

The True Witness

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOV. 18, 1859.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

THE affairs of Italy remain unchanged. The aversion of the people, to their exiled sovereigns is strong as ever; but the letter from Louis Napoleon to the King of Sardinia has extinguished all hopes of French intervention in behalf of the Liberals.

The breach betwixt the Emperor and the French clergy seems to be growing wider every day. The press no longer re-produce the Pastorals of the Bishops; but the facts of the existence of those documents, and of their implied condemnation of the Emperor's Italian policy, are well known, and are producing their effect upon the public mind.

During the last week in October the British coasts were visited by a most tremendous gale, exceeding in severity any that has occurred for many years. In consequence the loss of shipping and of human life has been very serious.

THE CONVENTION.—Though the members of this body were virtually, for the most part, self-nominated, still the fact that some four or five hundred persons, many of them gentlemen of standing, and influence in Upper Canada, have taken part in its proceedings, entitles it to notice from the religious, as well as from the purely secular press.

This body met on Wednesday the 9th inst., at Noon, and numbered some 250 members.—The Chair was taken by Mr. Adam Ferguson; and on the motion of Mr. G. Brown, Committees—on Finance—Party Organisation—Procedure—Resolutions—and Credentials, were named.

The evening sitting commenced about 7 p.m., with about 460 delegates present; the Committee on Resolutions presented the following Report:—

1. Resolved.—That the existing Legislative Union of Upper and Lower Canada has failed to realise the anticipations of its promoters, has resulted in a heavy public debt, burdensome taxation, great public abuses, and universal dissatisfaction throughout Upper Canada; and it is the matured conviction of this assembly, from the antagonisms developed through difference of origin, local interests and other causes, that the Union in its present form can no longer be continued with advantage to the people.

2. Resolved.—That highly desirable as it would be, while the existing Union is maintained, that local legislation should not be forced on one section of the Province against the wishes of a majority of the representatives of that section—yet this assembly is of opinion that the plan of government known as the 'Double Majority' would be no permanent remedy for existing evils.

3. Resolved.—That necessary as it is that strict constitutional restraints on the power of the Legislative and Executive in regard to the borrowing and expenditure of money and other matters, should form part of any satisfactory change of the existing Constitutional system—yet the imposition of such restraints would not alone remedy the evils under which the country now labors.

4. Resolved.—That without entering on the discussion of other objections, this assembly is of opinion that the delay which must occur in obtaining the sanction of the Lower Provinces to a Federal Union of all the British North American Colonies, places that measure beyond consideration as a remedy for present evils.

5. Resolved.—That in the opinion of this assembly, the best practicable remedy for the evils now encountered in the government of Canada is to be found in the formation of two or more local governments, to which shall be committed the control of all matters of a local or sectional character; and a general government charged with such matters as are necessarily common to both sections of the Province.

6. Resolved.—That while the details of the changes proposed in the last resolutions are necessarily subjects for future arrangement, yet this assembly deems it imperative to declare that no general government would be satisfactory to the people of Upper Canada which is not based on the principle of Representation by Population.

All which is respectfully submitted. ANDREW JEFFREY, Chairman.

Mr. Malcolm Cameron introduced the Resolutions, and spoke with considerable prolixity.—

He was altogether for a dissolution of the Union. Mr. Oliver of the Erie News called upon the Members of the Opposition to state their reasons for their new policy; desiring, as a member of the press, to know why they were called upon to abandon their old principles.

Mr. McKinnon, seconded by Mr. Gowen, charged Mr. Oliver with being a traitor. Mr. G. Brown stood up, and let off his speech; he enlarged upon his personal wrongs, and the wrongs of Canada, in that he was not Premier; denounced the Seigneurial Tenure Bill; advocated a Federal Union; waxed eloquent upon a "written constitution"; twaddled immensely about things in general; acknowledged he had been diffuse; denied that he had abandoned his old principles; and having bestowed all his tediousness on his hearers, sat down, and the Convention broke up.

In consequence Thursday, or the second day of the Convention, arrived in due time; the Fathers assembled, and the Secretary put them at once upon short allowance of talk, allotting half an hour to each member. After a pause of some length—

Mr. O. Mowat stood up, and declared himself in favor of federation. Mr. V. Wilkes followed suit, declaring his conviction that dissolution, pure and simple, would be the ruin of Upper Canada, and hinting that the Upper Canadians might take up arms. Mr. Robinson protested against that sentiment; Mr. Bodwell then moved the first resolution in favor of federation, and was seconded by Mr. Farewell. Mr. Epsom enumerated the grievances of his brother farmers, especially the imposition of newspaper postage, and the abolition of grants to agricultural societies.

