

The True Witness

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE... GEORGE S. OLBRE... Montreal, Friday, Feb. 7, 1862.

NEWS OF THE WEEK

The tone of the press, both in France and Great Britain, would seem to indicate that, unless the Northern States are prepared to assert, very decidedly and very speedily, their power to crush the Southern Confederacy, the latter will be formally recognised by the Great Powers of Europe.

We are now getting well on into the second month of the year, and yet no decided advantages have been gained by the North over the "rebels," although in December it was confidently asserted that the rebellion would be put down, crushed, and trampled under foot before the end of January.

Carried into execution, they would be a source of retributive, and was intended not to protect the coast of the loyal States from invasion, but to cripple the war resources of the enemy, but which would inflict upon him a signal and irreparable injury which should endure to all future ages.

The affairs of Italy remain unchanged; but so violent are the disputes in the Italian Parliament, that the attempt to construct a United Italy must be abandoned as hopeless.

CANADA AND IRELAND.—The British press recognises, and with justice, and with good reason congratulates itself upon, the loyalty of the Catholics of Lower Canada.

This is all very true, and very well. The Catholics of Canada are loyal, and have abundant reason to be, loyal to Great Britain, and to shrink with feelings stronger than mere loathing, from the prospect of annexation to the United States.

The Catholics of Canada generally are loyal; the French Canadians in particular—though standing in the relation of aliens in blood, language, and religion, to the people of England—are attached to English connection, and are ready to shed their blood in defence of the rights of England's Queen.

The Catholics of Ireland, the people of Ireland, have not thus been dealt with by their rulers. They have been virtually treated, until of late years, as a conquered and subject people;—they have seen their Church plundered, and their property handed over to a hated and alien Establishment; and with few intermissions the policy of their Governors has been that of maintaining Protestant Ascendancy—that is to say, the political ascendancy of a Protestant minority over a Catholic majority.

But had Catholic Ireland been treated as Catholic Lower Canada has been treated by Great Britain; had she, like Canada, been allowed her own Legislature, her own Church, and the control over her own internal affairs—Ireland would be to-day, what Lower Canada is; and it is to the gross injustice of Great Britain towards Ireland, and not to any inherent defect in the Irish character, that writers who comment upon the contrast between Ireland and Lower Canada should, and if they were honest would, attribute the want of affection on the part of the former towards British rule.

Human nature is much the same, every where. Treat men well, and they will be grateful; ill-use and persecute them, and you will make them your

enemies. Naturally there are no men more loyal and true to their plighted faith than are the Irish. Witness their fidelity during the last century to the Continental sovereigns under whom they took service, and whose armies they so often led to victory; witness the loyalty of the great mass of the Irish Catholics in the Northern States, despite of the usage that they have therein received; and we may be sure that, if they are not enthusiastically loyal in Ireland towards British rule, it is the fault of the latter, and not of the Irish heart, or of the religion which the people of Ireland cling to with a martyr's faith.

These are truisms, we shall be told—facts so patent to the most superficial observer that it is idle to insist upon them. And yet, self-evident and patent as are these facts, British statesmen will persist in ignoring them, and in treating those who insist upon them, as agitators, as visionaries, as disaffected, and foolish dreamers. And yet—what more natural than that the people of Ireland should claim the same treatment from the hands of Great Britain as that which has been awarded to Lower Canada, and the beneficial effects of which upon the Mother Country are now apparent? If it is right that we of Lower Canada should have our own Parliament or domestic Legislature at Quebec, it cannot be wrong for Irishmen to insist upon an Irish Parliament in Dublin.

Oh Jerusalem! wept Our Lord over the doomed City, "if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." So too a thick darkness seems, whenever the question of Ireland is mooted, to descend upon the best and wisest of British statesmen. The things that belong to the peace of the Empire are hid from their eyes; they cannot see that so long as they refuse to treat Ireland as they have treated Lower Canada, so long Ireland never can be to that Empire what Canada is—but that she will always remain the one vulnerable point, through which perhaps, some day its enemy shall deal it the fatal blow.

As British statesmen have sown, so have they reaped. In Ireland a bitter, a most bitter harvest; but in Canada a rich and plentiful crop of loyalty and good will. Why then do they not change their seed for Ireland? Because the things which belong unto peace are hid from their eyes.

PROTESTANTISM IN GERM.—There has been—as our readers will perceive by referring to our Irish items of intelligence—an unpleasant altercation between His Lordship the Bishop of Galway, and one of the parochial clergy—the Rev. Mr. Daly. The latter having persisted, in spite of the kindly admonitions, remonstrances, and positive injunctions of the Bishop, in taking an active and prominent part in secular politics, had been suspended from the exercise of his sacred functions. Hereupon a riotous demonstration in favor of the suspended priest was made by some of his admirers amongst the laity; upon which a Protestant journal—the Liverpool Post—quoted by the Montreal Witness of Saturday last—observes exultingly "that there are the germs of a Protestant spirit in the West of Ireland."

