look up to their spiritual nurses for food, they are bidden to eat the east wind.' At this plastic period of their lives their minds and hearts can readily be fashioned after the right model. It would be a task of far greater difficulty to reform them at a later age.

This idea is feelingly, but despairingly, expressed by the grown-up Tilda in the fascinating story, *No. 5, John Street*. Tilda was greatly neglected in her younger days, and this is what she says: 'I warn't made right at the start, I was a bit o' slop work. So was Covey. That's w'y we both got to 'ang together on the same peg. That's jest what's the matter with all on us in John street. We can't do no good with ourselves now. We want pickin' all to pieces, and if you begin that you'll only tear the stuff. Give the young uns a chance in their cradles, an' let the old uns die off; then you'll see a change. All these missions are trying to make us mealy-mouthed. It makes yer larf like, to 'ear us talkin' and to see our funny wyze. But some time you'll see us jest as we are. Then you'll git the 'ump, an' cuss the dye you tried to mike a lidy out of a fightin' flower-gal. "Oh, wy didn't yer ketch me when I was a kid?"'

Yes. If we are to hold our youths, we must 'ketch 'em when they're kids.' And if the Hibernian Society helps in the good work, it has established a fresh claim upon the support and encouragement of parents and priests.

### QUACKS AND QUACKERY.

TOWARDS the close of last week a self-styled 'cancer specialist' was mulcted in Dunedin in the handsome fine of £50 for illegally using the title of 'Doctor.' The penalty was an exemplary one. But unfortunately 'The Medical Practitioners Act, 1869,' does not reach the root of the crying evil of quacks and quackery. It catches an incautious irregular practitioner here and there and at painfully long intervals. But it does nothing to prevent the wholesale and heartless frauds that are being perpetrated on the luckless

public from New Year's Day to St. Sylvester's by a horde of what we may term in Carlyle's phrase, 'brass-faced, vociferous, voracious' quacks who trade under the various titles of 'professors,' 'psychomants,' 'trance-mediums,' 'astro-mathematicians,' 'hypnotic healers,' 'mystic healers,' and heaven knows what besides. Your *malades imaginaires*, and a big section of the public that have got enlarged livers, rheumatic knee-joints, phthisical lungs, or tic-douloureux are, in the matter of healers and cure-alls, mere overgrown children, credulous, evergreen with verdant hope, and of their *gobemoucheerie* there is no end. In the words of *Hudibras*:

Some with a noise and greasy light  
Are snapped, as men catch larks at night. . .  
Some with medicine and receipt  
Are drawn to nibble at the bait.

Our paternal Government prosecutes the retail depredations of the miserable fortune-teller. It might legitimately afford more strenuous protection to the half-fledged public against those rapacious harpies of the quack fraternity, with their gaudy rings, their oily and (usually) ungrammatical tongues, their handfuls of dried 'yarbs,' their phials of corrosive sublimate, their non-committal pills, their copious shirt-fronts, their double dose of low cunning, and their brazen affectation of supernal knowledge, which is intended to mask a baptismal innocence of all acquaintance with even the elements of anatomy, physiology, or therapeutics. Their working creed is well summed up in the *Biglow Papers* :—

In short, I firmly du believe  
In Humbug generally,  
Fer it's a thing thet I perceive  
To hev a solid vally;  
This heth my faithful shepherd been,  
In pasturs sweet heth led me,  
An' this'll keep the people green  
To feed ez they hev fed me.

When you go a-mountaineering in Switzerland there is always the off-chance that the rope which bears you may break or fray over the jagged edge of a precipice, or that you may fall into the depths of a dark crevasse through the thin and treacherous coating of frozen snow which covers it. In either event your insurance policy soon comes due. But it does not matter so much to the guide. He has taken the precaution to make you pay in advance, and the money is in the hands of his careful *frau* in the valley far below. The quack doctor acts in a similar way. He and all unregistered 'medical' practitioners are debarred by law from enforcing payment of fees: the man in the street would do well to remember this. But this modicum of protection to the silly section of the public is usually rendered inoperative by the medical fraud almost invariably stipulating for, and receiving, his fees in advance. The law is much more far-reaching in France, where, less than two years ago, a notorious 'mystic healer' who had set all Paris agog was heavily fined for the elastic crime of 'imposing on the credulous.' In one of the States of the Australian Commonwealth—we cannot at this moment remember whether it is Victoria or New South Wales—the Postmaster-General has for some time past refused the use of post-office boxes to self-styled 'medical men' who have become objects of suspicion. He has, moreover, claimed and

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