

The True Witness

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE. GEORGE E. OLERK and JOHN GILLIBES. All communications to be addressed to the Editor, G. E. OLERK.

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NEWS OF THE WEEK.

ALTHOUGH through the Duc de Gramont the Pope may have been informed that Louis Napoleon formally repudiates the sentiments of the writer of the famous pamphlet—"THE POPE AND THE CONGRESS"—yet the dismissal of M. Walewski from the Foreign Department, announced in the Moniteur, tends to confirm the impression of the French Emperor's hostile designs as towards the Holy See.

All is still uncertain as to the Congress, and events appear to be rapidly hastening to a crisis in the Italian Peninsula. Recruits to the Papal forces keep pouring in from Austria; whilst Sardinia, enraged at the prospect of the discomfiture of its ambitious schemes, threatens an invasion of the Legations if the enlistment of Austrian subjects by the Pope be not put a stop to.

THE "GAZETTE'S" THEORIES OF GOVERNMENT.—It is one of the inconveniences under which the Catholic labors, one of the difficulties with which he has to contend in his disputes with the Protestant upon matters pertaining to the moral, as distinguished from the physical order, that the latter has no fixed principles; that between the Catholic and the Protestant there is nothing in common, no premise, the truth of which is constantly recognised by both.

To tax his Catholic fellow-subjects with disloyalty is a common artifice with the Protestant, who thus, by implication, asserts loyalty, or obedience to the legitimate civil ruler, as a duty; but when it suits his convenience, or when the argument from the duty, or obligation of loyalty, can be cited against him, he at once turns round and asserts the right of insurrection.

Of this mode of conducting a controversy, the Montreal Gazette in its issue of the 20th instant furnishes us with several specimens. We had denied the right of subjects, at pleasure, to take up arms against their legitimate sovereign; and had instanced the case of the Catholics of Ireland, whom Protestants so often reproach with disloyalty; thus admitting that obedience is a duty, for otherwise disloyalty would not be a term of reproach to those towards whom it was applied.

Here then at once the Gazette flings to the winds the doctrine of loyalty being a duty, which, for God's sake, the subject owes to his legitimate civil rulers. There is no longer, according to the Gazette's theory of Government, any moral obligation upon the subject to obey. His might, or his power, to resist the authority of his sovereign, is the limit of his rights, is the sole measure of the allegiance which he owes to the civil magistrate.

authorises—according to the Gazette—or gives a right to their more powerful neighbor to oppress them, and enforce its rule upon them. For our cotemporary adds:—"But a Government on its side has clearly the right to use all the force at its disposal to prevent its destruction or the disruption of a portion of its territory."

Though when the Pope employed the force at his disposal to assert his legitimate authority in Perugia; though the Papal Government, before appealing to force used every means at its disposal to induce the Perugians to submit themselves to their legitimate Sovereign; and though after force had been appealed to, and the verdict had been given in favor of the government and against the rebels, every conceivable precaution was taken by the Papal authorities to prevent the unnecessary effusion of blood—the Protestant press in Europe and on this Continent with one voice exclaimed against the Pope as an abominable tyrant; because he had merely used the force at his disposal to quell an insurrection, and to prevent the "disruption of a portion of his territory"—that is to say, because he had done that which the Gazette asserts he had the "right to do."

The Gazette seems to have occasional glimmerings of the absurdity of his theory, and of the fearful results upon society were it to be generally adopted; for he speaks about "conflicting rights" as necessarily existing "everywhere in mundane affairs"—another point upon which we are at issue with him. There may, and no doubt ever will be, conflicting claims in all mundane affairs; so long as man is fallible and as often led by passion as directed by reason. But a right against a right there can never be; for as of contraries one must always, and both may be false, so the contrary of a right is a wrong, and always a wrong. The Gazette errs by not distinguishing between "claims" and "rights."