We allude to this painful transaction, not in order to criticise either the action of the Bishop, or the conduct of the suspended priest—for it is not for us to sit in judgment upon our ecclesiastical superiors; but merely for the sake of showing how conclusively and unconsciously our definition of Protestantism, as implying merely revolt against, or negation of, ecclesiastical authority, is confirmed by Protestants.

In the opposition offered by the Rev. Mr. Daly's friends to the act of the Bishop, there cannot be detected the faintest trace of Lutheranism or Calvinism or any other Protestantism considered as a phase of Christianity, but simply an act of revolt against ecclesiastical authority; and yet in that simple act of revolt, which does not imply any belief either in the sole authority of Scripture, or in the doctrine of justification by faith only—in which, according to the Christian Guardian, Protestantism consists—our Protestant contemporaries above cited, find, and with good reason, "the germs of a Protestant spirit." Not of a Christian, but simply of a "Protestant spirit"—that is to say, a spirit of revolt against ecclesiastical authority—in which, according to the TRUE WITNESS, all Protestantism essentially consists.

derived or proceeds, as from its first or formal principle. They germ of a Protestant spirit, contains in embryo the whole of Protestantism, and is the first or formal principle from whence it proceeds. But upon Protestant testimony, resistance to the authority of a Catholic Bishop, though not grounded upon any distinctive views of the doctrines of Christianity, and in which Unitarians and infidels might as consistently take part as evangelicals and orthodox Calvinists—is satisfactory evidence of the existence of the "germs of a Protestant spirit." What then must that spirit be when fully developed?

Thus we see that Protestants confound Protestantism and infidelity; and tacitly admit that in "germ" the two things are identical. "The people"—says the writer quoted by the Montreal Witness—"have revolted against this mandate of the Bishop;" and it is in this revolt itself—not in the motives to, or the results of the revolt—that our Protestant contemporaries find the "germs of a Protestant spirit." But as infidelity may, does, and indeed must, prompt its votaries to "revolt against episcopal mandates," so also we find the "germ of an infidel spirit," as well as of a Protestant spirit, in that act of revolt. In germ, the two spirits are thus identical; and as those things which are identical in germ, must also be identical in their full and final development, so Protestantism differs from infidelity, not in germ, or first principle, not in kind—but in degree only, and in that it is less fully developed. Infidelity, which springs from the same germ of revolt against ecclesiastical mandates, is therefore but full blown Protestantism.—Q. E. D.

All Protestants know that this is strictly true, though few have the honesty to admit it. By them, revolt against episcopal mandates, no matter what may be the purport of the mandates revolted against, is always accepted, and gladly hailed as a sign of a "Protestant spirit." If they hear a drunken rowdy, nominally a Papist, cursing and blackguarding his clergy—if they see him pelting his Bishop with rotten eggs, they at once conclude that the man is, if not already a sound Protestant, at all events in a fair way of becoming one. They hear that in Italy priests and monks are being forcibly expelled from their convents and monasteries, that the clergy are silenced or exiled, and that the authority of the Church is everywhere defied and set at naught. Hearing these things Protestants rejoice exceedingly; and wiping their lips give God thanks for that He has been pleased to shed the light of the Gospel upon a people sitting in darkness. So too, if from Ireland tidings reach their ears of violent mob demonstrations against a venerated Catholic Prelate, they hail the dawn of a new Reformation, and proclaim to the world that in Ireland also, "there are the germs of a Protestant spirit."

THE CENSUS.—The several journals of the Province give an analysis of the late census, which discloses some features very acceptable to Catholics, and to the friends of French Canadian nationality.

The total population of the Province is 2,506,755. Of these, very nearly one half, or 1,200,870, are Catholics, and the remainder, 1,305,885 are Protestants, or non-Catholics, of various denominations. Of these the Anglican sect is the most numerous, counting 370,887 members, whilst the Methodist and Presbyterian sects are represented by 372,462, and 346,991, respectively. Next in importance come the Baptists, who reckon 63,310 adherents; and lowest in the scale of Protestant sects we find that of the Mormons, or "Latter Day Saints," who can boast of only 77 adherents; of whom 74 belong to Upper, and 3 to Lower Canada.

If numbers alone constituted political strength, we should find in the above figures a full assurance, both for the preservation of our civil and religious liberties in the Lower Province, and for the triumph of Freedom of Education in the Upper. But numbers without union profit little; and it is because Catholics, unfortunately, have not been united, that the minority of Western Canada have still to complain of vexatious restraints upon their schools; and that the majority of Eastern Canada find themselves constantly menaced by the Clear Grits with constitutional changes, which by altering the relative strength of the two sections of the Province in the Legislature, would have the effect of placing the civil and religious liberties, the ecclesiastical, charitable, and educational endowments, of Lower Canada at the mercy of their unscrupulous enemies. If we wish to obtain and to retain that influence in the Legislature to which our numbers entitle us, we must be careful to cultivate that union which worldly policy, no less than Christian charity prescribes.

