

the provision of the Gaol Act, as a reasonable cause. The chairman of that division says the same thing; and he adds that it shall not happen again; whereby P. N. is free of his chapel, his chaplain, and his heretics, and has only for conscience sake suffered "peine dure et forte" for 122 hours.

Mr. Pigou concludes with this exclamation—"Had any Catholic priest so conducted himself to any two letters of the alphabet as the Folkestone chaplain persecuted P. N., what a eknor had arisen, what a calling of names, what Babylons invoked what an array of invective."

SECRECY OF CONFESSION.

We extract from the *London Times* of the 10th ultimo, an interesting article on the of a Protestant Minister to decline giving testimony as to matters revealed to him in confession, in accordance with the prescription of the English Book of Common Prayer. The case which he brings by way of illustration is precisely such as actually occurred when Colt was visited by Dr. Anthon. Not only should the Minister be permitted to decline revealing anything confided to him in such circumstances, but the obligation of secrecy seems naturally implied. In the Catholic Church the secrecy of sacramental confession is altogether inviolable.—*Catholic Herald*.

Many persons have probably observed the frightful case of infanticide which was reported in our paper a few days back. A woman of the name of FRANCES BENNETT being dangerously ill, and as she supposed at the point of death, confessed in her agony to her own sister, to a policeman named FOWLER, and to the clergyman of the parish, that she had murdered successively no less than six legitimate children, the offspring of an illicit connexion with a man named YAPP, and with him buried them in a place which she pointed out. Search was made, and the skeletons of six infants found; but the woman recovered, and now wishes to disclaim her confession. She and YAPP are in custody, and the case has been once brought before a coroner's inquest, which was adjourned to Wednesday, the 9th (yesterday), and of which we shall probably soon have to communicate the result.

We observe upon this case not for its atrocity, which rather repels remark, but because a curious and important point of English law seems likely to be raised by it, which has not yet received a definitive judicial decision. The clergyman having deposed to the above effect, refused to proceed beyond this statement, alleging that all further communications were made to him simply in his spiritual capacity, and were therefore inviolable. The coroner after some efforts to overpersuade him, "left the matter as it stood;" but it must almost inevitably be reopened, and certainly presents us with a question of very grave interest.

We suspect the edicts of judges will, amidst some variance, be found to tend to the conclusion that such evidence, though it may be admitted in a court of justice (for even this question has been raised), cannot or ought not to be compelled; and certainly the reasons for this last conclusion are of the most weighty kind.

Few persons deny that the earnest clergyman has a place in a Christian country. Few persons doubt that that place is not the preservation of property, not the punishment of guilt; not the administration of justice, but simple and directly this,—the salvation of those souls which he finds thrown up in his charge. In this work his ministrations can scarcely be called for more imperatively than in such a case as the present—in the case of the deeply guilty, terrified, almost despairing, criminal—in the case of a mind from ignorance, from

long habits of crime, from sickness, and from terror, unable to support or guide itself, yet crying in despair, we will not say for consolation, but for help. Nor does it appear less certain that only upon the unreserved communication of that which lies so heavily upon the heart can that help be rendered with wisdom and efficacy. It would be, indeed, hard to believe that at such a moment, when, if ever man could pronounce on the eternal prospects of his fellow-creature, he would say they were hanging on a thread, the English law interferes to check the bursting confidence, and throw back the criminal into a surly and hardened obstinacy, or, at least, into dry and measured half-confidence, by telling him that all that he divulges may—may, must—will be compelled to come forth as evidence, not only against his own life, but against all those necessarily implicated by his disclosures.

Let us take the case of a convicted, but unconfessing felon. What are his relations to the law? The civil rule has yielded to the terrible necessity—more terrible as the guilt which demands it is more atrocious—of capital punishment. He is right. The law of God, and the order of nature, fix on him that responsibility. But a responsibility it is to cut short a career of crime with short time for repentance; and to omit any means of mitigating that responsibility—of rendering effectual that short time which alone can be conceded, is guilt. Under this obligation, what does the state do? It sends to the criminal a minister of religion. It places in the hands of that minister a book of religion, sanctioned by and embodied in its own laws, in which it bids him "move sick persons," and not less urgently one would think men appointed to die, "to make special confession of their sins, if they feel their conscience troubled with any weighty matter." Can it be supposed that society interferes in the last moment of this man, sacrificed by itself and for its own good, to harden his heart and close his mouth—to nullify the necessarily inadequate provision which itself has made for his spiritual good, by telling him that those provisions are a trap, that he must not expect to discharge his mind unless he is prepared also to hang all his companions in crime?

Contrast with this the respect with which the law views all previous communications between the same criminal and his attorney. All that intercourse which took place in order to his effectual defence is invested with a veil of inviolable secrecy. The confidential information necessary for the conduct of his trial,—necessary, that is (if he be guilty,) in order to evade his righteous sentence, not only cannot be extorted from the lawyer to whom it is confided, but is actually, if proffered, inadmissible in evidence against himself or any one else. A privilege, useless in all cases to the innocent, is carefully secured to the guilty, lest he should be unable to defeat the law; but would be denied to him, on pretence of assisting the law, when imperatively demanded in aid of his higher, and now only remaining, interests. It is said to be the progress of civilization which secures to the criminal this tender considera-

tion for his temporal safety. In the progress of civilization in the same ratio to abjure any similar regard for his eternal welfare?

