

The True Witness.

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE  
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 J. GILLES.  
 G. B. OLBERG, Editor.

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 22.

ECCLIASTICAL CALENDAR.

DECEMBER—1865.  
 Friday, 22—EMBER DAY—FAST. Of the Feria.  
 Saturday, 23—EMBER DAY—FAST. Of the Feria.  
 Sunday, 24—Fourth Sunday in Advent. Vigil of Christmas.  
 Monday, 25—CHRISTMAS DAY.  
 Tuesday, 26—St. Stephen, Protomartyr.  
 Wednesday, 27—St. John, Ev. Ap.  
 Thursday, 28—Holy Innocents, M. M.  
 The "Forty Hours" Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will commence as follows:—  
 Saturday, 23—Convent, St. John's.  
 Monday, 25—L'Enfant Jesus, Pointe aux Trembles.  
 Wednesday, 27—Ste Melanie.

NEWS OF THE WEEK

We are now in receipt of the particulars of the escape of Mr. Stephens from Richmond jail. It was the simplest thing in the world.—The police, some twenty-five in number, who used to do duty in the prison, were first reduced to three; then keys to open all the doors were made for, or furnished to, the warden in charge on the night of the escape; and with these keys Stephens's cell was opened. Then as precautions had been taken by the authorities to place no sentries, and to oppose no obstacles of any kind to his escape, he walked quietly out, and is supposed at once to have got on board of a French lugger, and stood over for the coast of France. The next thing we shall hear of him, will be, we suppose, when he arrives at New York.

How far the authorities aided and connived at the escape is not known. By some a man named Byrne, who had charge of the wards on the night in question, is alone accused; by others the governor himself is accused; but the fact of the withdrawal of the police, and the other fact that special pains had been taken to have no military guard or sentries round a prison in which State prisoners were confined, would almost seem to indicate that persons far higher in authority than either turnkey or governor, were at the bottom of the business; and that the whole affair, the arrest and escape, was got up between Stephens and the Irish government, in order to put the latter in possession of important Fenian papers and secrets, and to screen the former from the odium and infamy attached to the character of the informer. If we reject this hypothesis we must adopt another at least as improbable. We must credit the government with an amount of fatuity and negligence inconceivable and incredible.

In the meantime the trials of several of the Fenian prisoners on the charge of "treason felony" have been gone on with before the Special Commission in Dublin. Mr. Luby, editor of the *Irish People* was the first arraigned—and after a long and careful trial was found guilty and sentenced to 20 years penal servitude. After him Mr. O'Leary was put up, and he also was convicted and sentenced to twenty years penal servitude. Mr. Michael Moore pike maker was the third: he also was convicted and sentenced to 10 years penal servitude: and when the last steamer sailed the trial of O'Halloran another alleged conspirator was progressing. It was thought that after the trial of the last named the Dublin Court would adjourn till after the 6th prox. devoting the interim to the trial of the Cork prisoners. Everything was quiet in Ireland up to the latest dates. The Channel Fleet had received orders to winter in Ireland, in which part of the Empire there are actually about 20,000 regular troops. All the Fenian prisoners have been removed to Kilmannham jail, as the authorities of the Richmond jail are suspected of treachery.

The British Government is about to institute a searching inquiry into the causes of the late negro outrages in Jamaica, and the alleged severities of the Colonial government towards the murderers. For this purpose a Commission will be named, to be composed, it is rumored, of Sir Henry Storks Governor of Malta, our old Canadian acquaintance Sir E. Head, and a legal gentleman, name not given. Everything seems to indicate the intention of the Ministry to introduce a Bill for lowering the franchise in England.—

The cattle disease still continued its ravages and was on the increase.

Leopold King of Belgium is dead. The cattle disease had broken out in France. There is nothing new to report from Rome.

From New York we learn that Mr. Stephens is hourly expected, and that it is hoped that his presence and influence may restore harmony in the Fenian ranks, now distracted by the dissensions between the Senate and President, who continue mutually blackguarding one another, and quarrelling over the distribution of the plunder which they have extorted from their dupes.—Meantime Mr. O'Mahony is in possession of the main thing—the elegantly furnished mansion, the wines, the beer, the precious liquors, and the tobacco—to which as the wages of his heroic patriotism he will no doubt stick to the last moment.

