

The True Witness

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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WEDNESDAY.....JANUARY 30, 1895.

OUR SOUVENIR NUMBER.

Last week we announced that it was the intention of the directors of THE TRUE WITNESS to issue a special and exceptional Souvenir Number for St. Patrick's Day, 1895. In repeating that announcement we desire to state that this year's souvenir will be distinct from anything heretofore sent forth from this office. We have no hesitation in saying—and facts will soon support our statement—that it is to be a most elaborate, artistic and perfect edition of its class. Many of our readers will recall the splendid Christmas issues of the old Dominion Illustrated; we purpose emulating even the finest of them. And what is better our issue will sell at half the price of any other heretofore similar publication. Arrangements have been made for the illustrations, and no pains, no talent, no artistic ability will be spared to procure a gem that will glitter in the diadem of Canada's choicest journalistic efforts.

We feel that we owe our readers and ever increasing number of friends some token of appreciation for the support they have given us, and we owe our Catholic people some evidence of the deep interest THE TRUE WITNESS takes in their welfare and success. It is true that, week after week, we fight their battles, uphold their cause and assert their rights; but we desire to go beyond even that field and let our fellow countrymen abroad, our co-religionists the world over, as well as strangers to our nationality, have an idea of what can be done by the English-speaking Catholics in general and the Irish-Catholics in particular, in this great Dominion of ours. And in no better way can we attain that end than by placing before them proof positive that in every sphere we are foremost amongst the first—in the journalistic realm as well as in every other domain. In making this announcement

we purposely refrain from saying all that we could easily and with assurance promise. We prefer to agreeably surprise than in any way to disappoint our friends.

In the carrying to a successful issue the well-matured plans which have been decided upon, we can obtain very substantial assistance from hundreds of our well-wishers—an assistance that would be mutual in its effects. Perhaps never in the history of special publications—particularly in the season when spring supplies will be coming in—were better inducements offered to advertisers. It is not in an ordinary issue of a weekly paper that they will be called upon to announce their establishments or business, rather will it be in the St. Patrick's Day Souvenir Number *par excellence*. There is no possibility of now calculating what the circulation of such an issue will be; only when it is seen will the public realize the value and importance of having a corner therein.

For the present we will say no more. We simply trust that this effort, on our part, will meet with a reciprocity of encouragement that it will deserve.

On different occasions we have solicited the encouragement of the Catholic public on behalf of the only organ that they possess in this Province; we are pleased to say that a fair response was made and, thanks to the energy and devotedness of all who saw the necessity of a thorough Catholic organ, THE TRUE WITNESS has made giant strides within the past few months, and has distanced a great number of difficulties and obstacles that thronged its path. This time we do not come to ask assistance, but to offer a souvenir of our gratitude to all who have had faith in our endeavors and who helped, in the past, as we know they will continue to help in the future, through the medium of the press, the cause that is most sacred to them and the interests they most cherish. Look out, then, for this year's St. Patrick's Day Souvenir.

"DAILY WITNESS" BIGOTRY.

There are bigots and bigots. There is a bigotry that is deserving of pity, for its source is ignorance; there is a bigotry that only deserves contempt, for it originates in persons who should know better and who cannot fairly plead ignorance as a palliation. In this latter class the Daily Witness, by its editorial of the 22nd inst., on the question of the Requiem Mass at Notre Dame, has most positively ranked itself. We are the more grieved at this course on the part of our *confrere* in as much as that organ has been making almost superhuman efforts, of late, to be more reasonable on subjects of a religious nature. But probably the Witness is like certain corporations composed of members that differ politically, and who seek to escape from any responsibility by shifting it from one shoulder to another. Probably "the only religious daily" keeps a "fighting man," whom it retains in the background as long as the organ is in good tune, but whom it trots out the moment there is any religious fighting to be done. In any case that article alone would suffice to stamp the paper as the most narrowly bigoted in Canada.

The two points that the Witness sought to make were that the Mayor of Montreal had no right to invite the Governor-General and the citizens to the Requiem service for the repose of the soul of the late Sir John Thompson; and that the issuing of such an invitation constituted a direct attack upon the peace of the community, because it was an attempt to establish a State Religion in Canada—which State Religion, through ecclesiastical aggression, was to

be the Roman Catholic. Although the terms we use may be considered "unparliamentary," still we cannot otherwise accurately qualify such contentions than by the terms absurd and foolish. Perhaps the words ridiculous and childish might suit, were it not that there is reason to use the adjectives bigoted and false. We are not going to enter into any arguments concerning the Catholic doctrine of prayers for the dead and efficacy of the Mass; this is neither the time nor the place. But taking the whole question from the extreme non-Catholic standpoint, we hold that the Mayor could not, consistently with his position and the circumstances, have done otherwise, and that instead of thereby seeking to place one religion, or church, above another, in the eyes of the State, he was actually proclaiming the universally advocated principle amongst non-Catholics, that one religion or church was as good as another. We don't mean by this that the Mayor thereby tacitly acknowledged the Catholic Church to be upon a level with the fragments of Christianity called sects, but that he did not consider that the Catholic Church was in any way inferior, before the world and the state, to any or all of them. Let us talk rationally; let us try to consider this matter from an impartial standpoint!

