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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 Iustitiæ 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

That 'Stuffing' Charge.

In reply to many inquiries and kind suggestions we beg to state that, when sufficient information is to hand for any Province regarding the charge of 'stuffing' the public service with Catholics, it is our intention to summarise the results and publish them in tabulated form. We hope at the proper time to be able to do the same for the whole of New Zealand. A further instalment of returns appears elsewhere in this issue.

Force of Example.

The slipshod company of 'beefsteak Catholics' may read a useful lesson on the force of good example in the following story in which the *Ave Maria* tells how the late Judge Bagshawe (who died recently in England) 'allured to brighter worlds and led the way.' 'Some years ago,' says our valuable contemporary, 'he was spending the Easter holidays at the seaside with a Protestant friend, a member of the Bar, who was rather sceptical as to the practice by Catholics of the principles they professed. He decided to put them to the test, and chose the one in which he thought Judge Bagshawe would be weakest—namely, the habit of fasting. The Judge was a man of full habit and enjoyed a good dinner; and, taking advantage of the fact that Friday is a day of abstinence, his host ordered an excellent meat dinner to be served that evening. To whet the Judge's appetite, he took him out in a boat for some sea fishing. The day was one of those hot spring days, with east wind blowing—just the sort of day calculated to make one ravenous. The Judge's appetite was as keen as his host wished it. They sat down to dinner and the Judge was helped to lamb, the first of the season. He was about to put the bit into his mouth when his host cried out: "Bagshawe, you forget this is a fast-day in your Church!" The Judge at once put down his knife and fork, pushed the plate away from him, and dined off bread and cheese—the only fasting food available. The host was dumfounded at such an act of self-denial and was covered with confusion. He apologised most humbly for his want of charity as well as want of hospitality; but so impressed was he by the self-denial that he forsook the faith of his fathers and became a convert.'

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Here is, indeed, a working example of the truth of the saying that 'there is an energy of moral suasion in a good man's life, passing the highest efforts of an orator's genius.'

Our Poets' Chance.

There lies much hope of cash and fair renown for our budding poets in the announcement made a few days ago by the *Wellington Times*. Says our Empire City contemporary: 'The mute, inglorious Kiplings of New Zealand, the unlaurelled Austins of Australia, and the budding bards in all parts of the British Empire, from Camlachie to Capetown, and from Limavady to Vancouver, have all offered to them an opportunity for winning fame and cash and Royal favor. The proprietors of the old British magazine, *Good Words*, are offering three prizes to the value of £75 for the three best odes on the Coronation of Edward VII. These compositions may be in any form and of any length; the only restriction is that they must

reach Messrs. Isbister and Co., the publishers of *Good Words*, not later than 30th April next.'

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The market value of poetry seems to have gone down of late years. Time was when Arab rulers paid a thousand, ten thousand, twenty thousand, and even thirty thousand chinking gold pieces for a few verses—nay, even for a single couplet—by the Khalifeh. And at a much later and more degenerate day did not Davenant prove by all the rules of logic that he knew that the government of a country 'can never be upheld in prose,' that neither parsons, generals, politicians, judges, nor police can sustain the edifice of the State and keep it plumb without the aid of sweet poesie? And this again is but a variant of what Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun wrote to the Marquis of Montrose: 'I know a very wise man that believed that, if a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws, of a nation.' Even as late as Tennyson's declining years, the poet had a certain vogue. The very magazine that now calls for tenders from the real and alleged poets of New Zealand and elsewhere paid Tennyson the tidy little sum of £200 each for a few odd odes on any subject under the sun. But there's a sad slump in rhymed or rhymeless measures now, and the only result of the much-advertised competition will probably be to flood the long-suffering editor with sundry reams of more or less metrical prose from

Those whose fustian's so sublimely bad,
It is not poetry, but prose run mad.

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According to Chesterfield, 'any man of common understanding may, by proper culture, care, attention, and labor, make himself whatever he pleases except a good poet.' Poets are born, not made. And they are very scarce. But the number of those who fancy themselves poets is legion, and some of them—like Alfred Austin—even contrive to scramble into laureateship. He is not the first 'tortured torturer of reluctant rhymes' who reached that pinnacle of social, if not literary, fame. Withers was a Puritanical soldier laureate. When captured by the Cavaliers, he was about to be hanged, but Sir John Denham, the rival laureate, successfully entreated the King to spare him—because so long as Withers was in the land of the living, Denham could not be deemed the worst poet in England. For a like reason Kipling of the splay-foot rhymes ought to wish a long life to the present laureate. And both deserve the large-hearted sympathy which pious people usually extend to cripples and others who are struggling bravely against adverse circumstances that dated from their birth. The average editor loves poems. But he can assimilate only a limited number, and his appetite for laureate-poems was slain for a time by the doggerel which began:

I stood on a tower in the wet,
Where the old and the new year met,

and by the drawing measured prose in which Kipling—the people's laureate—told how 'a horse has four feet and a man has two feet, and two into four make two.' It is hard to stand that, and we gravely doubt that a page of such stuff would even make good curl-paper. How true it is that 'there are many "poems" which are like photographic negatives, and should never see the light.' It appears that the two laureates

Hancock's "BISMARCK" LAGER BEER.

NEW ZEALAND'S
NEW INDUSTRY.