It is natural that the Catholic journalist should note the Reports from time to time published by the various missionary or swaddling societies with which the land is infested, as to their progress in their great work of de-Catholicising the *habitans* of Lower Canada. There are a good many of such societies, and each has its annual meeting or tea-party; and which, after many cups, and much buttered toast, unctuous men of God, with well-lined bellies, stand up and recount to an admiring audience what gracious things the Lord has been pleased to do for them, since their last re-union. We have before us in the columns of the *Montreal Witness* the Report of one of these meetings that came off on the evening of the 12th inst., in the Baptist Church, Beaver Hall.

One would have thought—o: rather one who did not know what manner of men these evangelical missionaries are, and what the itch for notoriety with which they are possessed, would have thought—that late events in Jamaica, and the disastrous results of their evangelical efforts in the West Indies would have inspired them, if not with modesty, at all events with a little prudence; would have taught them the propriety of not obtruding themselves too prominently on the notice of the public; and might have suggested to them the necessity of silence and concealment. Not a bit of it. Our acquaintances are not men to hide their light under a bushel, and the sound of their own trumpet is always pleasant in their ears, no matter what the tune. Bray a Baptist missionary in the mortar, and he is a Baptist missionary still.

But to come to business. On Tuesday evening, as we said, the brothers and sisters met in their meeting-house for the purpose of self-laudation, and after the usual preliminaries of tea, prayer, praise, refreshments and singing, proceeded to the reading of the Annual Report. This document was of course—as all these documents are—deeply interesting. It disclosed in its financial portion, the interesting fact that the Society was deeply in debt, and that its annual expenditure greatly exceeded its annual income. For the last eleven months the total receipts were \$6,000; the twelve month's expenditure had amounted to \$10,000; under the head of salaries to missionaries \$1,600 were still owing; whilst to supply pressing wants \$2,400 had been borrowed. Upon this head there need nothing more to be said; we will at once pass on to the spiritual side of the Report.

This too is very interesting and very significant. It brings out prominently the fact that, under the influences of the Baptist missionary infidelity is spreading amongst the lower orders and the more ignorant classes of French Canadians. It tells us, in the first place:—

"Mr. Lafleur's afternoon meeting was of great interest, his hearers being rather"—(mark well that word *rather*)—"of the better and more intelligent class, but many of them were disposed to free-thinking, and their views in this respect had to be combated."

The functions of a Protestant missionary to Papists are manifold. He has to foster "free-thinking" and he has to combat "free-thinking"; his it is to appeal to human reason at one moment, and to reject the testimony of human reason the next; to invoke the right of private judgment, and to protest against private judgment; to deny authority, and anon to assert authority. With one and the same breath he must blow hot and blow cold; and at the very moment of his triumph over the Catholic Faith, he must be prepared to denounce as false the very principle of "free-thinking" by which alone that triumph has been won. It is no marvel therefore that the poor man is only half-successful; and that after having superinduced a state or condition of "free-thinking" upon his converts, he is impotent to subdue the latter again to the desired state of "serf thinking," or, in other words, of belief upon authority. This portion of the Rev. M. Lafleur's Report is, we admit, very interesting, for it shows that freedom of thought or "free-thinking" is as incompatible with what the Baptists term Christianity, as it is with Popery, since they find themselves bound to combat it when it displays itself amongst their converts.

Here again is another passage from an address or speech delivered by the same M. Lafleur after he had read his Report, in which the chief and

most brilliant result of evangelical missions amongst French Papists is naively and apparently thankfully recorded:—

"There was a wide-spread spirit of doubt amongst their French Canadian Roman Catholic brethren, and many had said to him privately, we do not believe in the Church of Rome. The speaker then spoke with much feeling and eloquence on the encouragement which he felt in view of bringing a soul to God," &c., &c., &c.