This union can be cultivated only by means of the mutual interchange of good offices between the Catholics of the East and of the West.—The former need the good offices of the latter against the encroachments of the "Clear Grits;" the Catholics of the West are dependent for the very existence of their schools upon the friendly services of the Catholics of Lower Canada; and it is as much the interest of the former to

treat every man, every party, who or which takes up the cry for "Representation by Population" as a political enemy, as it is the duty of the latter to insist upon "Freedom of Education" for the Catholic minority of the West. These truths are so self-evident, that it would seem as if it were a work of supererogation to insist upon them; and yet they have been so often shamefully neglected, that it is equally evident that either they are not believed, or that they are deemed of less importance than the paltry interests of place and party.

The Canadian however recognises the truth, and we are delighted to place it on record:—

"So long as the Union of the Canadian subsists, the Catholics of Upper Canada will stand in need of us to resist the efforts of a fanatical Protestantism, as we stand in need of them to resist the efforts of Upper Canadian Clear-Gritism. A common danger should make but one single cause, of the cause of the Catholics of Upper Canada, and that of the French Canadians of the Lower Province."—Canadian.

These are words of truth and wisdom; and if there be still amongst us aught of capacity for ether, we shall lay them to heart: There has not hitherto prevailed that union between the Catholics of the two sections of the Province which the common interests of Catholicity require. There have been faults on both sides. Some have been too intent, on one side, upon propping up a Ministry, to note its faults and shortcomings on the School Question—and to insist upon justice to the Catholic minority of Upper Canada. Others, on the other side, have been equally culpable in preferring their particular or merely local interests to the general interests of the Church; and neither the one nor the other has the right to launch out into accusations or reproaches, as if the fault were entirely on one side.

Instead, therefore, of indulging in mutual recriminations, let us seek rather to avoid in the future, those errors which have done so much injury to the common cause, in the past. On many minor points we may well, indeed must, be permitted to differ; but there are two, upon which there should, there can, be no difference of opinion amongst the Catholics of Canada. One—that it is the right of Catholic parents to educate their children as they please without interference from the State; and that every restriction upon the exercise of this right, is a monstrous injustice.—The other, that the people of Catholic Lower Canada—having, when immensely the superior, in point of numbers of the people of Upper Canada, been restricted to an equal number of representatives in Parliament with the latter—have the right to insist that now, that the population of Upper Canada is slightly in excess of that of the Catholic section of the Province, an equality of representatives in Parliament still be allotted to them.

Every man who adopts these two points in his confession of political faith is our friend; every man who opposes them, or who refuses to adopt both, is, and ever shall be treated by us as our enemy.

Thus for years has been the political platform of the TRUE WITNESS, and nothing shall ever persuade us to make any the slightest modification therein. Earnestly do we request the concurrence therein if our co-religionists of Upper Canada; to whom the maintenance of Equality of Representation in a United Legislature is of vital importance—since upon it their Separate Schools and their civil and religious liberties depend; earnestly do we invite the co-operation of our Catholic contemporaries;—and we do so with the more confidence because we have before our eyes an article from the Toronto Mirror, wherein that journal clearly exposes and strongly denounces the anti-Catholic policy of the Reform party; and makes profession of the same political principles as those of which the TRUE WITNESS ever has been, and ever will be, the uncompromising advocate. We make some extracts from the article in the Toronto Mirror by us alluded to:—

"We deal with an energetic antagonist, backed by a strong and united body, who will fight against us with the virulence of men who feel that it is their last struggle for the cause of Protestant ascendancy. It will require our whole strength and ability to make headway against such spirits. The moment we exhibit weakness or cowardice, we are beaten. The enemy has entered the field in truth and in earnest; and the men or body of men who stand parleying with him, and who would talk of conciliation at the expense of any portion of our rights or liberties, is his best and most effective ally. We can only preserve ourselves from the hopeless and subordinate lot which has fallen to the lot of the Catholic minorities of New Hampshire and Vermont, (perhaps under Providence as a warning to us) by standing shoulder to shoulder, and uniting ourselves with the enlightened and liberal portion of our Protestant fellow citizens who are in favour of maintaining intact the constitution of the country." On this subject, we find in the last issue of the True Witness (the well-known and esteemed organ of the Irish Catholics of Montreal) a few remarks so noble and patriotic that we cannot forbear quoting them for the benefit of our readers:—

"Catholics of all origins, whether residents of Eastern or Western Canada, are immediately interested in one another's welfare. A blow dealt to religious liberty in Toronto, or on the shores of the Lakes, must be felt in Quebec, and along the banks of the St. Lawrence; and if one portion of the body Catholic suffers, all the other members of the body must needs suffer with it. Our common enemy, but our common cause, has persuaded us that, between the Catholics of the Western Province, and those of the Lower, there should be no sympathy of feeling, no unity of action. They seek to exaggerate and perpetuate jealousies of race; and by all means in their power strive to possess themselves of the leadership of all Catholics, which alone can check the free and bold bounds to George intolerance and Protestant fanaticism."—True Witness.