

THE TRUE WITNESS

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE,

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, OCT. 16, 1857.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The interview of the Emperors of France and Russia on the 26th of last month has given rise to speculations as to the continuation of the *entente cordiale*. It is remembered how a short interview betwixt another Napoleon and another Czar, after the bloody day of Friedland, was attended with unpleasant consequences to England; and it is feared by some, that an intimate alliance betwixt Louis Napoleon and the Russian Emperor bodes no good to Britain. In justice, however, to the former it should be borne in mind that hitherto he has faithfully redeemed all his pledges, and that he has given the world no reason for suspecting the honesty of his future policy, or for attributing to him any hidden design of avenging the disaster of Waterloo upon his uncle's most constant enemy, now almost exhausted by the fierce conflict raging in the East.

Recruiting goes but slowly on in England, and is almost a dead failure in Ireland. This must be attributed, not only to the improved material condition of the Irish cultivator of the soil, but to the unjust policy pursued by Great Britain towards its Catholic soldiers. This injustice it is which prevents Catholics from offering themselves in the hour of Britain's need, to maintain its dominion in the East; and until this injustice be redressed, by giving to the Catholic soldier the same advantages as are enjoyed by his Protestant comrades, the Catholics of Ireland will still turn a deaf ear to the voice of the recruiting-sergeant, charm he never so wisely.

For this the people of Ireland cannot be blamed, or accused of sympathising with Sepoy outrages. Catholic soldiers have as good a right to the services of Catholic chaplains, paid by the State, as have Protestant soldiers to the services of Protestant chaplains; and the duty which they owe to their children, and to their God, imposes upon them the obligation of requiring from the British Government a guaranty that their little ones, if left orphans, shall be brought up in the Catholic faith of their fathers. If Exeter Hall continues inexorable, if it will persist in perpetuating wrong, and in branding the brave Catholic soldier even whilst fighting England's battles, as the inferior of his Protestant brother in arms, of this we may be sure—that Catholics will not enlist for a service, in which they will be, to a great measure, deprived of spiritual consolations in sickness and at the hour of death; and which, after death, will seize upon their orphaned children, and train them up to curse the religion of their fathers, and to despise the faith of the mother that bore them. We hope however that the military authorities will see, ere it be too late, the propriety of making no distinction betwixt its Catholic and its Protestant soldiers; that in proportion to their numbers, they will furnish to both an equal number of chaplains; and that they will take prompt and effectual measures to put a stop to the system of proselytism amongst the orphaned children of deceased soldiers. By adopting this honest, and equitable line of policy, recruits may perhaps be found once again to offer themselves from amongst the gallant sons of Erin.

In England and Scotland, the service is unpopular, and young men of the middle classes, who cannot afford to purchase a commission, and who do not feel inclined to enlist for the ranks, are unable to find a fitting field for the display of their military ardor. "Young Englishmen" are keeping up an incessant fire of correspondence upon the editor of the *Times*; and the opinion seems to be gaining ground, that if Great Britain desires to maintain its position as a military power of the first class, it must at once set about popularising its army, and so modifying its military system as to hold out inducements to young men of good character, but small pecuniary means, to enlist as soldiers. That some thing must be done, and that speedily, if it be intended to keep the military establishment of the Empire on its present footing, is pretty clear. As it is, and in proportion to its population, Great Britain raises annually, and altogether by voluntary enlistment, a greater number of soldiers than any other nation in the world; but it has almost entirely failed hitherto in persuading the members of the middle classes of society to take service in the army. How to effect this is the problem which the Government is now imperatively called upon to solve, as the sole means of maintaining a force requisite for the present emergency.—"Army Reform" will therefore be one of the

measures of the next session of the Imperial Parliament.

