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Montreal, February 9, 1854.

THE TRUE WITNESS
AND
CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, APRIL 7, 1854.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The most important event that we have to note, is, the sailing of the first division of the Baltic fleet under the command of Sir C. Napier on the 11th ult., followed in a few days by a stronger detachment, making in all the most powerful armament that Great Britain has ever sent to sea. The service which it has to perform is beset with many difficulties, arising, not only from the enemy with which it has to contend, but from the obstacles which nature herself has opposed to the prosecution of naval warfare in the inclement seas of the North. Ice and fogs are likely to give Sir C. Napier more trouble than the guns of the Russians, who will most probably endeavor to avoid an encounter with the monster fleet of Great Britain. The warfare too, in which the fleet is about to be engaged, is in many respects a novel one. The capabilities of steam, as a propelling power for vessels of war on a large scale, have yet to be tested; whilst the efficacy of modern improvements in the art of gunnery is still rather a matter of conjecture, than of positive knowledge. However, as the men who man the ships, and fight the guns, are of the same bull-dog stock as the old salts of Aboukir and Trafalgar, we have every reason to expect that, if they do have the luck to come across the Russians, they will know how to make the most of the novel resources which modern science has placed within their reach. In a few weeks, the question will be decided.

If, with the *Canadian*, we could bring ourselves to believe, that the great end of legislation was to perpetuate office, pay, and the disposal of patronage in the hands of a particular body of men, and that political measures should be tested by their effect upon the stability of a ministry, we should be prepared to admit much force in the arguments which our Quebec cotemporary adduces in favor of the "secularisation" of the "Clergy Reserves;" and we should at once agree with him in the propriety of the advice which he offers to his fellow-citizens, and co-religionists—to combine with the Democratic and ultra-Protestant party of the Upper Province, in the attack upon State endowments for religious purposes. But, accustomed as we are to estimate the value of measures by another standard, and to ask—not, what effect will they have upon the ministry? but rather, how will they affect the interests of the Catholic Church?—we can only regret that our present rulers have deemed it necessary to stake their political existence upon the carrying of a measure which, though at first sight directed only against certain revenues set apart for the use of the Protestant communities, must inevitably clear the way for an assault upon all religious property; and which Catholics, therefore, cannot support without exposing the endowments of their own Church to considerable danger, and rendering themselves liable to the reproach of disregarding the civil rights of their fellow-citizens. Much as we may esteem the present ministry, acknowledging, as we cheerfully do, their claims upon the Catholic vote, we must regret the alternative which they have forced upon us; but we cannot allow our gratitude for services rendered, to outweigh the solid reasons which imperatively call upon every Catholic to resist the meditated onslaught upon Protestant ecclesiastical endowments.

That amongst its members, the present ministry includes several amiable Catholic gentlemen, of whose political integrity, and of whose sincere attachment to the Church, there can be no doubt, we are well aware. But we have no reason to believe that these men, in their hearts, approve of every political act of their colleagues; and if they yield their assent to the introduction of a proposal for "secularising" property, set apart by competent authority for religious purposes, we strongly suspect that they yield to what they conceive to be an inexorable political necessity, rather than to any personal predilections in favor of spoliation. But this necessity, the ministry themselves have created; the wall against which they will obstinately persist in dashing their heads, is one of their own building. We can conceive why the political antecedents, and the pledges made at hustings by some amongst them, should compel them to introduce, and honestly support, a Bill for "secularising" the "Reserves." But we cannot understand, and we heartily deplore, the suicidal folly of the ministry, in staking its political existence upon the success of the measure; a measure of doubtful popularity in Upper Canada, opposed by a numerous, and highly respectable body of Protestants, and which, if carried, can only be carried by the assistance of the Catholic vote. Granted, that the Ministry was bound to introduce such a Bill, and to use all its influence to force it through, it does not follow that it was bound to pledge itself to put an end to its political life, should its efforts prove unsuccessful. If the present Government is not strong enough to carry one particular measure, so long as its general policy enjoys the confidence of the people, it is not only perfectly in accordance with the laws of political morality for it to remain at its post,

and to abstain from madly cutting its own throat, but, as entrusted with the care of watching over the interests of the community, it is its bounden duty so to do. Lord John Russell was not more strongly pledged to carry out the famous "Appropriation Clause," than is the present Ministry to carry out the "Secularisation" of the "Reserves;" and yet, without any imputation on his honesty as a statesman, Lord J. Russell retained office, though the "Appropriation Clause" itself still remained a dead letter.—Our rulers might well have followed this precedent, and thus spared conscientious Catholics the disagreeable alternative which they have forced upon them—that of either abandoning a principle, or opposing a Ministry of whose general policy they heartily approve. The Ministry call upon Catholics to ratify, by their votes, the principle—that State endowments, in aid of religion, are unjust, injurious, and should be abolished; as Catholics, taking the Church as our guide, we cannot but offer our strenuous opposition to such a demand.