The Rev. M. Lafleur may have exaggerated the numbers of those in whom his teachings, and those of his fellow-laborers in the vineyard, have wrought a state of doubt; but he has correctly stated the only result that those teachings can possibly have amongst a Roman Catholic population—that is to say, doubt and unbelief. It is intellectually impossible that a "converted" Papist should be any think but a sceptic, and an infidel; as impossible in the moral order, as in the material order it would be impossible for a man to cast himself from the top of a sheer precipice, and only to fall half way. The majority, or at all events a very large number, of such converts are merely hypocrites, who, for the sake of some worldly advantage, in the prospect of improving their material condition, profess a change which in their hearts they do not feel; nay, which relying upon a death-bed repentance at least, they, in their inmost hearts, firmly promise themselves to adjure, when it shall no longer be of any service to them. The remainder are, and by a law of their intellectual being, must be, sceptics or infidels; because any argument addressed to the intellect which suffices to prove that the body known in history as the Roman Catholic Church, is, or ever has been in, or can possibly fall into, error upon questions of faith or morals, proves also as conclusively that the Person known in history as Christ was, if not a liar and an impostor, at all events a mere hair-brained enthusiast, destitute of all divine mission or authority.

In fact, it is rarely through the efficacy of arguments addressed to the intellect that men abandon their faith in the Holy Catholic Church, but of arguments addressed to the will. Our passions, our lusts, our bellies, our lower or animal nature all plead incessantly and vigorously against Romanism, its doctrines and its practices; and only by the aid of the supernatural, only with the co-operation of divine grace can we refute their logic, and resist their entreaties. Loss of faith is generally preceded by a corruption of morals; and it is because men first wish that the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church may be untrue, that they in time persuade themselves of their falsity—for in this matter men are easily deceived or persuaded to their own perdition.

We will not of course deny that to a Catholic of the most exemplary and irreproachable morals, doubts or rather difficulties upon religious matters may at times suggest themselves; but this we assert without fear of contradiction, that if ever such doubts or difficulties do suggest themselves, they are never in connection with any of what are termed the characteristic or peculiar doctrines of Romanism, *i.e.*, of those doctrines which distinguish it, materially, from all Protestant sects; but solely in connection with those beliefs or dogmas which all Protestants, who have not yet subsided into sheer infidelity, assert as fundamental, as truths, or dogmas, in short, which are inseparable from any conceivable system of revealed or supernatural religion. The Romish doctrine of purgatory is certainly not more difficult of intellectual acceptance than is the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell, or even the modified form of that same belief as held by Universalists. The doctrine of the Trinity and of the Real Presence are both equally above reason; but as neither is contrary to reason, so the Catholic finds no greater difficulty in accepting one than in accepting the other. In short his entire system rests upon one and the same foundation—to wit, the infallible authority of the Church, as the sole means by Christ Himself appointed for making known to all men, throughout all ages, even unto the end of the world, the saving truths which He came down from heaven to teach. This is the basis of the Catholic faith. No other has it to rest upon. Knock away or shake this basis, and the whole superstructure comes toppling down, a heap of ruins; but so long as it remains firm, though the winds may rage, and the floods may dash against this angle or that angle, the edifice remains secure, and bids defiance to the storms of doubt.

But if at any moment such doubts should present themselves, should seem to make any impression on the Catholic's mind, it would be found that the point assailed was invariably the authority and the inspiration of the Bible. Indeed of all the doctrines of the Church, that which asserts that book to be the Word of God is, to human reason, by far the most difficult of acceptance; and only by a child-like submission of his reason to faith can any man so accept it; only upon the full assurance that the Church so propounding it to him, is indeed that body with which Christ Himself promised to be ever present, all days even unto the end of the world, and therefore infallible. To accept the Bible as the Word of God is the greatest subjection of reason to faith that the Catholic can ever be called upon to make;

and if he can submit himself on this point to the Church's teaching, he can never find any difficulty, moral or intellectual, in yielding his unqualified assent to aught else that she may propose to him. Now Protestant missionaries to Papists never take these things into account.—They proceed upon the ridiculous assumption that the belief of the Catholic in the Bible as the Word of God, rests upon grounds independent of the Church; forgetting, and wilfully ignoring the fact that even amongst the great majority of the intellectual and educated classes of Protestantism, amongst the most earnest, the most spiritually minded of our separated brethren, the belief in the Bible as the Word of God, and as authoritative whether in the historical, the moral, or the supernatural order, has been openly and deliberately rejected; because, as they affirm, the Bible contradicts history, chronology, their reason, the evidence of their senses, and their moral intuitions. Indeed amongst Protestants, so far from the Bible being the basis of their religion, it is now a burden on their religion; it is the weak point of their religion; the weak point in fact of Christianity which is not based upon that Catholic and infallible Church, but for whose authority moving him thereunto, the great St. Augustin tells us that he would not have believed the Scripture.