Mr. Sheppard of the Globe rose to propose an amendment to the fifth resolution, to the effect that dissolution was the one thing needful.—Mr. Woodriff seconded the amendment. Mr. McDonald supported the original resolution.—Mr. McDougall and a host of others propounded their several views; and a Mr. Nickerson distinguishes himself by an attack on the "abominable licence system." Mr. Clunie of the Bowmanville Statesman, a Protestant Reformer of the first water, declared for dissolution; and so the ball was tossed from and to another, till Mr. G. Brown rose to close the debate; the other resolutions were then carried, and the meeting adjourned. Thus ended the second day.

The Convention met again on Friday, but the attendance was less numerous than on the previous day; the reporters for the Spectator, Leader and Colonist were refused admittance.—The Report of the Committee on Organisation was brought up and adopted; and the following Resolutions were moved and agreed to:—

1. Moved by George S. Wilkes, of Brantford, seconded by W. R. Orr, of Oshawa, and Resolved.—That an address to the People of Canada explaining the reforms demanded by this Convention, and the arguments in support of them be prepared, and widely circulated throughout the Province.

2. Moved by E. Leonard, of London, seconded by Dr. Fraser, and Resolved.—That a Petition to the Provincial Parliament, praying for the adoption of the constitutional changes approved by this Convention, be prepared and circulated for signatures by the people of Canada.

3. Moved by Mr. Bown, of Brantford, seconded by Mr. Bodwell, and Resolved.—That a copy of the proceedings of this Convention be forwarded to the Colonial Secretary and to the several members of the British Legislature.

The thanks of the Convention were then presented to the President Mr. A. Ferguson, and to the Secretary, and the meeting then broke up. So ended the Convention, and it may be asked—what has it done? In so far as we can perceive, it has shown clearly, that some five hundred gentlemen in Upper Canada are very dissatisfied with the Union, with the present Ministry, and, above all, with their exclusion from office.

It has given us strong reasons for believing that the discontent of the actual members of the Convention, is shared in by a very considerable portion of the population of Upper Canada to the west of Toronto; and it has conclusively established the fact that, from the Protestant Reform party, Catholics have no reasons to expect any, the slightest redress for the grievances of which they complain; though the latter attended at the Convention, and have, in consequence, exposed the religious community of which they call themselves members, to the sneers of the press and the contempt of their Protestant fellow-citizens. This we regret. If faithful to the precepts of their religion, Catholics need never expect to be popular amongst Protestants; but if true to themselves, they can always enforce respect even from their enemies; and to well regulated minds, respect is of more value than popularity. But how can Catholics expect to win the respect of their opponents, when, by their own conduct, they show that they cannot respect themselves?

For, we say it advisedly, the Catholic who could consent to make part of a body of which the editors of the Globe and of the Bowmanville Statesman were members; to sit "cheek by jowl" with those calumniators of his religion, or to make common cause with them in any political action whatsoever; and who on such an occasion did not dare to utter one word in vindication of his rights as a freeman over the education of his children—betrayed a moral pusillanimity to which it would be almost impossible to find a parallel; and which, if taken as an index of the sentiments of the entire Catholic body, would almost justify the wrongs to which that body is subjected by the Protestant majority of the Upper Province. The slave who, from want of pluck, will not strike a blow for his freedom when the opportunity presents itself, deserves to

remain a slave; and his cries under the lash can but provoke the derision of the brave and honest man. For, we record it with shame, the only allusions to the School Question made during the Convention—at all events, as far as we can judge by the published report of its proceedings—were made by Mr. George Brown. He, at least, did not shrink from that question; but plainly intimated to his Catholic hearers that one object for which the Convention was held was, to devise means for preventing the Catholics of Lower Canada from again interfering on behalf of their coreligionists of the Western section of the Province. Addressing himself to the people of Lower Canada, and expressing his policy, and the policy of his party, he spoke as follows.—

"We do not want you to change our common school laws in opposition to the wishes of the people of Upper Canada." And again—we still copy from the Globe's report—we find Mr. Brown represented as declaring as follows:—

"What is it that has most galled the people of Upper Canada in the working of the existing union? Has it not been the control exercised by Lower Canada over matters purely pertaining to Upper Canada—the framing of our School laws?"—Globe.

This is the head and front of our offending; and now we find the very men for whose sake, and at whose urgent request, we have interfered with the School Laws of Upper Canada, reproaching us with our generous interference in their behalf; and urging it against us as a reason for organic changes!

