



The True Witness

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.
VOL. XXVIII.—NO. 19. MONTREAL, WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1877. TERMS: \$2 per annum in advance.

ROBERT BRUCE.

A colossal statue of King Robert Bruce the heroic victor of Bannockburn, and saviour of his country's independence, was unveiled on Saturday the 23rd of November, in Stirling, by Lady Alexander, of Westerton. A contemporary says:—

The proceedings were remarkable for the absence of the Scottish nobility of the present day, and for the utter want of interest taken in them, except by those immediately concerned. Of course Stirling was en fête, but except a deputation from London and another from Dumbarton, there were present no strangers. Not without good reason, did the speakers at the banquet, which followed the unveiling of the statue, deplore the dying out in Scotland of that National spirit which had been her distinguishing feature. One gentleman said "it had been remarkable that the Scotch nobility were no longer the nobility of Scotland, and he feared it was true."

ERZEROU.

Erzeroum is now the centre of attraction for the Russian troops in Asia Minor. If the war continues it must like Kars and Plevna fall into the hands of the Russians. If so the time for England to act may have come. England will hardly allow Russia to possess all the strong places in Asia Minor without a struggle. An English exchange says that:—

The resident inhabitants of Erzeroum are in a panic; and that they are disposed to do anything but fight. This disposition of the people is intimately connected with the sufficiency of the provisions for the mouths to be fed. Where the population of a beleaguered place is either enthusiastic, or very small in proportion to the army, it is practicable to place it upon short rations. But the population of Erzeroum (60,000) is to the army as 5 to 1 if the army is not stronger than it was when our correspondent wrote, or as 3 to 1 if the latter has been joined—which we do not hear—by the 8,000 troops said to have been on their way from Trebizond. The stores and magazines must then be heavily drawn upon to supply the wants of from 70,000 to 80,000 consumers. It is, however, by no means certain that Erzeroum will be left to fall by the pressure of a blockade. The Russian army wants winter quarters there, and by the end of next week there will probably be an army before Erzeroum twice as strong as that which carried Kars by assault.

SKOBELOFF.

General Skobelloff is the idol of his soldiers. Young, brave, and handsome, he has proved himself a good General as well. A correspondent at the seat of war sent the following incident:—

One afternoon in November, his troops were massed near their encampment, with arms in hands, and with spades to entrench the ground they were about to take; stretcher bearers in a group at the rear, a suggestive, but unpleasant sight; a battery of mitrailleuses bundled up like so many human beings, to keep out the damp, and in front of the troops, the little body of picked men, each with his shovel, his rations, and plenty of ammunition, who were to make the first rush across, use the bayonet, and then throw it aside for the spade, and endeavour to cover in time to resist the attack of the returning Turks. General Skobelloff dismounted and told the men just what he expected of them—that they were not to storm the works of Plevna, but only to run forward and take the piece of ground they knew perfectly well in front of the road, and to hold it until they had worked thrown up. He cautioned them, as many were young soldiers sent out from the reserves to fill the great gaps in the ranks, not to advance too far, but to mind exactly what the officers told them. He would be with them himself, and would direct the movements personally. As the men passed they all received encouraging words, and they went by smiling at the good-natured chaff from the General, who called to them by name, remarked on their new boots, which, he said, were like those of a Spanish don, and told the musicians they would play a waltz in the new redoubts on the morrow.

SERVIA.

The Tory papers in Great Britain have unanimously denounced the conduct of Servia. They say that she was the other day at the mercy of Turkey and that Turkey spared her. They call her soldiers cowards and her statesmen miserable creatures all. They point out how Servia hesitated until Turkey was on the verge of defeat, and not till then did this "miserable principality treacherously turn upon her suzerain." That is one side of the picture. Here is the other taken from a Liberal paper:—

If there was ever a country which has been cruelly treated, unjustly judged, and covered with contempt, it is Servia. She has been reproached with all the sins it is possible to reproach a nation with. Condemned because, though free herself, owing to her own former exertions, she attempted to assist her own kith and kin who were being massacred; condemned and ridiculed because she failed to do in six months what Russia with all her power, has been unable to accomplish in the same period; and condemned because she again desires to strike a blow for her own entire freedom, and that of the Bosnian and Old Servian Slavs, it is wonderful that she still has the courage to preserve

in the face of nearly all Europe—and certainly of her nearest neighbors—and is preparing, in the very midst of the scenes of her former disasters, to take up the sword again and stake her all, not only against her avowed enemies, the Turks, but also against her secret foes, on the other side of the Danube, who are never weary of jeering her and invoking the Austrian Government to lay her lame. For the last two years Servia has suffered more than any country of the same size ever suffered before. And even taking her enemies' account, she has suffered from no fault of her own, but simply because she happens to occupy a part of that field which forms the disputed ground of the Eastern question, a victim to the conflicting interests of half Europe.

