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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII. TO THE N.Z. TABLET.

Pergant Directores et Scriptorum New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiæ causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.
Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.

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., P.M.

LEO XIII, Pope

Current Topics

A Papal Jubilee.

Most men who touch Pope Leo's patriarchal age reach it in the condition of rather well preserved mummies. But the Grand Old Man of the Vatican may be described as, mentally at least, though not bodily, a middle-aged man of 93—for that is the verge of age that he touches on next Monday. And, so far as his mental vigor is concerned, the long procession of years merely leaves 'some smack of age' in him, 'some relish of the saltness of time.' On last Friday he attained the silver jubilee of his election to the See of Peter, and (as the cable messages tell us) was the recipient of thousands of congratulatory messages. Next Tuesday is the silver jubilee of his coronation, which took place on March 3, 1878. Long may he reign!

Some Droll 'Statistics.'

Statistics, like edged tools, need careful handling. A writer in the 'N.Z. Church News' has forgotten the French proverbial phrase, 'We always weaken whatever we exaggerate,' and coolly asks an astonished public to believe that there are in the world 520,000,000 Protestants, as against 242,000,000 Catholics! The authority for the first-mentioned squad of figures on parade is stated to be Dr. Boyd Carpenter, Anglican Bishop of Ripon, in an article in the 'Encyclopædia Britannica,' and the date of the 'research' is set down as the year of grace 1900. Unless the episcopal census-taker used multiplying lenses, or included some odd hundred of millions of 'dead corpses' in his count, the first row of figures given above must be a misprint for 120,000,000. So far as we know, no copy of the supplementary volume of the 'Britannica' has yet reached New Zealand. We are, therefore, not yet in a position to state whether Dr. Boyd Carpenter ever published that preposterous estimate of the many hundreds of independent and more or less hostile denominations that are collectively termed Protestant. But from the completely successful manner in which Cardinal Moran flails and batters the absurd numerical statements made by him as to Catholic and Protestant foreign missions, it is certain that with Dr. Boyd Carpenter, as with Artemus Ward, 'heavy figgerin' ain't his berthrite.' The ninth edition of the 'Encyclopædia Britannica' (to the end of 1884) estimates the grand total of all Protestants of every denomination at 120,000,000. Juraschek, for the same year, counts them, all told, at 123,000,000. Bell's 'Dictionary of the World's Press' for 1899 says (p. 355) that the latest estimates 'made by a competent authority' sets them down at 143,237,625. 'Chambers' Encyclopædia' (Ed. 1901) says they are estimated to number 'from 100 to 120 millions.' The fourth edition of Mulhall's 'Dictionary of Statistics' (revised to November, 1898) estimates the count of heads at 157,050,000. Statisticians, like doctors, differ here. But an abyss is set between the highest of these estimates and the fabulous legions claimed by the 'N.Z. Church News,' which exceed by 52,000,000 Mulhall's estimate of the grand total of all the Christians on the face of the earth! Our Christchurch Anglican contemporary is itself gifted with a reacherously short memory, for, while congratulating itself on

the miraculous expansion of the divided forces of Protestantism to 520,000,000 souls, it tells us, higher up in the same paragraph, that the total Christian population of the world was, in 1896, estimated at only 500,000,000! And thus one end of that curious paragraph eats up the other.

Alleged Bible-burning.

It evidently matters a good deal, after all, whose ox is goaded. There was no protest by non-Catholics, either in Sydney or in any other part of Australasia, against the frequent, open, and undisguised plundering and destruction by fire of churches, sacred vessels, costly vestments, liturgical books, Bibles, etc., by American Boxers during the recent barbarous conflict in the Philippines. But, according to the rather meagre cable-messages that have been trickling into our newspaper offices during the past few days, there is in Sydney something like an eruption of volcanic feeling over the alleged burning of Protestant Bibles in the Fiji Islands by natives who had embraced the Catholic faith. It appears that a large number of Fijians in the district of Namosi recently abandoned the Methodist body and joined the Catholic fold. The circumstances of these numerous conversions were set forth by Bishop Vidal in our issue of February 5; and Cardinal Moran, who is in constant communication with the islands, states (according to a recent cable message) that 'the chiefs had informed Bishop Vidal when at Namosi that the Methodists were preying upon them and doing them no good. The desire for a change of faith was the voluntary choice of the natives, and decided upon after holding several councils of the chiefs of the province.' The 'Catholic Press' considers it possible that Wesleyan literature may have been destroyed, but does not believe that Bibles were burned; and Cardinal Moran, on the assumption that this has been done, believes that it was the work of the converts themselves, and that the priests had no part in such a proceeding. His Eminence would not approve of any such action; and we, for our part, would likewise reprobate anything so highly calculated to wound the reasonable sensibilities of Protestant people as the burning of those Bibles, however mutilated and incorrect they may be as representations of the written Word of God. It is, however, necessary to accept, with a good deal of caution the usual version of stories regarding the burning of Protestant Bibles. Some years ago Mexico was made the scene of a holocaust of some Spanish version of the Scriptures. But it turned out that the story was, like that of the 'walled-up nun,' another Mexican myth set afloat by some minor Ananias who held, with the character in 'A Day's Work,' that there is no sense in telling too much truth. In November, 1895, a story crept into a Victorian provincial paper to the effect that a somewhat theatrical case of Bible-burning had taken place in Ballarat, at some unstated period, during the course of a Catholic mission in that fair golden city. We instituted careful inquiries on the subject among representative Catholics and Protestants who had been 40 years and more residents of the place—including a clever and greatly-esteemed Protestant pressman and old identity who wrote over the pen-name of 'Tom Touchstone.' The result of our investigations was that the truth of the story was denied on all hands; one man classed it among the 'fish and snake yarns' that fill out the dull moments of the silly season.

Hancock's "BISMARCK" LAGER BEER.

NEW ZEALAND'S
NEW INDUSTRY.