On the broad basis that the State here acknowledges no special form of Christianity, no particular church, as a state church, the Catholic Church has as much right to hold its services, be they for the living or for the dead, as has any other form of Christianity. The late Premier was a Roman Catholic; he died in full communion with that Church; he believed, as he teaches, in the efficacy of prayers for the dead, and particularly in that of the Mass. It, therefore, was his right and privilege to have prayers, either public or private, offered up for the repose of his soul; as it is the right and privilege of the Church to offer up such prayers according to her ritual. Had Sir John been anxious for a monument after his death and the Catholic Church saw fit to comply with that desire, we can see no objection that could possibly be raised to her so doing, nor to her inviting others, equally desirous of honoring and complying with the deceased's wishes, to cooperate. There is no doubt that were Sir John asked to decide between a monument and a requiem Mass, he would have chosen the latter, as, according to his belief, the greater honor and the greater benefit. How, then, could there be anything inconsistent in the Church complying with such a desire and inviting—not obliging—others to take part in the paying of that tribute?

Let us suppose that the Mayor of Montreal was actuated by a narrow spirit, such as the Witness has displayed, and omitted to extend invitations to the Governor, the administrative, executive and legislative representatives, as well as to the citizens in general, what would the Witness think of him? It would be the first to accuse him of ignorance, discourtesy and incapacity. What would the Governor and dignitaries who belong to churches other than the Catholic one think? Naturally they would conclude that the Mayor had a very poor opinion of their liberality of mind, and that he must have considered them so prejudiced that they would not take part, even as observers, in such a tribute, or else so weak in their respective creeds that they could not attend a Catholic requiem service without thereby proclaiming their belief in the doctrine of Purgatory and their distrust in the teachings for which the Witness tells us so many martyrs perished. Were the Mayor to have so acted he would be unworthy of

his position, he would be directly insulting the highest personages in the land, and he would be casting a very mean and prejudiced suspicion upon the sincerity of their different creeds.

How the Witness can torture the presence of the Governor and others at that service into an attempt at establishing a State Church is more than we can imagine. Evidently the writer of that article knows less about the Catholic Church than does the untutored savage of the Congo. The special Requiem Mass at Notre Dame was not an ordinary, but an extraordinary, service of the Church. It was a public act that might be participated in either as a benefit to the dead statesman's soul (by Catholics) or as a tribute to his memory (by Protestants). No Catholic was obliged by the Church to attend that Mass. It was not attended in fulfilment of any precept of the Church. It would be different were it a regular Sunday Mass. The Catholic, unless for valid reasons of exemption, is obliged to attend Mass, at least once, on Sunday. Did ever the Mayor, or any Catholic priest, or layman, send out a circular inviting the Governor, or the Protestant personages of official dignity, to attend the Sunday Mass in the Catholic Church? In that there might be a suspicion of securing a special state recognition for the Catholic Church; and even then it would only be a faint suspicion. We can readily understand that were the authorities, civic or ecclesiastical, to place a pew at the disposal of the Governor, or of any Protestant dignitary, in a Catholic church, and seek, by one means or another, to have that personage attend the regular and ordinary Sunday Mass, there might be reason to suspect an attempt at securing high sanction and official recognition on behalf of the Church. But to extend the ordinary courtesy on such an exceptional occasion is so far from being what the Witness supposes that only a silly child or a frantic bigot—each equally irresponsible—could conceive such an idea.

But horror of horrors! The Protestant gentlemen and ladies, from the Governor and his consort down, actually knelt in the church, and followed the service in the prayer-books handed them. It would be a very poor compliment—and any of these personages would so deem it—to suppose that they would be ignorant and impolite enough to stand up and gape about, as if purposely to show disrespect for the ceremonies. But they knelt down, and thereby took part in prayers for the dead. How does the Witness know that any individual, from first to last, in that temple ever thought of praying for the dead—the non-Catholics we mean? But they followed the service in the books. So do they follow the text of Shakespeare upon the programmes handed around, when "Hamlet," or "Julius Caesar," is on the boards. That does not mean that they believe in the actuality of what they hear and see. Is there anything more fearful in a person seeking to know the meaning of the ceremonies and the nature of the prayers in a church, than in the same person wishing to thoroughly grasp the significance of each act and the purport of each phrase in a tragedy?

We have taken this subject from a Protestant, not from a Catholic standpoint, in order to show how senseless is the bigotry. He generally commits the great mistake of being silent when it would benefit himself to speak and of blazing forth, in uncontrollable vapourings, when no good is to result to either individual or country. We are sorry for the Witness; it is always painful to behold an otherwise sane person making an exhibition of some peculiar eccentricity. If the Witness were our most