PETRIFFICATION.

A figure said to be the petrified body of a man, found in Colorado, Pike's Point, is now puzzling the scientifics of New York. The *Herald* says:—

"Its formation is a succession of layers of rings conforming with the contour of the human body. Those who have made a chemical examination says that it is composed of carbonate of lime, silicate of lime and iron, the outer surface having a corroded appearance, and an amorphous formation to the depth of about one inch. It is stated that, in order to test the composition of the interior, Professor J. K. Taylor, of Bridgeport, bored a hole into the head below the left ear three inches deep, and found oxidized cube crystals, which were yesterday exhibited. The color of these crystals was found to be shaded from the buff gray of the outside gradually to the blue of the inside, comparing precisely with the chips taken from the chest of the petrification. The figure is seven and a half feet long, and of 600 pounds weight. The features are of a decided Indian type, high cheek bones, low retreating forehead and an enormous posterior cranium. The right arm is bent, the hand lying on the breast. The bones between the wrist and fingers and the finger bones, with their processes, are said to be true to nature. The left arm rests on the left leg, which is drawn up, and the flexor muscle bears a *c.* The great toes on the feet have the appearance of thumbs and are not unlike the toes of a gorilla. But that which excites the greatest curiosity among scientific men is the vertebra, which is extended about two inches and a half, displaying a well defined tail. This tail is not believed to be the osseocopy projected by the shrinkage of the muscles, for in that case it would have a flat arrow-shaped form. It is about five inches long, about one inch in diameter, and with a conical termination."

PLEVNA.

The heroic defense of Plevna had added additional lustre to the fame of Osman Pasha. The *New York Herald* says:—

Osman Pasha's defence of Plevna was in every military respect a splendid achievement, and, though it comes to a surrender at last and will therefore nominally be counted a failure, few successes could be of greater advantage to his country's cause. When we reflect that with his little army he has kept in check through the whole summer and autumn an invasion now supported by a force of three hundred thousand men we must recognize that the most successful soldiers that ever lived never did more than this with such a disparity of numbers and we may regard his forty or fifty thousand as a forlorn hope intended to perish in the accomplishment of that purpose rather than the fate of the men to be deemed the measure of success. In the few words in which our despatches tell this final story we have a glimpse of the hard conditions in which the heroic commander did his duty as a soldier. His troops were perishing with cold and hunger. They had defended their lines through four months with unsurpassed gallantry. More men had been killed and wounded in front of the works than the whole number of the defenders. They had not at any time been well supplied, but when the enemy drew his lines gradually all around the place starvation became imminent. Two or three times that peril was averted from supplies sent in from Orchanie, and more substantial relief was promised from that quarter. But they saw the winter weather grow constantly worse and help did not come, and even the precarious convoys of supplies no longer reached the place. Forced by cold and hunger—two irresistible allies—the commander led his men in a gallant attempt to cut his way out, which, however the enormous weight of numbers against him rendered utterly desperate. If there ever was a surrender that left intact equally the honor of the general and the honor of the army this is one.

SERVED THEM RIGHT.

The Irish Rifle Association is sinking deeper in the mire. At a meeting of that body a few days ago a letter was read from the English Home Secretary refusing once more the prayer of the petition that the members of the Association be allowed to compete for the Queen's Prize at Wimbledon. It was bad enough, considering that the right to carry arms is generally forbidden in this country, for any set of Irishmen to have made any such prayer, but surely the resolution with which the refusal was answered reaches the utmost degree of self-abasement. Notwithstanding the repeated refusals of the National Rifle Association of England to relax their rule confining the competition for the Queen's Prize to the efficient volunteers—that is, to Englishmen and Scotchmen, there being no volunteers in this country—Major Leech and his confederates have now resolved to eat humble pie and to request admission, by way of qualifying themselves, into some English or Scotch volunteer regiment! Should this request also be refused, as will, probably be the case, we fancy, the general verdict will be—"Served them right."—*Nation*.

THE FALL OF PLEVNA.