We do so, but with regret; not from ill-will towards the present government; not from any party motives, nor from any desire for a remodelling of existing political combinations. We doubt much if any change of ministry would be beneficial to Catholic interests; and we fear that the change that would occur, in case of the resignation of the present men, would be, in many respects, a change for the worse. But a principle is at stake; a great principle, involving, not only the disposal of the revenues accruing from the "Clergy Reserves," but the whole question of the propriety of State endowments for religious purposes. We contend that they are lawful, desirable, and should be maintained.

For be it observed, the question at issue is not—as the *Canadian* endeavors to put it—"Shall the Reserves be maintained in their primitive destination?" but simply this—Shall a fund, set apart by the State for religious purposes, be "secularised," or altogether diverted from its original destination? Two questions very different; and though we are not called upon at present to answer the first, we can, without hesitation, return a decided negative to the second.

We have always carefully abstained from discussing the question—Are the revenues, as at present set apart by the State, for religious purposes, distributed, or employed in the best manner possible? We neither assert that they are, nor that they are not; and if any injustice can be established in the present mode of distribution, that injustice may well be adduced as an argument in favor of a reform—as a reason for a more equitable division of the property in dispute. To such an argument, Catholics and Protestants are willing to listen; and are ready to demand that, if injustice can be proved, that injustice be remedied. But reform, if necessary, is one thing—and "secularisation" another. Surely, it is possible to remedy one wrong, without perpetrating a greater; and to remove all reasonable grounds of complaint, without having recourse to such a desperate measure as secularisation, which, to Catholic ears at least, always sounds suspiciously like sacrilege. The "Clergy Reserves" having been set apart, by competent authority, for religious uses, we contend that they are sacred, and should not be diverted to merely secular purposes. We would go further: and without denying the right of the Legislature to apply a remedy—if the need of a remedy can be fully established—we contend that the existing rights of the Anglican church, and other religious bodies deriving their revenues from these Reserves, should be scrupulously respected; and that, if there be a reasonable doubt as to the extent and nature of those rights, that doubt should be interpreted in favor of the actual possessors.

That duty, no less than interest, indicates this as the proper policy for the Catholics of Canada to pursue at the present juncture, we are prepared to argue with the *Canadian*. Not in any contentious spirit; not, we assure him, with the design of insulting him, or his friends; but coolly, dispassionately, and from a Catholic point of view. The press upon our columns prevents us from entering more at large into the subject this week; but in our next, we trust to lay before our cotemporary some considerations which should, we think, induce Catholics to pause, ere, by their votes they sanction a measure whose consequences will inevitably be deeply injurious to the welfare of the Catholic Church in Canada.

In the meantime we would beg of the *Canadian* not to take personal offence where none is meant. If we have imputed to him, simplicity, and taxed him with an over-credulity in the fair words, and honeyed speeches of men against whom he should have been on his guard, we did so to avoid attributing to him something worse than mere simplicity, something more disgraceful than any amount of credulity; we did so, lest we should seem to accuse him of a readiness to sacrifice the interests of the Catholic Church of which he professes himself a member, to the exigencies of a political party of which he is the recognised organ. We trust that this explanation will suffice to allay any angry feelings which our cotemporary may entertain against us on account of our article of the 24th ult. We attack his politics on a particular measure, as fraught with evil to the Church, but we acquit him of all evil intentions, or dishonorable motives. We would also remind our cotemporary that the *lay* editor of the TRUE WITNESS is alone responsible for all that appears in its columns.

Mr. J. Mitchell has, it seems, put forward an address to his fellow-countrymen in the United States, exhorting them to avail themselves of the anticipated outbreak of hostilities in Europe, by an attack upon Great Britain's North American possessions. The American press further announces that an organisation exists throughout the States, the object of which

is to excite an insurrection in Canada, of whose population the Irish form a very numerous and powerful part. Nor is money wanting for the scheme, says the *New York Herald*. A balance of the sum raised some years ago by the friends of Ireland in America, still remains on hand; which, together with the interest accruing therefrom, must amount to upwards of \$50,000. This sum is to replenish Mr. Mitchell's military chest, and to defray the expenses of the marauding army, at the head of which he is shortly expected to appear as Commander-in-Chief, menacing our Canadian frontiers, and calling upon the Irish throughout the Province to revolt.

