

THE NEW ZEALAND TABLET

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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

The Holy Father and the Apostolate of the Press.

The Holy Father has always taken a very high view of the value and importance of the Catholic press as a means of promoting fervor and loyalty among the children of the Church and of spreading the just claims of the Church even beyond her own pale. Again and again he has spoken words of appreciation and encouragement to Catholic journalists; again and again, by imparting his special blessing, or by bestowing decorations, he has given express recognition, to individual members of the Apostolate, of good work done. As our readers know, the N.Z. TABLET has itself on more than one occasion been the recipient of the Holy Father's thoughtful kindness and cordial approbation. A little more than two years ago we received from him the kind and gracious message which finds an honored place as the heading of this page, and our readers will be glad to hear that on the occasion of Father Cleary's visit to Rome a few months ago he received, in his capacity as Editor, a special blessing from his Holiness on himself and on the TABLET in the good work being done.

And now, as further evidence of the Holy Father's interest in the work of the press, we are glad to note that two of our colonial contemporaries have just received well-merited recognition from his Holiness. The 'Catholic Press'—our live and active Sydney contemporary, whose push and energy have given a fresh fillip to Catholic journalism in the Mother Colony—has been accorded the Holy Father's blessing, while the Rev. Father O'Mahoney, editor of the Tasmanian 'Monitor,' has been decorated by his Holiness with the Cross 'Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice.' This is a highly-prized distinction, and it has been fully earned by Father O'Mahoney by the long and faithful service, often under great difficulties, which he has rendered to Catholic journalism and to the Church. His paper is a credit to himself and to the Catholic body in Tasmania, and is among the most welcome of our exchanges. We heartily congratulate Father O'Mahoney and our friends of the 'Catholic Press' on the recognition their good work has received.

An Attempted 'Reform.'

The various godless education Acts in these colonies are in a chronic state of disrepair, and take as much wiring up and tying and splicing and all-round tinkering as a cheap and badly-constructed motor-car. The Victorian Parliament has of late had its educational engine at the forge for the hundredth time. An 'Education Act Amendment Bill' has been before the Legislative Council, and one of the clauses—discussed on December 15—was to the effect that, notwithstanding the provisions of the Education Act, those children who did not attend voluntary religious instruction, might be retained for secular instruction in a separate room while such religious instruction was given. Mr. Reid, who introduced the measure on behalf of the Government, voiced the general feeling of the Protestant Churches against the rank godlessness of the Education Act, and (according to the 'Argus' report) said that

'when he was distributing the prizes at the Melbourne Presbyterian Ladies' College the previous week he was amazed to hear the principal state that persons of good position sent their children to the college, and that some of them knew nothing of God, or that there was a Saviour of humanity.'

In the course of the discussion which ensued, Mr. Melbourne—who, by the way, is a strong secularist—pointed out the substance of a difficulty which has often been advanced in our editorial columns, to the effect that 'there was no restriction upon the dogma that might be taught' in the schools, and that ministers and teachers might stuff the minds of children with any sort of doctrine, and use their position to openly or covertly attack the tenets of other denominations.' Mr. Fitzgerald, a Catholic member, said that all other ministers had hitherto 'steadfastly adhered to the education policy embodied in the Act. Mr. Balfour's amendment, in spite of all that was said, was a distinct infringement of the Act. When the Act was originally passed the difficulty in the way of religious instruction did not arise from the Roman Catholics, but from the differences among the Protestant denominations. All the Catholics asked was to be credited with the average cost of scholars which they educated up to the recognised secular standard. Within the metropolitan area the Catholic schools had educated 21,000 children, saving the expense to the State, and yet received nothing for it. Mr. Balfour had spoken of non-sectarian instruction, but religion could not be administered in homœopathic doses. When the Act was passed it was claimed that a Utopia would be created by placing the children together on the same forms and in the same playground, yet racial disputes were to-day as rife as ever. In those days some had foreseen what would take place, and now half a million children had been turned out of the State schools, not knowing of the existence of a Creator. Retribution had fallen upon the State for the injustice done to the Catholics, and that retribution was the dechristianising of the people of the country. And now he found this little mild amendment being sent up like a balloon to see how the public would receive an alteration of the Act. This amendment was an invasion of its principles, and was an underhand attack upon it.' The motion was, however, carried.

Archbishop Carr Speaks.

The true inwardness of the insidious proposal given above was ably set forth on the following day (December 17) by the Archbishop of Melbourne in the course of a speech delivered at the Athenæum Hall in connection with the closing exercises of St. Patrick's College. His Grace dissected the Council's vote in a manner that ought to appeal with irresistible force to fair-minded people of every creed, and, in view of the possible, and even probable, attempt to work off such a scheme of religious instruction upon us in New Zealand, our readers would do well to pigeon-hole his words in their memory. The 'Argus' reports his Grace to have said that 'if anything came of the vote in the Legislative Council on the previous night, Catholic boys should in future, to borrow a phrase from the cricket field, lag for their Protestant companions. It appeared that there was considerable difficulty in getting the latter to attend the religious instruction doled out to them in the State schools after school hours. It was therefore proposed to make use of