The moment therefore that a Catholic doubts of the infallible teachings of his Church on any one point, he abandons the only reason he has, or that any man can have, for accepting the book called vulgarly the Bible, as the word of God, or as of authority in the supernatural order. Many of its moral precepts will command his respect because of their intrinsic excellence; its history will be to him as any other history, or record of events long past, matter of legitimate criticism; its cosmogony he will probably pass over with a pitying smile, as the crude production of an ignorant age, endeavoring to account for phenomena which it had but very superficially observed; but for its miracles and its supernaturalism, he will feel as little respect as he does for the stories which, as a boy at school, he used to read in his Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, or his *Homer*. In the language of the Protestant writers of *Essays and Reviews*, prominent dignitaries of the Church of England, these things will, to him, have passed from the order of *credenda* into that of mere *legenda*; the intellectual provender, not of grown men, but of silly old women and children of tender years, incapable of discrimination, and unversed in the laws of nature.

Doubt, scepticism, and then rejection of all supernaturalism, that is of all revelation *ab extra*, are, and must be, the lot of all those who, having once been Catholics, and therefore accustomed to a reasonable and logical system of religion, like M. Lafleur's converts, "no longer believe in the Roman Catholic Church." That this must be so, can be established *a priori*; that such is actually the case, the progress of Protestantism in France, Spain, Italy, and Lower Canada—as evidenced by the acknowledged "free-thinking" and "wide-spread spirit of doubt" admitted by the missionaries themselves—fully proves.

THE URSLINE CONVENT, COLUMBIA.—We have read and heard much of the sufferings of the brave Southerners, of their losses, and of the barbarities of the Federal troops on their famous march under the orders of General Sherman. These sufferings, losses, and barbarities have not been exaggerated even in so far as the lot of the Southern States are concerned. But how about the Church, and the treatment which her property and her Religious have met with from the hands of the conquerors!

Let us take the case of the Ursulines of Columbia, as one amongst many in which Catholic churches and convents have been pillaged, and razed to the ground by the Yankee soldiery, and the hiring out cut-throats serving in their ranks. These Ladies, who thank God are no strangers in Canada, but whose services in the cause of education, morality and religion can never be too highly appreciated, had a Convent in Columbia in which they received, boarded, and educated a large number of pupils. On the night of the 17th of February last, this Convent was burnt to the ground by General Sherman's troops. The Nuns escaped with their pupils indeed, but everything they possessed in the world was destroyed. On the horrors of that night passed by the poor Nuns and their trembling charges in an adjacent burying ground, where surrounded by a brutal soldiery they were exposed for long hours to incessant insults and abuse we need not dwell; but we would call the attention of our readers to the fact that an appeal has been made to the sympathies of the Catholic public in behalf of the destitute Nuns; and that a gentleman from the United States highly recommended by his own immediate ecclesiastical superiors, and by His Lordship the Bishop of Kingston is now in Canada, seeking contributions for the destitute Ursulines. Mr. Jones, the gentleman in question is at present at Quebec, and intends shortly to visit the Diocese of Kingston, to the generous Catholics of which

Diocese we beg leave respectfully to recommend him.

We subjoin a letter from the Mother Superior of the destitute Ursulines of Columbia, giving an account of the sad calamity:—

A. M. D. G.

Ursuline Convent, Valle Crucis, Columbia, Feast of St. Ursula, 1865.

Rev. Mother and Dear Sister in Christ—It is with almost a holy envy that I address one who is in the enjoyment of her convent and its inestimable privileges, since we have lost ours. I trust however that your esteemed community may never experience what we have undergone since the general confiscation of this city, Feb. 17th, by the army under General Sherman, at which time our convent being situated in the centre of the City was consumed, with all its contents—furniture, instruments, music, books, apparatus, clothing, provisions, &c. We barely escaped with our lives, and those of our numerous pupils, each carrying a change of clothing. We had deceived ourselves, relying upon the promises of protection given us by those from whom we could expect it, even by General Sherman himself; and instead of investing our surplus funds in gold, which would have been portable in an emergency, we laid in large quantities of provisions with our Confederate money or held it in bonds. These latter are now useless, and the extensive well-filled store room was consumed, together with all the rest we had accumulated in our convent, since its first establishment in the South. One able business man writes to me. "I find upon calculation that out of a fortune of \$150,000 you simply have left, a lot and a pile of rubbish."