From India the tidings are gloomy, nor do there seem to be any reasons to expect a change for the better, before the end of October, when the reinforcements, now on their way, will have arrived. We have dates from Bombay to the 31st August, from which it would seem that the gallant corps under General Havelock, after many hard fights, had been compelled to abandon the advance upon Lucknow, and to fall back upon Cawnpore; where, with its numbers reduced to 900 men, it was menaced by bodies of insurgents from all quarters. The native population, hitherto indifferent, if not friendly to the British, begin to evince considerable uneasiness; more than watering in their allegiance, and ever ready to side with the victorious party, there is too good cause to fear, that should any signal disaster attend the British arms, they will unequivocally range themselves under the banners of the Sepoys. Lucknow and Agra still hold out. Before Delhi, the prospects of the besiegers are brightening. Their numbers have been considerably increased, and an assault, for the 20th of August, was spoken of as probable. The magazine of the mutineers had exploded, causing a great loss to the garrison, who are also said to be running short of ammunition. The puppet king was, it was rumored, meditating a retreat upon Rhotuck, a place about 45 miles to the north-east of Delhi, and to which he had already sent his Zenanah. At Calcutta, much uneasiness is felt, and the city is being rapidly filled with fugitives from the disturbed districts.

The commercial panic in the United States still rages as fiercely as ever. On Wednesday, the New York and Boston Banks suspended specie payments; commerce is paralysed, and the unfortunate work people dependent for their daily bread upon the prosperity of their employers are cast upon the world to beg, steal, or die of hunger. Such are the fruits of wild speculation, reckless extravagance, and general disregard of common honesty amongst the "business" men of the United States.

THE "MONTREAL HERALD" AND THE APPARITION OF LA SALETTE.—The following particulars of this miracle, or reputed miracle, are, we doubt not, still fresh in the memories of most of our readers. How on the 19th of September 1846, Maximin Giraud and Melanie Mathieu, aged respectively eleven and fifteen, saw, or said that they saw, on the mountain of La Salette, a lady who, speaking in the character of the Blessed Virgin, addressed them on the prevalent vices of the district—swearing and the profanation of the Lord's Day; and warned them of God's judgments about to fall on the land for these iniquities; and how, having thus delivered herself, she slowly ascended towards the sky before their eyes, and gradually vanished in the upper air, leaving behind her a brilliant light which lasted for some time and then faded away. These are the leading facts in this reported miracle; to which, without any variation, the two deponents above mentioned have adhered for now upwards of eleven years, though repeatedly subjected to rigorous cross examinations, by persons anxious to discredit their extraordinary story; and to convict the *Romish* Church of encouraging imposture.

Upon these facts we do not intend to dogmatise. It is not for a simple layman to affirm positively where the Church is silent, or to condemn others for not believing that which is not an article of faith. Like every other reported miracle upon which the Church has pronounced no decision, so upon this of La Salette every one is at liberty to judge for himself. It must be tried by the ordinary tests wherewith we determine the truth or falsity of any other story propounded to us; and our controversy with the *Herald* amounts simply to this—Has the falsity of the story of the shepherds of La Salette been so clearly established, as to authorise any one whose Catholicity is "unimpeachable" to pronounce it an evident imposture, in the face of the sanction given to it by the Bishop of Grenoble; who, after a careful weighing of the evidence, mature deliberation, and with the approbation of his Chapter, has pronounced it to "bear in itself all the marks of truth, and that the faithful may"—not *must*—"with justice believe it to be indubitable and certain?" We contend, the *Edinburgh Reviewer* notwithstanding, that its falsity has not been proved; and, without asserting the truth of the shepherd's marvellous tale, we maintain that until the Church has spoken, no "unimpeachable Catholic" will venture, even if he himself disbelieves it, to pronounce it to be an imposture.

Of course, if with Protestants, the Catholic assumed that miracles in the XIX. century were impossible, there would be an end of the matter. For, as the poet sweetly and philosophically sings:—

"The thing that is impossible can't be,
And never, never, comes to pass."

But if we admit that what has been, may be—and concede that what is actual is also possible—we cannot deal with it in such an off-hand manner. Catholics believe that their religion is a continuous miracle; that it was inaugurated, ren-

dered historically credible, and propagated by means of miracles. They believe, in short, that Christianity is a fact in the supernatural order; and thus, living as it were in, and inhaling constantly a supernatural atmosphere, they have contracted a sort of predisposition to accept the miraculous as true, when presented to them upon competent testimony. And thus it is with the reported miracle of La Salette. If proved, we will accept it as true; and until proved, we shall hold ourselves open to receive evidence in its favor, without pronouncing it to be false, because its truth has not been fully established.

