

# THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

THIRTIETH YEAR OF PUBLICATION.

VOL. XXX.—No 28

DUNEDIN: THURSDAY, JULY 10, 1902.

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

### The Opening of Parliament.

It is tolerably safe to predict that the session of Parliament which was opened last week with the usual ceremony will be brief and uneventful. To begin with, the House is much later than usual in commencing its sittings, and the session is, moreover, the last of the present Parliament, so that members will be on pins and needles until it is over and they are able to get back amongst their constituencies to commence preparations for the coming election campaign. The Government, too, have shown their willingness to expedite matters, for the Governor's Speech, foreshadowing the Government proposals for the session, is one of the briefest and most modest that has been delivered for many a year. The Referendum Bill, the State Fire Insurance Bill, some amendments in the Land Act, and some amendments of a detail nature in the Labor legislation are the principal—and indeed almost the only—legislative proposals that are directly specified. Of these the most important is the Referendum Bill, and as this measure, though it passed the House of Representatives last year, was thrown out in the Legislative Council by an overwhelming majority, the Minister who introduced it being the only member who voted for it, it is hardly likely to become law during the present inevitably short session. Other subjects indicated in the Speech as being likely to be dealt with are the Railways Superannuation Fund Bill, amendments in the Military Pensions Act, the appointment of commercial agents in the United Kingdom, South Africa, and Australia; measures relating to mining matters, company laws, the public health, and the protection of young persons; while the question of preventing combinations by which the prices of food supplies are improperly raised to consumers is declared to be of importance and worthy of being considered. The Government have acted wisely in refraining from definitely pledging themselves to the introduction of specific measures dealing with many of these subjects, thus leaving themselves free to keep the length of the session within reasonable limits without laying themselves open to the charge of having broken the promises they made when the session began.

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The session will be remarkable in a negative sort of way for the absence of Mr. Seddon, who has for many years been so conspicuous a figure in the Parliamentary life of the Colony. His absence has left a gap, as one correspondent rather cruelly remarked, which it will be difficult to fill; but it is satisfactory to note that the Acting-Premier (Sir J. G. Ward) is winning golden opinions on every side for the tactful, courteous, and business-like way in which he is carrying on the work of the House. Evidence of the method and despatch which characterise Sir Joseph's leadership is furnished by the fact that the Budget and Public Works Statement—usually delayed till the session is well advanced—are to be brought down immediately, while the annual Railways Statement has been already introduced. This Statement is an exceptionally satisfactory one. The earnings for the past year amounted to £1,874,586, or £147,350 more than those of the preceding year, and are the highest yet reached by the railways in this Colony in any one

year. The expenditure was £1,252,237, thus leaving a net profit for the year of £622,349, as against £599,388 for the previous year. The record of the year's work is highly satisfactory on the administrative as well as on the financial side. The safety and efficiency of the railway system have been increased by the adoption, as far as has been possible in the time, of the interlocking-gear, the electric tablet system, and the Westinghouse brake and the work of equipping the rest of the railways of the Colony with these important appliances is to be vigorously proceeded with. The serious deficiency in rolling-stock which has been so noticeable for the past year or two has now been attended to, and important additions have been made consisting of 59 locomotives, 101 bogie cars, 27 bogie brake vans, 52 bogie waggons, 1562 four-wheel waggons, and 810 tarpaulins. Several improvements have also been effected in connection with the equipment of the carriages, which, though trifling in themselves, have added very materially to passengers' comfort. Thus the provision of foot-warmers on the southern lines during the winter months has been greatly appreciated, while the fitting of the second-class cars with cushions has made railway travelling easy and pleasant for all. Altogether, the railway record for the year is a highly creditable one, and goes to confirm the popular conviction that Sir Joseph Ward, as Minister for Railways, is, to quote Mr Seddon's historic phrase, emphatically 'the right man in the right place.'

### A Backward Move.

Some of the Victorian Protestant clergy are still apparently uneasy in their mind about that 'Catholic vote.' A few weeks ago we referred at some length to a resolution which had been adopted by the Victorian Presbyterian Commissioners in favor of 'organising a permanent opposition to the Roman Catholic vote in regard to religious instruction in State Schools and kindred questions,' and gave a full account of the discreditable means by which the promoters of the scheme had succeeded in carrying their proposal. We now learn from the Melbourne correspondent of the *Otago Daily Times*—whose letters, by the way, are in point of clearness, conciseness, and general grasp of the questions dealt with usually models of what a correspondent's letter ought to be—that the Wesleyan Conference has followed suit by adopting a similar resolution, and the outcome is that a meeting has been called to form a league 'for meeting and counteracting the organised Roman Catholic influence on the legislation and Administration of this State, without in any way combating or interfering with the Roman Catholic religious position.' The circular convening the meeting is stated to be signed by the Anglican bishops, as well as the Presbyterians, Wesleyans, etc., so that, on paper at least, these clerical crusaders are able to make quite a brave show.

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We are glad to see, however, that the *Times'* correspondent, who, as a disinterested party on the spot should be able to form a competent judgment, has no hesitation in prophesying certain failure for this hare-brained scheme. 'It is' he says, 'easy to predict failure for it, and for this reason: The Protestant laity are not behind it. They do not support their clergy on the religious education question. Only one section of the Protestant laity will support it—the Orange section; and that section will not respect the clause that is to prevent the League

Hancock's "BISMARCK" LAGER BEER.

NEW ZEALAND'S  
NEW INDUSTRY.