In opposition to "the only sound doctrine" of government, and of the respective rights and duties of rulers and subjects, as laid down by the Gazette, we would urge the Catholic doctrine. That all power is from God; and that the obedience which the subject owes to the civil magistrate, is a moral obligation, imposed by God Himself, and from which therefore the subject cannot absolve himself; though the ruler may by his misconduct, and by his abuse of the power which he holds from God, but as a trust only, forfeit his right or title to the allegiance of his oppressed and misgoverned subjects. Now here we take issue with the Gazette upon a matter of fact. We deny that Pius IX has so abused his power as a temporal sovereign; we deny that he has so oppressed and misgoverned his subjects, as to justify the latter in their rebellion to his authority. His whole reign has been marked by acts of clemency; his every act as a Sovereign Prince has been that of a father of his people—in spite of the ingratitude and treachery which he has received in return for the benefits by him conferred upon his temporal subjects; and though we do not predicate perfection of his government, or claim for it infallibility, we challenge its enemies to indicate one act of Pius IX by which he has justly forfeited the allegiance of the people of the Pontifical States; or to adduce any number of abuses in their government which are not more than balanced by the one monster infamy of the Protestant Church Establishment of Ireland.

On the other hand, we know from their acts that the success of the Italian insurgents would be the death-blow to true liberty; and therefore we pray for their defeat, as we would pray for the overthrow of any other set of tyrants—though there is no tyranny so grievous as democratic tyranny. Of what the friends of freedom have to expect from the triumph of the Liberals; of the real value of the latter's boast of attachment to liberty, take as specimens their treatment of the Church of the Religious Orders, and the Press; the thefts perpetrated upon the first; the arbitrary decrees of suppression and exile pronounced upon the second; and the tyrannical restrictions imposed upon the other. Obscene tales, pictures at the sight of which the most abandoned harlots of our back-lanes would blush, are permitted free circulation, and find a ready sale; but a Catholic Catechism is prohibited, and the offering for sale of a work of devotion is, by the Friends of Italian Freedom, punished as an offence. This was the kind of freedom established by the Terrorists of Paris, this liberty which Liberals have always and everywhere established; and if to loathe this kind of freedom, if to repudiate with disgust this kind of liberty, and to pray for its speedy suppression, be a wrong, we have no hesitation in pleading "guilty" to the Gazette's charge. As a plea, however, in mitigation of sentence, we would request of our judge to pause, and consider how he would feel towards the government which should treat him and his co-religionists, as Catholics have been treated by Italian Liberal Governments; which should seize upon and confiscate the property of the Protestant Orphan Asylum; which should assume to itself the right to nominate Protestant Ministers; which should decree the exile of all the Methodists; and prohibit under severe penalties the publication and sale of Calvinistic works of devotion.

It can be of no consequence whatsoever, either to the Montreal Witness, or its readers, by whom any articles that may appear in this paper are written; yet, as our cotemporary has had the impertinence to deliver himself of an opinion thereupon, and as he in so doing has been guilty of a violation of the truth, we take this opportunity of contradicting, and of requesting him to contradict, the assertion in his issue of the 18th inst., that the writer of certain controversial articles in the TRUE WITNESS is a Catholic clergyman. This statement of the Witness is false; and we request him to contradict it, because we do not choose that any of our Clergy

should be held responsible for any thing that appears in our columns, unless that responsibility be by them directly avowed and assumed. Once for all then, we give to the Witness' assertion a full and explicit contradiction; and assure him that the ostensible editor of this journal is the actual writer of, and alone responsible for, everything that appears therein, unless the contrary be explicitly stated.

This matter disposed of, we will address ourselves to the task of replying to the other points in the Witness' article of the 18th inst.; where-in he reiterates against the Catholic Church, his charges of idolatry, and suppression of the Word of God. He says:—"If the capacity of hearing and attending to invocations offered by thousands of different individuals in all parts of the world at the same time, be not a proof of omniscience and omnipresence, we can scarcely conceive what would be a sufficient proof. The creation of this earth is surely a proof of the omnipotence of God, as much as the creation of all worlds."