OSMAN PASHA'S VIEW OF THE SIEGE.

A correspondent gives the following summary of the views of Osman Pasha expressed from time to time during the siege of Plevna:—

Osman Pasha has been despondent and apparently without hope for the past six weeks. As soon as Plevna was completely invested he became silent morose, and severe in his attitude towards his staff. Early in November he was loud in his denunciations of the Ministry of War at Constantinople. "While I was doing my best," said he, "to render this place impregnable, and to defend it against the repeated attacks of a formidable enemy, a miserable drunkard, as cowardly as he is ignorant (Hakki Pasha), compromises all my plans and imperils the successes which I have gained up to this day. It may be fatality or simply want of judgement, but it would almost seem as if some malevolent spirit was pushing on our Ministry to commit blunder after blunder." A correspondent tells this story of the "Ghazi."—"A Jewess of a very advanced age is the only one who amid the general consternation amongst look after her own interests and profits by the occasion. She goes by the name of Sarah, and is a fortune teller. The door of her house is open from morning till night, and the house itself is filled with officers and soldiers, many of the former being of high rank, who come to consult her on their future lot. She derives an immense profit from this source, especially since her predictions of the death of officers in one or two cases, and promotion in one or two instances, have been verified. It is even said that Osman Pasha himself has not disdained to consult the ancient Sarah, who has predicted for him a most brilliant future provided he is not made prisoner before the 12th of December."

When the Russians sent word to Osman Pasha that they intended to send back the 5,000 prisoners they had taken at Dubnik and Telis, the Turkish commander-in-chief said that if they did send them back he would mow them down with grape-shot, seize the coward Hakki Pasha, who was with them, and have him shot on the spot. He told the Grand Duke's messenger in a somewhat bombastic manner that he might as well prepare for a regular siege, as he had provisions for eight months, a statement utterly untrue. He doubtless said this to attempt to deceive the Russians. At this time the daily ration to the troops had been reduced by one-third.

GLADSTONE AT EMMET'S GRAVE.

An Irish contemporary thus describes Mr. Gladstone's visit to St. Michael's Church—a place full of historical interest:—

"On the vestry table lie two casts of the heads of the brothers Shores, two men hanged and beheaded in the rebellion of 1798. Such are the properties of the soil in the cemetery that the bodies of these men are as perfect as the day on which they were hanged. The church itself is 800 years old, having been built by a Danish bishop during the ascendancy of his race. Mr. Gladstone examined the communion plate, some of which came out of the spoils of the Spanish Armada. But these were light trifles; the grave of Robert Emmet is here. "Let no man mark my tomb," said he, "until my country takes her place among the nations of the earth." Mr. Gladstone stood beside the rough granite, unadorned, unlettered, silent slab. No name, no date, no word of sorrow, of hope! The sides are clipped and hacked, for emigrants have come from far to take to their home in the New World bits of the tomb of Robert Emmet. How it comes to lie here is simply said. When his head was cut off in Thomas Street, his body was taken to Bully's Acre—what a name!—and buried. Rev. Mr. Dobbins, a sympathizer in the cause, was then rector of St. Michael's. He ordered the body to be disinterred that night, and he placed it secretly in St. Michael's churchyard. A nephew of Emmet a New York judge, corroborated this statement a few years since. But Emmet is not the only rebel that lies here in peace. Oliver Bond sleeps here, with "God's noblest work an honest man" written on his tomb-stone. Here too, is the grave of the hero William Jackson, who was tried, convicted and sentenced to death. While the judge was still pronouncing the awful doom, the man grew faint, and in a few minutes fell down dead. He had swallowed poison on hearing the verdict from the jury, in his vault, over which Mr. Gladstone peers anxiously, you can see a group of heads, all of 1798 men, and there, on one of them, there is the hangman's craps, as it has stuck in the wounded neck since the day on which it and its owner parted company. Mr. Gladstone is silent as he sees all this, and at last turns mournfully away."

THE NAVIES OF EUROPE.

The number of vessels of war of all the maritime Nations by some official statistics lately published in Germany, is 2,039, of which 279 were iron-clads. The armament comprised 280,000 men and 15,000 guns; 110 war-vessels, including 56 iron-clads, were in the course of construction. The share of Germany in the world's navy was 21 ships (11 being iron-clads), two frigates, four corvettes, five gun-boats, 10 vessels fitted with screws (of which four are corvettes, three tenders, and three are vessels with torpedoes). As regards the number of vessels which they possess, the different nations rank as follows: England, France, Russia, Turkey, Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain, Holland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, Portugal. Italy and Germany rank together by reason of the great number of vessels they have lately constructed.

