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IN MEMORIAM

ROSSITER.—In loving memory of Eliza Rossiter, who died at Christchurch, New Zealand, 30th September, 1900; aged 67 years.

Sleep on beloved, sleep and take thy rest;
Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast;
We love thee well, but Jesus loves thee best,
Good night!

Calm is thy slumber as in infants' sleep;
But thou shalt wake no more to toil and weep;
Thine is a perfect rest, secure and deep.—
Good night! Good night! Good night!

—Inserted by her loving husband, sons, and daughters.



To promote the cause of Religion and Justice by the ways of Truth and Peace.

LEO XIII. to the N.Z. TABLET.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1903.

LOOT



CURIOUS 'exhibit' is at present on view in the library of our House of Representatives. It is a venerable Boer Bible, looted from the house of Joseph Johannes Fritz by one of our gallant raiders during the course of the South African war. It was rescued by the Premier from the sordid surroundings of a Wellington pawnshop, and is soon to be restored to its rightful owner, in response to the appeal

made by Lord Roberts for the return of those venerated family treasures to the Boer homes from which they were stolen by thieves in khaki. Many of those stolen Bibles were ponderous volumes dating from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. All of them contained family records of births, marriages, and deaths that are accepted in South African Courts as legal evidence on these matters. To their Boer owners they possess a religious, sentimental, and genealogical value that made their theft a grievous loss and doubtless dictated the appeal of Lord Roberts for their speedy restoration.

This strange and widespread freak of military thieving is a fresh reminder to us that war, even at its best, was properly described by the first Napoleon as 'a trade of barbarians.' In pagan days there was a real and terrible meaning in the phrase, 'spoils of the victors.' Yet there were even then men that were better than the spirit of their times. Fabricius, for instance, returned without personal spoils from his sweeping victories that enriched his soldiers and filled to overflowing the coffers of his country's treasury. Soon afterwards he was found by his ingle-nook eating the roots and herbs that he had cultivated with his own browned and horny hands. He was the one of the noblest Romans of them all, and lived and died in rigorous poverty. Yet he could, in his campaigns, have piled the talents high and retired like the conquering heroes of our days to enjoy his laurels in wealth and ease. The old pagan principle was that war, when

declared, was declared against an entire nation, and that every man, woman, and child belonging to it was an enemy. To the Catholic Church we owe the abandonment of this principle in actual practice: that we do not raze cities and sprinkle salt upon their smoking ruins, that we do not slay or enslave captives, or (usually) strip the dead upon the field of battle, or treat women, children, the sick, physicians and surgeons, and non-combatants generally, as enemies. It was ever the Church's ideal that, when an armed struggle became necessary, it should be 'a duel between the military and naval forces of the States at war.' And so it purports to be to-day.

The Church and the theologian have raised their voices against promiscuous private looting in war, but thus far without very conspicuous effect. A great step in advance was made when merchants belonging to the country of an enemy, found in England at the breaking out of the war, were protected by the Magna Charta in their body and goods. The Spanish Jesuit theologians Suarez and Ayala were the first to codify in a way the laws of Christian warfare. We have moved pretty fast and far since their day. We have had Geneva Conventions and International Laws of War since then—hastened on, no doubt, by the wholesale plundering of the Peninsular War, and the historic sackings and massacres of Badajos, San Sebastian, Tripolitza, and Belgrade. The unauthorised and forcible seizure of the private property of an enemy by a soldier for his personal benefit is nominally punishable by a firing party and sundry lethal doses of lead. So it is—on paper, where good discipline and glowing philanthropy may be bought by the ream at counter-bargain rates. A somewhat looser printed code prevails at sea. Privateering, for instance, is not yet legally abolished. And is not every Prize Court to this hour a Court of the Law of Nations? In actual practice the provisions against private looting are a homage to the Christian ideal in war—only that and little more. The Lord of Misrule is too often the lord of war. Scratch a Russian and you'll find a Tartar. And there is a distinctly appreciable percentage of the Russian in the men that shoulder the rifle and go down to the wars. In the evil days of the Peninsula and the Crimea, when muddling commissariats often left Thomas Atkins hungry o' nights, a keen forager like Mickey Free or an accomplished chicken-thief was a treasure to his company. 'All sorrows are bearable if there is bread.' So runs the Spanish proverb. But it was not the achings of hunger that led to the extensive looting which took place in the German army, even under the sternest military discipline, during the war between the Fatherland and France. Officers and men alike fell to wholesale thieving; and during the whole course of that memorable campaign bands of Jewish and Christian dealers formed a conspicuous body among the variegated tatterdemalion of parasites and camp-followers of the German army. They bought up the military loot of every kingdom, from ladies' ear-rings to hall clocks and grand pianos, and sent them in vast consignments to the eager and profitable markets beyond the Rhine.

During the Chinese crisis of three years ago whole quarters of Tientsin were plundered by uniformed white thieves from ridge-pole to cellar-floor. So was Peking. It was only during the present year that some priceless relics of the bygone days of the Hwa Kwo or Kingdom of Flowers were recovered from an American 'officer and gentleman' and restored to their rightful owners. The strange spectacle was even witnessed of missionaries openly joining in the plunder, not of necessary articles of food, but of objects of value, which they converted into cash. They afterwards had the courage to attempt to justify their action in the columns of the American secular press. It was a curious case of history repeating itself. In the old Puritan days in England preachers maintained that dominion or ownership is founded on grace, and that if any man lacked this he had no right