This is the fact! For alas! so thoroughly cowed were the Catholic delegates who listened to these ominous words, to this crack of the slaveholder's whip in their ears, that they sat tamely by, and had not a syllable to urge in behalf of their only friends! It is as if the Catholics of England were to assist at an Exeter Hall meeting, and to appear on the evangelical platform to take pleasant counsel with Spooner and Newdegate, how to put down Popery, and to check the progress of the "Man of Sin." But it is needless to pursue the subject further. Tastes differ, and there is no accounting for them. Some people appear to have a relish for what, in homely phrase, is known as "humble-pie;" and, verily, our Catholic delegates to the Toronto Convention have eaten their full share of the unsavory mess.

The School Question having been thus, to all appearance at least, abandoned by those who are most immediately interested therein, it becomes a serious question, whether the Catholics of the Lower Province have any reason to interest themselves therein for the future. We cannot if we would, we would not if we could, force upon our Catholic brethren of the Upper Province a measure to which they have now shown themselves utterly indifferent; that is to say, have approved themselves indifferent—if the Catholic delegates who assisted at the Convention are to be looked upon as in any sense the representatives of the Catholic community of Western Canada; and there can, therefore, be no reason why we of Lower Canada should expose ourselves and our institutions to the savage attacks of the Protestant Reformers of Canada, for the sake of men who will not make one effort to help themselves, and who treat with ingratitude those who try to help them.

PROTESTANT WORSHIP.—The Protestant Echo having favored us with a description of the Catholic celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, as seen from a Protestant stand point, will not take it amiss if, in return, we present him with a sketch of a Protestant celebration of the Eucharist; made, not by hostile Popish hands, but by a devout member of the same denomination as that of which our Toronto cotemporary professes himself to be the organ. Perhaps, after a careful study of the two pictures—that which he has given us of Popish worship in his own columns, and that furnished to us by a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States—he will admit that, of the two, the latter is, to the Christian, the more offensive; and that the genuflections, the many ceremonies, the incense burning, and other rites wherewith he reproaches Papists, are more in accordance with the fundamental ideas of worship common to all nations, than the bar-room manners which are characteristic of the Protestant Episcopalians of the United States.

It is to a correspondent of the N. Y. Churchman, a Protestant Episcopal paper, that we are indebted for the following amusing, if not very edifying details; and we would request the Echo to take note, that the scenes therein described, occurred, not in some remote, obscure corner, but in the full glare of the light that beams from the eyes of Protestant Bishops. It is important to bear this in mind; and this premise will allow our Protestant informant to speak for himself. He first describes the scenes that occurred at the opening of the Protestant Convention,—and gives us the following picture of the preparations made for celebrating devoutly and reverently what Protestants pretend to look upon as the Holy (!) Communion:—

"A huge demijohn stood under the Holy Table, in full view of the congregation during the whole service. The aims were collected from the Rev. Bishops in an old Kossuth hat. During the prayer of Humble Access, the Rector brought in some additional bread upon a common earthenware dinner plate, and placed it under the thick white cloth upon the table."

As to the quantity of victuals provided for the solemn occasion, it seems that the arrangements were unexceptionable. The "huge demijohn" of liquor full of wine, or perhaps "Best Corn Whiskey," shows that the reverend gentlemen are fond of their drink, and are determined not to run short of creature comforts during the celebration of their mysteries. But the "old Kossuth hat," and the "common earthenware dinner plate" were hardly in keeping with the solemn occasion. The writer next proceeds to describe the consecration of a batch of Protestant bishops, and the ceremonies consequent thereupon. On such an occasion, we may well presume that the Protestant Episcopal Church put forth all its splendor; and that then, if at any time, its Ministers were careful to testify by their

conduct, their belief in, and respect for, those sacred mysteries which they were met to celebrate. The reader will judge however for himself. Our informant writes:—

"Honor was done to men, but great dishonor to God. There upon the Altar,—(the counter beneath which is kept the huge demijohn of liquor)—"was left a great quantity of the consecrated Elements, which had not been 'severently' consumed by the Bishops and other communicants, as the rubric directs. We looked on tremblingly for the issue.—Soon the Sexton came, and having gathered up, at least, three hundred pieces of consecrated bread, and placed them in a napkin, he put them into a basket to be 'carried out of church to his house, probably to be given to dogs or beggars'—(perhaps to make poultices)—"or, at least, to be devoted to common and unallowed uses. The consecrated wine was poured back into the demijohn; and the chalice (if they are worthy of the name) were turned up on the floor of the chancel to drain."