Seriously, we think, that Mr. Mitchell has much over-estimated his own influence over his countrymen, and that he has formed a very erroneous opinion of the disposition of Her Majesty's Catholic subjects in this portion of the globe. The Irishman has, most assuredly, no cause to love England, or British rule. At home, in his native land, the tokens of that rule may be read in the wasted fields, the deserted cottages, and the emaciated countenances of Ireland's peasantry. Its monuments are the ruins of Catholic churches, and convents, and its fittest trophies, are the vast charnel-houses of Ennystimon and Kilmursh. That an Irishman should entertain a lively hatred of English dominion, is as natural, as that the Greek should burn with unconquerable aversion against his Moslem oppressor, or that the Pole should loath the accursed yoke of the barbaric Muscovite. The true-hearted Irishman, in that he loves his country, must needs detest the alien rule beneath which Ireland has, so long, and so bitterly groaned.

But the Irishman remembers also, that it is as a Catholic, and because of his fidelity to his ancestral faith, that he has been persecuted. In the oppressor of his country, he sees the Protestant, rather than the Saxon; and he knows that, whilst he remains true to his religion, he will still continue to be the object of Protestant hatred, and, where practicable, of Protestant persecution. He knows too, that the Yankee Protestant, is as bitter, and as implacable a foe of the Irish Catholic, as is the Anglo-Saxon Protestant on the other side of the Atlantic; and that he has as little justice, or honesty, to expect from a Protestant republic, as from a Protestant monarchy. The blackened walls of the Charleston convent, and the constant refusal of the Massachusetts Legislature to indemnify the innocent victims of Protestant brutality, plainly tell how little justice, Catholics have to expect at the hands of Yankee Protestantism. The Irish Papist will still be persecuted, whether he be a British subject, or a Yankee citizen.

And if, as Catholics, Irishmen have nothing to gain from the revolutionary policy advocated by Mr. Mitchell—who, it should be remembered, is as hostile to the religion of Irishmen, as Mazzini, or Garibaldi, as citizens, as freemen, their condition most certainly would not be thereby improved; for any trifling accession to their political privileges, would be more than counterbalanced by the diminished security to life and property, and by the loss of personal, or individual liberty—the only liberty after all which it is worth while to contend for; political privileges being only so far desirable as they contribute towards the security of the freedom of the individual. But, in America, we are told that "the citizen has no personal rights."

Now personal freedom does, and may always, exist to a high degree, under a monarchical form of government; though it is almost impossible under a democratic. Of all tyrannies, there is none so cruel, so degrading and brutalising, as the tyranny of an irresponsible, brute majority; no despotism is so hopelessly crushing, as a democratic despotism—no not even the despotism of the Russian Czar. And it is to exchange our present mild and equitable government—which, if not perfect, leaves at least little to desire to its subjects; and which, alone on this vast Continent, can truly boast, that its soil is never trodden by the foot of a slave, whilst its flag offers a sure asylum to the wretch escaped from the thong of the whip, and the bloodhound's fangs—it is to exchange this truly free and equitable government, for the democratic institutions of that blessed land of republican freedom, where "niggers" are burned at the stake, and where Mr. Mitchell ardently longs to possess a "cotton plantation well stocked with black slaves," that the Catholic Irish are called upon to take up arms, and to join the standard of a Protestant revolutionist, who is known to approve of, and would very probably imitate, had he the power, the worst atrocities of the infidel democrats of modern Europe. Verily the Irish are not such fools as to enroll themselves beneath such a standard, in such a cause; and Mr. Mitchell has yet to learn that his antecedents in Ireland, in Australia, and in America, are not such as to give him any legitimate claims to the respect or confidence of his Catholic fellow-countrymen. The cause of Ireland, to be fought successfully, must be fought beneath a Catholic standard, by a Catholic leader, with Catholic followers, and with Catholic weapons. So only can the cause of Catholic Ireland prosper—for so only will it deserve to prosper.

Mr. Mitchell egregiously mistakes the state of parties in Canada. Whatever causes of complaint Catholics may have against the British Government at home—and they have many, and great—they have none here. Here, towards all its subjects—whether from policy, or from nobler motives—the British Government has, with but few exceptions, acted honorably and impartially. If disaffection exists, it is not amongst the Catholics, whether of French, or Irish origin; whose highest interests are safer as subjects of the British monarchy, than they would be if they were citizens of a democratic Protestant republic. Besides, there is such a thing as duty, as well as interest; and our duties as Catholics, are incompatible

with the line of conduct advocated by Mr. Mitchell; for revolt against lawful authority is condemned by the Church, as a sin, not only against man, but against God. It is not permitted to the subject—says the Church—to take up arms against his lawful sovereign. Now certainly the authority of the British Crown in Canada, is lawful authority.

