

FEATURES OF THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

Leader—The Limits of State Interference, p. 29. Notes—Listening In; Virgil's Tomb; Good English, p. 30. Topics—As Others See Us; Peace Prospects; European Peace; Cardinal Logue; Anti-Clericalism in France, p. 18 & 19. Short Story, p. 11. Church in New Zealand, p. 17. The Fifteenth Centenary of St. Patrick, p. 21. The Visit of the Bishop of Tonga, p. 39.

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

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiae 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.



WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 1924.

THE LIMITS OF STATE INTERFERENCE

IT is not for lack of physicians that the world remains an invalid; for nearly every social reformer has a quack remedy for all our social disorders. The horrors of war and the hardships of poverty, which bitter trade rivalries thrust upon the people, have shocked mankind into a feverish search for immediate protection; and although in the main the ills of society are merely the reflection of moral corruption, many people seek their cure not in the sphere of ethics but in that of economics. They have become obsessed by the idea that the welfare of all can be secured only by abolishing the natural rights of everybody. They would make the individual a creature of the State and thus they promote the pernicious error that the civil government should arbitrarily intrude into the family and the household. This is a denial of the truth so clearly enunciated by Pope Leo XIII that: "Man precedes the State, and possesses, prior to the formation of any State, the right of providing for the sustenance of his body." The Pope was refuting the errors of those who are "striving to do away with private property, and (who) contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State. . ."; but as there is general uncertainty about the powers and functions of the State a brief examination of them may serve to dissipate some of the current fallacies.

The State is an institution that rises out of human necessity. The rights of man flow not from the State but from nature; and the liberty of the individual to exercise his rights is restricted only by the liberty of his neighbors to do likewise. The restriction proves the right, for while it is the duty of the State to prevent the clashing of rights, it has not the authority to abolish rights any more than a judge has to abolish the laws he administers. Rights may be abolished only by the authority that created them; and the rights which God gave to man cannot be taken away by any collection of men. The State is merely the guardian of rights, and its duty is to limit the how, when, and where of their exercise. For instance, everyone has the right to use the public thoroughfares, but it must be exercised in the manner best calculated to ensure for all the greatest possible liberty in moving about. It would surely be absurd for a State to decree that because some people refused to conform to the traffic laws it was necessary to close the

roads altogether. Yet this reasoning is not more foolish than that of those who say that because some people misuse private property the right to own private property should be denied to everyone. The right to own things is something that separates mankind from the brute creation. The brute lives for the moment, and is guided by its senses to the means of satisfying its simple needs. But with man it is different. He is guided by reason and he knows that the needs of to-day will recur to-morrow. "And," says Pope Leo, "on this very account—that man alone among the animal creation is endowed with reason—it must be within his right to possess things not merely for temporary and momentary use, as other living things do, but to have and to hold them in stable and permanent possession; he must have not only the things that perish in the use but those also which, though they have been reduced into use, continue for further use in after times." The State is called into being at the behest of man himself acting under the supreme authority of God, and its primary purpose is to preserve his rights by so limiting his exercise of them that those of his neighbor will be also preserved. The moment the State abolishes individual human rights it automatically abolishes the limitation of them; and the chief reason for its existence having thus disappeared, we are thrown back into anarchy. In such case the position of the citizen is infinitely worse than it would be if no State existed at all. In the latter circumstances he would have to defend his rights only against individuals, and he would no doubt receive help from his neighbors; but when the State uses its power to attack him he is helpless. Aristotle was right when he said that "the tyranny of a majority is the worst of all tyrannies."

The argument is sometimes advanced that man does not precede the State in any real sense; that in return for the assistance of the community, without which he cannot develop, he enters into a social contract—a contract to give up all rights and liberties to the State, and let the State decide what rights and duties he shall have for the future. This artificial theory is torn to shreds by Father McLaughlin, O.S.B., in the *Catholic Times*: "Man, with his rights, precedes the State with its rights. Man, with his rights that clash with his neighbor's rights, precedes the State with its right to adjust things so that each can get the substance of his rights unhindered. Man, with his right to daily bread, and his duty to win that daily bread, precedes the State with its right and duty to protect his daily bread-winning. Man, with his daily needs, has a right to his own permanent sources of livelihood, before the State is born to protect his ownership. The order of nature is thus: Man has his needs, and his duty to provide for himself and his family. These needs and duties to provide for himself and his family imply that he has also a right to do this. In seeking his rights he clashes with his neighbors, unless order be taken to prevent this clashing. To prevent this clashing the State is formed."

The craze for State action—or rather, State interference—is becoming a serious menace to individual liberty, as those who agitate for it most have the least idea of its just limits. We have seen the extent to which it has been carried in the matter of prohibition, when the temperate citizen is punished for the excesses of others. Most deplorable of all is it to see ministers of religion beseeching the politicians to relieve them and parents of their responsibility of training the children in the love and fear of God; and it is a sad reflection on the Reformation that after five hundred years of Protestantism its ministers can see no means of checking prevailing evils except the popular vote.

IRISH HISTORY COMPETITION
DATE OF EXAMINATIONS—SEPTEMBER 30.
APPLY FOR PAPERS IMMEDIATELY.

IRISH HISTORY PRIZES.
Rev. P. O'Dea (Omakau), £1 1s.

J. E. Taylor & Sons

CAMBRIDGE TERRACE & KARORI

The Catholic Undertakers; Phone (Day or Night) 1107.