It is one consolation after all, that there was no real sacrilege committed, seeing that Protestant Bishops are but simple laymen, and have therefore no more power to "consecrate" than have any other laymen; but it is sad that even Protestants should have cast away the little respect which they once professed to entertain for their own doctrines, and their own sacraments. As Catholics, we can afford to laugh at the "demijohn" of liquor, kept "convenient" under the Altar! and at the remnants of the "consecrated elements" carried off by the sexton, and dealt with as if they were what the Chief Superintendent of Education for Canada West would style "casual advantages." But then our mirth is damped by the reflection that these irreverences are perpetrated by Christians, or baptised persons; and that their places of worship are scarcely to be distinguished from the grog shop, or drinking saloon. Nay! from a well kept bar-room the Protestant Bishops of the United States might learn a valuable lesson, and devise many a profitable hint for the decoration of their Altars, and the celebration of their worship.

But certainly it behoves neither them nor their flocks, to criticise others, or to find fault with the ceremonies of a Catholic High Mass. This much may be said in defence of the latter; that those ceremonies are in perfect harmony with the faith of the Church in a real divine presence in the Blessed Eucharist; and that they can seem strange or ridiculous to those only who, like the editor of the Echo, are ignorant of, or Protest against, those great truths of which the ceremonies are as they were but the garment.

The subjoined letter from His Lordship the Bishop of Hamilton was addressed in the first place, and for reasons which from its contents are easily intelligible, to the Toronto Freeman. That journal, however, having declined publishing it, it made its appearance in the Hamilton Spectator, and the Toronto Mirror, from whose columns we transfer it to our own:—

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "TORONTO MIRROR."

DEAR SIR,—Finding that my note of apology to an invitation to attend the McGee Banquet at Toronto, has given occasion to a misconception of my views, and that it has been reproduced in the last number of the New York Tablet in connexion with remarks which I entirely condemn; I request the favor of having this short explanation inserted in your next issue. That note of apology was never intended by me as an approval of the course adopted by Mr. McGee in relation to certain questions of the most vital importance to Catholic interests in this Province; but only as a civil reply to an invitation which was given, I am convinced, in a kind spirit. The expression of my good wishes towards Mr. McGee was certainly sincere; for I did hope and desire that his remarkable abilities, directed by sound principles, should be honorably employed for the advancement of the general welfare of the Province, and in particular for the removal of the evils which press so injuriously and so unequally on his fellow-Catholics in the Upper Province. I do confess that with all the true friends of Mr. McGee, I did expect much good from him, and was prepared to lend him the small amount of influence at my command. It is with pain I am forced to abandon that hope, at least so long as Mr. McGee continues to pursue his present career; and to inform those who may have misunderstood my motives, that my views are now, and always have been, those expressed in the letter of His Lordship the Bishop of Montreal, to which, with all the Bishops of the Province, I subscribed; and that I deem no man, whatever his other recommendations may be, a fit leader of the Catholic body, and, least of all, of Irish Catholics, who advocates publicly and pertinaciously, a line of policy in direct antagonism with the principles thus publicly recommended to the faithful by the united voice of their first Pastors. It should be unnecessary for me to state that I do not include questions of mere secular policy. With such it is not my inclination, nor do I deem it my duty, to interfere.—But I should be wanting to the sacred charge imposed on me, were I to remain a stranger to the working of the great questions placed before the faithful in the document alluded to, affecting as they do in the most vital manner the well-being of the whole Catholic body of this Province. It must be clear to every reflecting mind, that to disunite the Catholic body by appeals to the unworthy passions arising from opposition of races, must prove a cause of weakness to the Catholic cause; and that to deprive the Catholic minority of the Upper Province, of the cordial aid of their brethren of Lower Canada, by placing the former in an unnatural alliance with the fierce and unrepenting enemies of Catholic institutions, is a policy as insane as it is wicked.

I cannot close this explanation without recording my full approval of, and confidence in, the course pursued by the Montreal True Witness. The principles of its gifted and most distinguished Editor, G. E. Clerk, Esq., are truly Catholic; and from the wisdom and ability with which they are upheld, they place him in the first rank of the Catholic writers of the present day, and should recommend him to the Catholic laity—especially to those of my own country—as their truest friend and most reliable guide.

I have the honor to be your most humble and obedient servant, JOHN, Bishop of Hamilton.

CONSECRATION.—On Sunday next, the 20th inst., will be consecrated the Right Rev. Dr. Lynch, the newly appointed Coadjutor to his Lordship the Bishop of Toronto. For many years, we believe, the latter has earnestly pleaded for a fellow-laborer in the extensive vineyard which has been committed to his charge; and it is in reply to his earnest and reiterated requests that a Coadjutor has been given to him.