Dissatisfaction there may be; but it is chiefly confined to the Protestant commercial classes, and amongst them it exists to a very limited degree.—The Annexation movement of '49 was, as the *Leader* observes, "exclusively a commercial movement;" a dirty sordid affair of dollars and cents; one of the most contemptible, mercenary, agitations that ever disgraced a political party. Amongst the Orangemen, too, there may be dissatisfaction; because they can no longer lord it over their Popish brethren; because, in Canada, the Catholic is on an equal footing with the Protestant; and to the Orangeman, "Annexation" holds out the prospect of the restoration of "Protestant Ascendancy," and of those glorious days when the Papist dared not call his soul his own, without leave obtained from his Protestant neighbor. For these, "Annexation" may have its charms; but every Catholic, who, appreciating the blessings which he now enjoys, wishes to perpetuate them, will deprecate it, as the greatest curse and disgrace that could possibly befall his native, or adopted, country.

Amongst the "signs of the times" we may enumerate the articles which appear in the leading Protestant organs, of both sections of the Province; and in which the intentions of the political parties which they represent, with respect to the property of the Catholic Church in Canada, are openly avowed. So confident is the ultra-Protestant, or democratic party, of the ultimate success of its designs, that it takes not even the pains to conceal them.

The *Globe* in the Western, and the *Montreal Gazette* in the Eastern, Province, may be supposed to speak the sentiments of the great majority of the democratic Protestant body in Canada; and whilst advocating the "secularisation" of the "Clergy Reserves" they do so, not as if that "secularisation" were the end proposed, but merely as the means to an end; that end being of course the "secularisation" of the property held by the Catholic Ecclesiastical Corporations in the Lower Province.

To be sure, our opponents know, that, if the "secularisation" of the "Reserves" can be effected, the victory of the democratic party will be so complete, that there will then remain no question as to its "might" or power of seizing upon every ecclesiastical, charitable, and educational, endowment in Canada; no matter how, or by whom administered, or by what title held. They desire, however, to invest their "might," with a semblance of "right;" and to make it appear that the exercise of the former will involve no violation of the latter. For this purpose, many specious, but impudently mendacious, or else grossly ignorant, arguments are put forward by our Protestant cotemporaries above named.

We will take as a specimen, the *Montreal Gazette*. He is professedly replying to an able article in the *Journal de Quebec*, in which our Catholic cotemporary argues that—as the property held by the Catholic Ecclesiastical Corporations, was not originally conferred by the Crown, from the public domain—that as it was acquired either by purchase, or as a donation of private property from private individuals—and that as its inviolability has been recognised by Acts of Parliament, and guaranteed by international treaties—therefore it is not subject, in the same manner, to the control of the State, as are unconditional grants from the Crown, of public property, for which no value has been given by the holder, and to which he has imparted no additional value by the expenditure thereon of his private capital. All private property is justly liable to State control for State purposes; all is subject to be taxed for the profit of the whole. But then all should be equally burdened; nor has the State the right to seize upon the property of some of its subjects, upon the plea that they are too rich, or that the State stands in need of such extraordinary and partial means of recruiting its exchequer. We admit then that the State has the same right of control over the property of any of our Catholic Corporations, that it has over the property of the farmer, the merchant, or manufacturer; but we deny that it has any more right over the property of the former, than over that of the latter; because the property of both is private property—acquired, not by gift from the State, but by purchase, or by donations, from private individuals. We claim, in short, for the property of our Ecclesiastical Corporations the same inviolability, the same sanctity, the same respect, which we require for, and accord to, the property of any private individual in the community. The justice of this claim depends upon, whether the property of these Ecclesiastical Corporations be indeed private property; and this again depends upon the manner in which these Corporations originally acquired it. If—as we contend—by purchase, by gift, or as a consideration for pecuniary services rendered—that is, services which may be expressed in terms of £. s. d.—then is it, in the strictest sense of the word, private property; and, therefore sacred, as its seizure by the State, without a full compensation, would be tantamount to an act of robbery.

The *Gazette*, and others, attempt to meet this argument—which cannot be assailed without perilling the whole social fabric, and the utter subversion of all ideas of right and justice—by denying the premises of the *Journal de Quebec* respecting the original process by which the Catholic Ecclesiastical Corporations obtained the property which they now hold. And as our cotemporaries know that the majority of their readers have but little acquaintance with the early history of Canada, they shrink not from making