And this is the point to which we would call our cotemporary's attention. He somewhat hastily, and, as it seems to us, unphilosophically concludes that, not to believe a story is equivalent to pronouncing it to be an imposture; as if between the two mental acts—that by which we affirm the truth of a story propounded to us, and that by which we positively assert its falsehood—there was no middle, or neutral ground possible. Thus he argues:—

"The mere fact that the Church does not acknowledge the revelation—the tale of the shepherds—must, to our simple understanding, be a proof that she considers it an imposture."

But this argument is defective, inasmuch as there is another hypothesis conceivable, without assuming that the Church considers the story "an imposture," and which is also reconcilable with her silence as to its truth. The Church may, with the evidence before her, feel that the story may be true, and therefore not necessarily "an imposture;" whilst, at the same time, she feels that the evidence in her possession is not, as yet, sufficient to entitle her to pronounce authoritatively as to its truth. This appears to us to be the present position of the Church towards the reported miracle of La Salette; and if so, it would be, to say the least, presumptuous on the part of any layman, or indeed of any individual Catholic, to anticipate, by his dogmatic decision, the judgment of the Church upon the matter in dispute. Every one is at liberty, without sin, to believe or disbelieve the story, according as the weight of evidence for or against it may incline him; but no one has the right to pronounce it an imposture. For there is a wide difference betwixt not pronouncing a story to be true, and pronouncing it to be not-true.

In a journal like this, it is of course impossible to take up one by one, and dissect thoroughly, all the arguments of the *Edinburgh Reviewer*—the source from whence the *Herald* mainly derives his information upon the subject under discussion—against the truth of the story of the shepherds of La Salette. One or two inaccuracies we will however take this opportunity of correcting.

The *Edinburgh Reviewer*, and the *Montreal Herald* after him, rely much on a verdict given in the Court of First Instance and subsequently confirmed by the Imperial Court of Grenoble—whither the case had been carried in appeal; and in which a Mlle. De La Merliere brought an action for damages against an Abbe Deleon, who had represented her in a pamphlet by him published, as having personated the Blessed Virgin on the 19th of September 1846. According to the not very trustworthy *Edinburgh Reviewer*, whom the *Herald* no doubt in good faith follows, this verdict, because unfavorable to Mlle. De La Merliere, in so far as her claim for damages against M. Deleon was concerned, is conclusive as to the opinion of both Courts, as to the part said to have been played by that lady in the case of the Apparition of La Salette. The *Reviewer* says, that "the miracle and the miracle worker have therefore been twice judicially condemned;" and the *Herald* in the same way accepts the verdict refusing damages to Mlle. De La Merliere as a conclusive proof, against the miracle of La Salette, and of its judicial condemnation by the legal tribunals as "an imposture." Both the *Reviewer* and the *Herald* are at fault here, for the verdict on which they rely carefully avoids any allusion to the said miracle; pronounces no opinion as to the truth or falsity of M. Deleon's accusations against the plaintiff; and refuses damages, or compensation to the latter, upon the express grounds that M. Deleon had no malicious intent, and that no injury had been done to the character of the lady by his imputations. The words of the verdict which we have before us, are these:—

"The tribunal of Grenoble rejects the demand—for damages—declaring that M. Deleon and Gargillier have acted in good faith, and that the imputations of which Mlle. De La Merliere complains have done her no harm." (Of course, because no sensible person believed them.)

Not a word, it will be seen, as to the truth of the story of her having personated the Blessed Virgin; and therefore no judgment whatsoever on the miracle itself. Its credibility is in no wise affected by the decision of the Grenoble Courts, and the positive evidence in its favor is of the same value as before the trial. That evidence we will briefly analyse.

The facts to which the two witnesses testify are of such a nature as to preclude the hypothesis of their having been themselves "deceived" by a personation of the B. Virgin by Mlle. De La Merliere, or by any one else. They assert positively that, at the close of the interview, the person who addressed them, arose from the

ground, and slowly ascending before their eyes, gradually vanished from their sight. It is physically impossible that this feat should have been performed by any mere natural agent; and therefore it is impossible that the witnesses could have been themselves "deceived."