But it is said justice is defrauded. Of what? Of the advantage which it would reap in the pursuit of crime by a knowledge of the substance of these confessions. And, if it be so, it is the least of two evils. But this is not, or scarcely, the case. You cannot avail yourself for judicial purposes of this spiritual confidence without destroying the confidence itself. The chaplain of a gaol (to pursue our illustration) may be made an evidence in a court of justice or he may be made the comforter and depository of the prisoners' loaded consciences. He cannot be both. Make him an accredited spy; and you harden the heart of the prisoner against him at once—before his trial for his own sake, both before and after trial for the sake of others. You gain nothing for yourself, you only silence him. No feeling abides so stubbornly in the hearts of such men as a mistaken fidelity to their companions. This—the better part, perhaps, of their nature—you at once alarm and rouse against yourself, and by it block up every opening to reliance and sympathy. You crush what you wish to gain—and more—you cast away what, in a measure, perhaps, you might have gained by gentler methods. Allow the heart of the criminal to soften itself; do not hasten to take advantage of the first gushings of a guilty conscience; give him the fullest access to that guidance which he needs without greedily snatching from him the mastery of his secrets; let him learn his duty—the duty of making such satisfaction as is still in his power to the law of his country, but leave him still his discretion in making it—and you will probably gain more—you cannot possibly gain less—from his voluntary and deliberate confessions than you could otherwise extract from his indiscretion or despair.

This is no place for any legal discussion of the question. We have merely attempted to argue it on those grounds of humanity, religion, and expediency, which are level to any apprehension, and we believe that the conclusion which we base on these considerations is such as to command the acquiescence of any Christian nation.

MILLERISM.

To the Editor of the MONTREAL TRANSCRIPT.

Sir,—I have on several occasions observed in your paper, allusions to the doctrines of Millerism; but I believe the public are not sufficiently aware of its consequences as practically exhibited by those who have embraced these doctrines. The extent to which the delusion has spread throughout this County, would astonish any who was not aware how very easy it is for wondering persons to impose upon the community, by earnest appeals to their feelings and imaginations, and by confident assertions. Throughout Stanstead the mania has been generally spread, as also through the adjoining Townships of Barston and Hatley. I believe it has not spread much in other parts of the District, except about Melbourne, where it is said that not a few have embraced it. At Sherbrooke, and in the neighbourhood, only one person has been converted, and he is at present engaged in drawing out timber to build a blacksmith's shop in the spring, so that he probably is not very well convinced of the world's coming to an end in April next.

You will readily imagine that the most intelligent part of the community are not those

who embrace Millerism; on the contrary, they are those whose character for reflection is by no means high, and whose judgment are weak in proportion as their imaginations are strong. It is a fact, however, that not a few persons of respectable character, and "well off in the world," as we say hereabouts, have embraced the doctrine; the majority, as far as I can judge, are not of this class, but principally well meaning, credulous persons, of small property, living in remote neighbourhoods. I enclose you a discourse or argument published at Boston, which has been widely scattered about in this quarter, proving that the world is coming to an end in 1843. The author, Josiah Leath, has made a great stir in this quarter; but to a sober mind his arguments are so utterly ridiculous, as not to merit refutation. Indeed, it is only by dint of excitement and loud talk that any attention is gained for such doctrines, for the Press seems to destroy all their effect and open the eyes of the people.

But to show the effects of the doctrine I may mention a few instances of persons, whose names will be given if required. One man, named W., a blacksmith, had sold out and was to be paid next fall, but took one half of the sum in hand, has given over work, goes about attending Miller meetings, his wife has gone home to her friends, and the poor man is now a firm believer in the "great crisis." Another man, named M****, had a revelation that he was to marry a girl who he had been trying to get for some twelve months, but who had refused him, and was engaged to another. She seems to have had a like revelation, and in 48 hours they were married. Another man had a similar revelation, but his dearly beloved partner and sister has had no corresponding revelation, as yet, so the matter is postponed. Others have carried their dangerous absurdities so far as to pretend to have had revelations that other men's wives were to be given into their power! It is well known that others have given over work, and are now running about attending meetings, which are held almost nightly, sometimes till after midnight.

It is impossible to exaggerate the absurd practices at the meetings, especially what is called struggling for sinners, or in plain terms throwing themselves on the floor, casting their arms about like maniacs, clapping their hands, and shrieking at the top of their voices, "Hosanna," "Come Jesus," and many other such phrases. At a place some 4 miles from Stanstead Plain, an attempt was made to shoot the devil out of a respectable man in the neighbourhood. The meeting lasted till 2 o'clock in the morning—the door was opened and the invisible spirit shot at, and, as it were, chased out with motions and signs, and thus the excitement is kept up from night to night. "Losing their strength" is another of the tactics resorted to—falling down as it were in fits; sometimes the young ladies will accidentally fall into the arms of a favoured swain, not far off, who of course solicitously watches over the fair devotee. One old lady in this quarter was observed quietly making preparations for a fall, by taking off her bonnet and folding her shawl so as to make a pillow for her head, and then down she came in her agony of soul for the impenitent. Singing is an essential part of the exercises; the most popular line are the following, which are sung a score of times in succession:

"I believe it—I believe it:
I believe it just now."
And also the following very beautiful and expressive lines:
"I'm on the island, I'm on the island;
Isn't it strange? Isn't it strange?"

It is needless to multiply examples. It is strange, it is astonishing, that men should be so easily duped; but the absurd system of "Revelations" bids fair to open the eyes of the well meaning and sincere persons, who have embraced their doctrines. In the mean time we are on the look-out to see how your city will treat the new doctrine, as it is said that two Reverend Gentlemen from the South were going in to convert the unbelieving worldings who attend to their business as if the world had not more than five months to live.

I am yours, &c. S.
Stanstead, 15 Dec. 1842.