

FEATURES OF THIS WEEK'S ISSUE

Leader—Milk-and-Water Catholics, p. 29. Notes—"Ponjola"; "Oiseaux de Tempête, p. 30. Topics—Catholics in U.S.A.; Bellarmine and American Independence; The Conquest of Scotland; The Menace of Asia, p. 19. Short Story, p. 11. Mussolini, p. 13. "Fake" Nuns, p. 15. Pius XI. and Ireland, p. 21. The Ruhr, p. 23. The Clash in the Klan, p. 23.

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

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



THURSDAY, AUGUST 23, 1923.

MILK-AND-WATER CATHOLICS



witty *sagart* once told a flock in a dairying district that many of them were only "milk-and-water" Catholics; for, in the summer, the milking kept them away from church, and, in the winter, the rain. However, it is usually in the towns that one finds most Catholics of that category. You find them among the young people who are misled by the will-o-the-wisps of the devil: among

their elders who suffer from laziness and from atrophy of conscience; among society people who think it vulgar to be out of step with their broad-minded non-Catholic friends; among business people who are so busy making money that they have no time to save their souls. Outside the fringe of earnest believers who never miss Mass, who go regularly to the sacraments, who uphold their religion, who help their schools, there is a host of stragglers who are more or less left behind by the members of the Church Militant, who bear the brunt of the battle for the Faith. They all have one thing in common: they have not brains enough or soul enough to understand what their Faith is, what it means, what heroism and what sacrifice on the part of our fathers made it, even humanly speaking, glorious: they are unable to see the grand truth of that bold challenge once uttered by the late Archbishop of St. Paul: "I hold no man my equal who does not share the Catholic Faith with me!"

Faith of Our Fathers! People may boast of the deeds that made the British Empire, but what are they in universality, in age, in stainless purity to the deeds that brought down to us that Faith? People may boast of long descent from a line of nobles, but what is it when you compare it with the unbroken and untarnished genealogy of the spiritual heirs of the Faith of the Apostles? People may boast of their race, but what is even the oldest race to the brotherhood which claims as glories Augustine, Basil, Ambrose, Columba, Malachy, Francis of Assisi, Francis de Sales, Ignatius, Dominic, the heroic Plunket, the fearless Jean, the seraphic Bonaventure? which adds to them the names of Pante, of Aquinas, of Scotus, of Raphael, of Angelo, of Da Vinci, of Pasteur? What line of kings can compare with the Popes? What heroes were braver than maidens like Agnes and Agatha and Lucy?

Against the impregnable rock of Peter the assaults of foes have been powerless in all ages. Alaric and Attila shattered themselves on it; in later times the fury of the Reformation spent itself in vain, and the might of Napoleon broke like a reed against it. If you are ignorant of history, if you have a heart incapable of admiring whatever is great and good and noble, you may be a milk-and-water Catholic, but if you are a man or woman worth knowing the clarion call of "Faith of Our Fathers" will rouse at once in your breast the response: "We will be true to thee till death!" If there were no other motives but historical and sentimental ones, we ought to be proud of our Faith and true to it. But beyond and above all such human reasons there is the great reason that our Faith is our link with God, with His grace, and through grace, with eternal life. When people abandon their Faith or grow indifferent to it, they revert to the earth from which their bodies were formed; they cease to look upwards; they try to establish their kinship with monkeys and apes. But people who cling to it lift their eyes to the skies and try to make the upward march of their body keep pace with the flight of their soul towards the things of the spirit, which are the things that matter. And the one way to do that is to be true to the Faith, to be members of the Church Militant, to be active soldiers in the army of Christ on earth, to be living links in the great chain which binds the grand society of the noble living, who are following Christ, of the noble dead, who are being purified in Purgatory to become worthy of seeing Him, of the blessed in Heaven whose souls are bathed in the radiance of the Great White Rose. In other words, we must do on earth what the Church commands us: we must keep the Commandments, hear Mass, frequent the sacraments, as good and earnest Catholics do at all times and in all places. And when doing that, to the best of your ability, whatever the world may think of you, you are in a position to make the same statement as Archbishop Ireland made and to regard yourself as above those who are not manifesting their appreciation of the Faith as you are. You need not worry about "Society." The humble men and women whom you meet on the road to the church are better men and women than your "toney" friends: better in the sight of God, and better friends for you could you but see it.

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If the true Catholic is such as we have briefly described, we know what the milk-and-water variety is only too well. Perhaps even next door to you lives the dear lady or the smiling gentleman who deprecates all active defence of our Faith, even when it is attacked; who shows his or her broadmindedness by eating meat on Fridays or by going for a joy-ride instead of to Mass on Sundays; who sends the children to non-Catholic schools because there they will meet people who will be useful to them in after life; who closes the ears to appeals for funds for education; who never spends a pound in buying good books, in supporting Catholic papers, in helping Catholic charities; who criticises sermons which express plainly the truths that are hard sayings for back-sliders; who avoids missions; who does not become a member of Catholic guilds or confraternities. The milk-and-water Catholic, in one word, is the Catholic who fails to do his duty in the most important matters in life. He is a shirker in the things that are of most importance; he is a coward where cowardice is most shameful, that is, in the matter of following Christ who died for us all. There are many of these slackers and backsliders and cowards around us. Could they but see themselves as they really are, their complacency would receive a rude shock. While trying manfully to avoid being in any thing a milk-and-water Catholic, let each of us pray for those who unfortunately belong to that too numerous host, the host of *faint* Christians who never seem to remember that they received Confirmation as a grace whereby they might be at all times courageous enough to profess their Holy Faith and to practise it without fear or human respect.