On that terrific night our Sisters and pupils were obliged to leave our convent about midnight, and seek refuge in the churchyard among the graves—God be praised in all things. We have great need of courage and resignation to His holy will, and His inscrutable judgments. Our pupils are necessarily scattered, our means of support withdrawn with them, and the common necessities of life are wanting to our community. One of our young Sisters succumbed in this trying crisis, and died July 22nd of consumption induced by privations and exposure consequent on the burning of our convent—indeed I may say she died of starvation. Another the gem of our young chorists, the gifted and lovable Sister Gertrude fell a victim Sept. 20. R.I.P. I greatly apprehend the same for others, unless by charitable aid our situation can be alleviated.

After the destruction of our convent, our Sisters with a remnant of our pupils took refuge in the third and fourth stories of a building Methodist Female College already occupied by about thirty families nearly as destitute as ourselves. There we were crowded together without yard-room, comforts or conveniences, and after living in this condition nearly six months, all the occupants of the building—we amongst the number, were notified to leave before the 1st of September, as it had been rented for a hotel. We looked in vain among the ruins of Columbia for a house to shelter us. For the houses in the suburbs of the City such prices were demanded, and such our poverty that we could not venture to involve ourselves in debt—for the payment of which the future offers no prospect. Much to our regret we were obliged to leave Columbia—and take possession of Valle Crucis a small property belonging to the Church which we can occupy rent free. But Valle Crucis is three miles from town; we can have here no day school; we are removed from priest, physician, market and are obliged to depend upon charitable contributions for our daily support—what a trial! and how opposed to our love for the duties of our Institution. We are exceedingly anxious to resume our labors and re-establish our convent; and you will readily perceive dear and reverend Mother, how great an act of charity you will bestow in aiding us. We also beg the prayers of yourself and Sisters in our behalf.—Believe me Dear and Reverend Mother in the Sacred Hearts of J. M. J. yours affectionately,

THE MOTHER SUPERIOR,  
 Per order Secretary.

THE JUBILEE.—With this week the season for the Jubilee in the City of Montreal comes to a close. Since its commencement on the 26th ult., the churches have been crowded morning and evening; and the Clergy, though numerous, and assisted for the English speaking portion of the community by the Reverend Redemptorist Fathers, could hardly suffice, in spite of their unremitting exertions, for the labors of the Confessional—so great have been the multitudes seeking to profit by this season of grace.

At the Parish, the Jesuits, and other churches the exercises were, for the most part, conducted by the Clergy regularly attached to them. At the St. Patrick's Church the Redemptorist Fathers have been preaching three times a day, and confessing morning, noon, and night with the most happy results. To these zealous, never-tiring servants of God the Irish congregation are under deep obligations.

At the Cathedral, the Rev. M. Lafleche, G.V. of Three Rivers, delivered the sermons of the evening exercises, addressed more particularly to the male portion of the congregation. It is needless for us to dwell upon the eloquence, the fervor, and beauty of these instructions, because, not for any of these qualities, though in a high degree they possessed them all, were they the most remarkable. The reverend preacher is an eloquent and fervid orator no doubt, a man of profound science, and of delicate mental culture; but he is something more, something higher, something infinitely better and more precious.—He is the zealous, and, we believe, the approved servant of God; and in the might of his Masters has been the instrument of conversion, of blessing, and of salvation, we trust, to thousands during his sojourn amongst us. God grant that his faithful instructions may strike deep root, and bring forth fruit abundantly in the hearts of his hearers.

REGIOPOLIS COLLEGE.—We understand that this noble institution, whose value to the Catholics of Central Canada cannot be exaggerated has now got as its Director the Reverend Mr. Stafford, Pastor of Wolfe Island. The College is of course always under the especial patronage of His Lordship the Bishop of the Diocese, and with its new Director will we are sure continue to hold the high rank that under its former management it had obtained;