But that they are not "deceivers," the *Edinburgh Reviewer* admits. In the first place he adopts throughout the hypothesis, started by M. Deleon that Mlle. de La Merliere personated the Blessed Virgin; and secondly he admits p. 8—"that the little cowherds did actually meet upon the hill in question a woman strangely accoutred, who perhaps addressed them in some such language as that they related to their respective masters on their return to the farms." And though the *Reviewer* adds that there may be "some doubts whether the boy Maximin was really imposed upon"—he grants that "the girl Melanie probably believed she had beheld a celestial vision;" in confirmation of which view of the case he adduces the fact, p. 10—that "her mind appears to have given way under the excitement caused by the assurance that she had actually held communication with a supernatural being." Thus even the *Edinburgh Reviewer* admits, the objective reality of the apparition, and the perfect honesty of one at least, of the eye-witnesses—thus abandoning the hypothesis of their being "deceivers;" whilst the supernatural character of the facts by them attested to renders untenable the hypothesis of their having been themselves "deceived." Here then we have—if not positive evidence of the truth of the miracle of La Salette—sufficient reasons at least for inducing us to refrain from "pronouncing it to be an imposture."

It is therefore incorrect on the part of the *Herald* to pretend that "the vision of La Salette, and the Mormon revelation, rest on precisely the same kind of evidence;" because in the case of Joe Smith there are sufficient reasons to feel assured that he was a wilful "deceiver;" whilst in the case of the cowherds of La Salette, we have the important admissions of the disbelievers in the miracle to the honesty of one at least of the eye-witnesses; and in the particulars of their story strong reasons for believing that they could not have been deceived. Marvellous as is their narrative, and improbable as to the Protestant many of its details must appear, there is certainly nothing therein contrary to faith, or good morals; and difficult as it may be for the *Montreal Herald* to accept it, he will find it a still more difficult task to frame an hypothesis consistent with the admission of the *Edinburgh Reviewer* as to the honesty and truthfulness of the witness Melanie, and the supernatural nature of the facts by her testified to—and at the same time compatible with the hypothesis that the miracle of La Salette rests on the same kind of evidence as does the pretended revelation of Joe Smith. Until such time as our cotemporary shall have framed such an hypothesis, and given it to the world, he should refrain from all disparaging allusions to the credulity of those who hesitate to "pronounce that to be an imposture" which has been testified to by eye-witnesses, who could not have been "deceived," and of whom, one at least, is admitted by an impugner of the truth of the miracle, not to be a "deceiver."

The *Hamilton Banner* evidently misunderstands the secret of our hostility to "State-Schoolism." It is not, as he would seem to fancy, because in a particular instance—Upper Canada to wit—"common schools" are anti-Catholic; but because we are opposed to the principle of State interference either in religion, or in education; and because, as freemen, we contend that education is not a legitimate function of the State. We hold the same position with regard to "State-Schoolism," that Protestant Dissenters in England hold towards "State-Churchism." We deny *in toto* the right of the State to tax any man for the support of either a church or a school, to which he is conscientiously opposed; and finally we insist that, if the Voluntary Principle be true in religion, and adequate for the support of the Church, the same principle must be true also in education, and adequate for the support of the School. It is then to "State-Schoolism," in every conceivable form, that we are opposed—as a tyrannical assumption of power to which the State can have no rightful claim under any conceivable circumstances; and as a monstrous invasion of the sacred, inalienable rights of the individual parent—to whom alone, and not to the State, does the education of the child belong.

We ask from the State nothing but simple non-interference. We ask not its assistance; for, if it will but refrain from theft, and from laying dishonest hands on the funds which Catholic zeal and Catholic piety will never fail to set apart for the education of the young lambs of the fold, we shall always have abundance of means at our command to support our own schools and colleges, without being under the disagreeable, and generally degrading necessity, of asking State aid in any form. But, so long as the State takes of the public money for educational purposes—so long as it burdens us with a school tax—we demand, not as a favor—for God forbid that we should ask, or accept, a favor from any one—but

as a right; that of the monies so appropriated, and of the taxes so levied—we receive our fair share, in proportion to our numbers. If these terms seem harsh, then cease to tax us, cease to take of the funds to which we, equally with Protestants, contribute, for school purposes, and we will ask no more. If you dislike the "Denominational" school system—then give us the "Voluntary" system, and let every man feed, clothe and educate his own children, and give them their apertient medicine in due season. These are the duties—the legitimate functions of the individual parent; but with them the State, no matter how organised, has no right whatsoever to interfere.