PERSECUTION IN ROME.

Mr. William Mercer wrote on the 18th ult. from Rome to the *Daily News*, informing that estimable journal that since the forcible seizure of the Pontifical territory by the royal brigand from Piedmont, there is neither truth nor justice nor law to be met with in the whole peninsula. He even quotes for us the words of one of the barristers in Italy, who solemnly warned him as follows:—

Let nothing induce you to bring an action against the government authorities on account of your sufferings without the support and guarantee of expenses from the Foreign Office, otherwise you will be deliberately led from court to court, and appeal to appeal, until you are ruined.

Mr. Mercer continues, on his own account, thus:

The brigand cry, familiar to travellers, "Your money or your life!" has now spread from Pustum, Salerno, Naples, and Sicily, to every court of law in the Italian kingdom.

Unless we greatly mistake, it has been for some years the habit with a crew of mendacious reporters not altogether unknown to the *Daily News* to proclaim that all the virtues were flourishing in Italy since Victor Emmanuel's act of dastardly brigandage at the Porta Pia. It now is beginning to appear, even to English eyes that we spoke the truth when we asserted that Italy, under the Savoyard, had become the "habitation of devils," and that the *Daily News* simply falsified when it announced the commencement of a golden age for the fortunate Italian population. Travellers from all parts of the world most ominously are avoiding Rome and Italy at the present time, and unless some sort of guarantee can be given by Victor Emmanuel to the civilized world that property and life shall be respected, the bear hunter and his son and the villains who surround them will find themselves most decidedly "cut" by Christian Europe. This is no dream of ours, it is the openly expressed opinion of all honest men. When we read from the pens even of Protestant writers such words as these—

The change of ministry was due to unworthy and selfish intrigues.... Everybody, it would seem, has been disenchanted.... Taxation, the opprobrium of the kingdom of Italy, has become no lighter. They will long have to pay dearly for the sweets of liberty and the honour of achieved nationality.... Altogether, the Italian prospect is not cheering.... Under the old regime Italian morality stood exceedingly high.

—and ten thousand other sentences all of the same hue, we know whither poor Italy is drifting and what the historian will have to say of her. At the inauguration of the Mentana monument the speeches were little else than plain outspoken denunciation of the king and the government. And this by their own men—those who have helped at the de-throning of the Sovereign Pontiff and at the spoliation of the religious houses! *London Universe*.

"THE ARMENIAN QUESTION"

Under this heading the *Pull Mall Gazette* prints the following extract from a recent despatch of Mr. Layard, British Ambassador at Constantinople, to Lord Derby, relative to the dangers to England from the Russian conquest of Armenia:—

I may be excused for pointing out the dangers to England of a prolongation of the war, and of a complete subjugation of a large part of the empire by Russia. Should Russia desire to annex at this time any of the European provinces of Turkey, European interests would probably be called into play, and she would be prevented from carrying out her intention. But as regards the acquisition by her of territory in Asia Minor the case is different. The interests of England would then be alone concerned. It would probably signify little to the rest of Europe whether Russia retained Armenia or not. But England has to consider the effect of the annexation to Russia of this important province upon the British possessions of India. Russia would then command the whole of Asia Minor and the great valley of the Euphrates and Tigris, which would inevitably fall into her hands in the course of time. Persia, moreover, would be placed entirely at her mercy. The suspicion that Russia has already made secret offers to Persia to assist her in acquiring the province of Bagdad in exchange for Ghilan and Mazanderau may be unfounded, but the fact that it exists, and has been entertained by persons not generally ill-informed, proves that this consideration is one not to be altogether lost sight of. The desire of Persia to possess the province of Bagdad and the holy shrines of their prophets and martyrs is of very ancient date, and is shared by the whole Persian nation. On the other hand, the possession of the entire coast of the Caspian Sea, and the direct road through Herat and Afghanistan, and ultimately to India, is a matter of vast political importance to Russia.

It must not be forgotten that the possession of Armenia by Russia as regards any designs that she may have upon India, supposing her to entertain

them, would be very different from that of any part of Turkestan or Central Asia. In Armenia and the north of Persia she would have a busy and abundant population, affording her excellent materials for a large army, ready at any time to advance upon our Indian frontier, and resting upon a convenient and sure base of operations, in direct communication, by the Caspian Sea, and by Batoum, with the heart of the Russian empire. The moral effect of the conquest of Armenia and the annexation of Ghilan and Mazanderau by Russia upon our Mahomedan subjects, and upon the population of Central Asia, cannot be overlooked by a statesman who attaches any value to the retention of India as part of the British empire.