ORDINATION.—On Wednesday the 30th ult., the Bishop of Three Rivers conferred Holy Orders on the Rev. J. Griffith. During two years, previously, Mr. G. had been a professor in the College of Nicolet, where he gained the esteem of his superiors and confreres.

A Collection was again taken up on Sunday last, the 13th inst., from the Irish Catholic congregations of this City for the relief of their poor. The sum realised amounted to Two hundred and thirty-five dollars. It is but a few weeks ago that from the same congregation the sum of Four hundred dollars was taken up in behalf of the Hamilton Cathedral.

On Sunday last a collection was taken up in the Church of Notre Dame to aid in the restoration of the Hamilton Cathedral. The amount collected amounted to One hundred dollars.

ADULTERY ACCORDING TO LAW.—"It is not commonly known," says the Toronto Colonist of the 31st ult., "that the Lord Chancellor's new Bill of Divorce opens the Divorce Court to persons residing in Ireland, India, or any of the Colonies." From this it would appear that the benefits of polygamy, an institution peculiarly Protestant, are at length placed within the reach of those of Her Majesty's subjects in Canada, on whose necks the matrimonial yoke presses too heavily. They will, henceforward, be enabled to sue for a divorce in the London Courts; and may thus avoid the necessity of applying for a special Act of Parliament for licence to commit adultery.

The Colonist will, we hope, permit us to correct an error into which he has fallen on this subject of Divorce—where he speaks of Catholics as "invincibly repugnant to any dissolution of marriage except by the Pope." This would seem to imply that the Colonist believes that, in the opinion of Catholics, it is competent to the Pope to grant a dissolution of marriage—a vinculo. On this point we must beg leave to set our cotemporary right.

No Pope has ever pretended even to have the power to dissolve a marriage, so as to allow the parties thereunto, to contract new sexual unions. No Catholic believes that either Pope, or General Council, could, in this sense, grant Divorce or dissolution of marriage. The law—"whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder"—is as binding on Popes, as on secular Princes. It is ultra vires, beyond the power of either, to dissolve a marriage; and though the latter may have arrogated to themselves that power, never has any Pope pretended even for a moment that he could dissolve a marriage validly contracted or annul the Sacrament of Matrimony where once it had been truly administered.

What Popes have often been called upon to decide, and what Popes have claimed for themselves the right to decide upon, as falling within the legitimate Province of the Ecclesiastical tribunal—is, the validity or reality, of pretended marriages. Whether certain sexual unions were truly Sacramental unions, and, therefore, per se indissoluble, or mere concubinage, and, therefore, to be dissolved, are questions which, as we know from history, have often been submitted to the Popes; but never have they even entertained for one instant the question whether the parties to a recognised valid marriage, might be separated so completely as to leave either, or both of them, at liberty to contract fresh sexual unions during the lifetime of their former partners.

Thus in the case of the founder of the Protestant Church of England, and his wife Catherine of Arragon. The Pope was called upon to decide, not as to whether they should or even could be divorced; but simply as to whether they ever had been married. And so with every other so-called Divorce case before the Court of Rome. The sole question which in those cases the Court of Rome ever entertained was, as to whether the parties before it had been truly married, or united in Sacramental union. This matter of fact, comprises all that the Popes ever pretended to decide, or that they are competent to decide: for no power can suffice to unmarry those who have been validly married, or to put asunder those whom God hath Sacramentally joined together. The law may pronounce them divorced, and license them to contract fresh sexual unions; but when it so acts, no matter in whose name, or upon what pretence, it so speaks, its utterances are a lie, and its enactments serve but to legalise concubinage. The civil magistrate has no more power to unmarry people than it has to unbaptise them, or to exclude them from the Kingdom of Heaven.

We must do the Colonist the justice to add that, though as a Protestant, he does not absolutely condemn the granting of divorces, he is still far from approving of the practise; and recognises that there, where it most obtains, is the marriage tie, the bond of the family—which again is the basis of Christian Society—the least respected. "In the little State of Rhode Island there were no less than eighty-four applications for divorces during the last session of the Legislature;" whilst in England, as the Colonist tells us, "the new law has so quickened men's sense of their matrimonial grievances that the (Divorce) Court has had to be from time to time strengthened with additional judges."

The Colonist seems to recognise another important fact upon which we have often insisted: viz., that to grant divorce for the cause of adultery, but of adultery only, is to put a premium upon impurity, and to attach a privilege to the due performance of crime. Mr. and Mrs. B. want to be divorced; the lady, at her husband's suggestion, is guilty of adultery, taking care to leave the proof thereof in her husband's hands; but in such a manner as to avoid the appearance