Our cotemporary will therefore understand that we are not so much defenders of "separate schools" as the opponents of "common schools," or of "State-Schoolism" in every form; and that, we are so not only as Catholics, but as freemen, asserting their rights against the encroachments of democratic absolutism and bureaucratic tyranny. It is in the same sense that we "come out strongly in favor of nunneries." We ask, as for our schools, only the non-interference of the State with these institutions. We assert our right, as against the State, to do what we will with our own, in the fullest extent of the words; our right to shut ourselves up for life, if we please, and to take all manner of vows—of celibacy, poverty—and of every sort in fact, which does not involve a violation of the natural law—without let or hindrance from the State. We assert our right, as freemen, to give of our own, to whom we please, as we please, and for whatever purpose we please—so long as that purpose is not a violation of the natural law—or contrary to religion and good morals. We claim for our sisters and daughters—whether clad in silk or in serge—whether they be married or single—whether attending to their duties as mothers, or, as Sisters of Charity, engaged in services of general benevolence—immunity from all insults, and intrusion. Neither into the bedrooms of our wives, nor into the dormitories of our Religious, will we ever permit any filthy sneaking Government official to thrust his unwelcome presence; and whilst admitting, to the fullest extent, the right and duty of the State to punish crime, and to interfere actively for its prevention, we deny to it the right to assume the presence of crime from a religious dress, or to treat as criminals those whose only offence it is, that they have left all things to follow Christ.

And as "freemen," as honest men, faithful to the spirit of treaties, and regarding the rights of others as fully as sacred as our own, we are, and ever shall be, the uncompromising opponent of "representation by population"—when applied to two distinct communities like those of Upper and Lower Canada—as a measure impolitic, unjust, contrary to every sound principle of legislation, and in violation of the spirit, if not the letter, of the Union betwixt the two Provinces. Impolitic and unjust, because it would be both impolitic and unjust to subject the people of Lower Canada to the control of "aliens in blood, in language, and in religion," as are the people of the Upper Province, with reference to the French Canadians; contrary to every sound principle of legislation, which teaches that "interests" should be represented, as well as brute masses; and a violation of the spirit of the Union, which, by giving to Upper Canada a representation equal to that of Lower Canada, in spite of the excess of population in the last named section of the Province, implicitly recognised and sanctioned the propriety of maintaining that equality of representation, when the relative positions of the two sections of the Province should be reversed. Of this arrangement, the Upper Canadians have had the advantage; upon no other conditions can the Legislative Union of the two Provinces, be compatible with justice and sound policy; and it is therefore but fair that Upper Canada should adhere to the terms of a contract which hitherto have been altogether in its favor. If to this the people of that section of the Province will not consent, then is there but one course of policy open to us, and that is, a total Repeal of the unnatural Union.

The law, as laid down by the *Montreal Witness*, for dealing with intruders into a private dwelling house, and who upon timely notice being given them to quit the premises, refuse to comply, is the same as that laid down by the *True Witness*. A father of a family has the legal right to turn a stranger out of his house; he has the legal right, if necessary, to employ force for this purpose, but should not have recourse to harsh, until gentle measures have failed. This is precisely the mode of treatment that we have recommended our Catholic friends to adopt towards all "Swaddlers," hawkers of immoral or irreligious books, and the agents of the *French Canadian Missionary Society* generally. Give them timely warning to quit the premises with their wares, and if they will not take the hint, kick them quietly but promptly out of doors.

Mr. Samivel Weller recommended a more vigorous mode of action to his estimable parent Tony, who was much pestered in his latter days by one of the Missionary tribe—a "red nosed man" with a seedy black coat, much given to strong potations, and extemporaneous utterings; and who, like our friends of the *Pointe aux Trembles* mission, looked upon all who refused to accept him as a preacher of salvation, as "vesels of wrath and doomed to perdition." In this case, if we remember right, Samivel exhorted his parent, the next time he was pestered by the visits