The *Cologne Gazette* says on this subject:—

Field Marshal Moltke, who knows Asia Minor from personal experience, is reported to have said recently that the Russian conquest of Armenia would be a very serious affair for England. With Armenia Russia advances to the Euphrates, and once she possesses the Euphrates the way to India would for the greater part be already closed to England. The question now is whether the conquest of Kara, as formerly the burning of the Turkish fleet before Sioope, will at last induce England to manly action. Here (at Berlin) the opinion of England's power of action has sunk so low that it is doubted whether we shall see her rise from the lethargy. These remarks are made in reference to the explanation now given from the Russian side of the Emperor Alexander's word of honour that he spoke only of Europe, and not of Asia, and in reference to the cry of the Russian journals that Armenia should be kept as a "war indemnity."

TURKISH VALOR.

The European and Christian races everywhere, the races which account themselves the greatest, wisest, and bravest on earth, have watched with amazement the spectacle of invincible and semi-barbarous Turkey contending on even terms with gigantic and organized Russia.

At the outbreak of the struggle the civilized world supposed that it would be pitifully unequal; that without the assistance of some one of the "great powers," the Moslems would be crushed in a single campaign; that the advances of the Muscovite armies would be little more than a triumphal promenade. It was commonly supposed that the superiority of Russia's soldierly disposition, intelligence, and education at least equalled her advantage in wealth and numbers. It had come to be an accepted credence, almost equivalent to military maxim, that Asiatic and semi-Asiatic troops could not stand before Europeans.

We have seen enough during the summer of 1877 to lead us to question all these beliefs. What Turkish general has showed formidable capacity, and the Turkish soldiers have exhibited heroic courage. They have not only defended intrenchments with their historic tenacity, but they have assaulted them with impetuosity, and sometimes with success. Embodied, they seem to be the equals of the Russians, and man to man, their superiors. What is the meaning of this wonderful uprising and resuscitation of a people whom all Europe looked upon as decadent and effeminated? The truth is that there has been no change in the character of the Ottomans. We have not read their history thoroughly and with discrimination. Arguing loosely from their military disasters, we have not done justice to their martial qualities. They have always been brave, even in their overthrows. Their most unfortunate wars, the wrestles in which they have suffered defeat or defeat, have been illustrated by signal instances of heroism such as the most warlike nations might glory in. If they have lost territory, it has never been through lack of valor, nor altogether from want of good generalship, but mainly from defect of preparation.—*J. W. De Forest, in Harper's Magazine for January.*

A DESCENDANT OF SIR WALTER SCOTT TO THE BISHOP OF BUFFALO.

ABERTSFORD, MELROSE, N. B.

My Lord:—I trust your Lordship will forgive the liberty I am taking. Emboldened by the sympathy which I know exists in America for the memory of Sir Walter Scott, I venture to make an appeal for help towards a convent of the Good Shepherd which it is proposed to start in Edinburgh, where the want of such a house is very great. The scheme is approved and blessed by the Right Reverend Bishop Strain, Vicar Apostolic of the Eastern District of Scotland—but we need between £3,000 and £4,000 to start with, and this will have to be collected. There is much to be done in Scotland and there are very few Catholic families with means. These are already overwhelmed with claims upon their charity.

For this reason do I venture to lay a petition before your Lordship, in hopes that your charity may suggest some means of obtaining help for us. I would willingly beg from others besides Catholics; but I do not know how to reach them. It has occurred to me that if the Bishops of the United States should generously allow some kind of collection to be made in parts of their Diocese a certain portion of the sum might be raised without much difficulty. I cannot express in words how great would be my gratitude, but I can promise that benefactors will be remembered for ever in the prayers of the community.

Though I have alluded to the memory of my great-grandfather as a plea for the step I am taking, nevertheless the love of God is the principal motive on which I rely for obtaining help while the hope of promoting a work manifestly to His glory gives me courage which otherwise would fail me to write on this occasion.

Eagerly begging your Lordship's blessing, I am, my Lord,

Yours most respectfully,
MARY MONICA MAXWELL SCOTT.
Nov. 16th, 1877.