Neither from the creation of "this earth," nor from that of all existing "worlds," can the "omnipotence" of their Creator be logically concluded. The conclusion can never contain more than there is in the premises; but all existences, or creatures, are finite; and therefore from the premise "creature" as finite, no matter how extended, it is logically impossible to conclude to the omnipotence of its creator, since omnipotence is infinite, and the finite cannot contain the infinite. All that can be logically and directly concluded from existing creature, is, a creator whose powers far transcend our powers. Now the Witness should endeavor to realise the idea that the infinite is the contradictory, not a multiple, of the finite; and that, in spite of Paley, finite creature, which may be but a manifestation of finite power, cannot be a direct proof of omnipotence, or infinite power. So with the wisdom of Creator. From the contemplation of the material creation we may logically conclude to a wisdom far transcending our own, but not to omniscience, or infinite wisdom. We may therefore, for the sake of argument, admit the premises of our cotemporary, whilst rejecting his conclusions. We may admit that the capacity of the Saints to hear the invocations addressed to them from earth is just as much a proof of their omniscience and omnipresence, as the material creation is a proof of the omniscience and omnipotence of its Creator; but as from the finite or limited manifestations of power and wisdom, which are all that creation affords, it is impossible to conclude logically to the infinite wisdom and power of its creator, so from the much smaller, and far more closely limited power or capacity which we attribute to the Saints, it is also impossible to conclude to their omniscience or omnipresence. If we are not mistaken as to our cotemporary's religious opinions, he believes in a personal devil, and that the latter has a capacity for knowing what transpires on earth, which far transcends the capacity of mortals; yet we do not conclude that the editor of the Montreal Witness therefore believes the devil to be either omniscient or omnipresent—though he virtually acknowledges in the devil a capacity for knowing, as extended as that which Catholics attribute to the Saints reigning with Christ, and in the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision.

Our cotemporary errs again in supposing that we attempt to base any argument in the supernatural order, or with reference to dogma, upon Scripture, or writings of any kind. We appeal to the books of which the Bible is composed as authentic historical documents; and as therefore competent to establish a fact in the natural order, because their authenticity is a fact which by natural reason may be demonstrated. But the doctrinal authority of the said writings, as a fact in the supernatural order, cannot be established by natural reason; and as in our controversies with Protestants we must argue from premises which we have in common—and as in the supernatural order, Catholics have nothing in common with Non-Catholics—so we appeal to the Scriptures as authoritative in the natural order only, without conceding their authority in the supernatural order. We cite them as conclusive to facts in Jewish history, and as containing authentic records of some of Christ's sayings and doings upon earth; but beyond this, in controversy with Protestants, we would certainly never dream of appealing to them.

The only means by Christ Himself appointed that we know of, for learning "what is the teaching of the Holy Spirit," and on any matter not falling within the sphere of our natural faculties, is the teaching of the Catholic Church, as delivered to us by her Sovereign Pontiffs speaking to, and in the name of, the Church; by her Prelates in General Council assembled; and by the immediate teachings of our own duly appointed Pastors, in communion with the Apostolic See. We recognise therefore, as incumbent upon us, no obligation whatever of defending any dogma of the Catholic Church by appealing to Scripture; for Scripture, or writing is, not our rule of faith—seeing that the Catholic Church is older than any of the Christian Scriptures; and that if we recognise any authority in the supernatural order in the latter, it is solely because the Church from whom we received them, as

sure us, on her infallible authority, of their inspiration. The position of the writings of the New Testament to the Christian Church is not the same as, or analogous even to; that in which the writings of the Old Testament, and the Pentateuch especially, stood to the Jewish Church. As respects the latter, the Scriptures stood chronologically; and therefore logically, first in order: whilst as respects the former, or Christian Church, it is an indisputable historical fact, that her sacred writings are chronologically, and therefore logically, only second in order. In other words, the Jewish Church was a Scriptural Church, because based upon Scripture—i.e., because its Scriptures were anterior to its existence as a Church; whilst the Christian Church cannot be based upon what are known as the Scriptures of Christianity, seeing that in point of fact, the Christian Church is older than the oldest of the Christian Scriptures. Now as no superstructure can be anterior to its basis, so the Christian Church cannot be based upon the writings of the New Testament; and we do not feel ourselves therefore bound to cite the latter in support of any of the teachings of the Church.

And so when the Witness appeals to Scripture as authoritative in the supernatural order, he is guilty of two errors; firstly, in assuming that the Christian Church has no rule of faith except the Scriptures; and secondly, in assuming that his private interpretation of Scripture is the true meaning thereof. All he can say is—all he would say, if humility were a Protestant virtue, would be—"The Scriptures, as I understand them, say this, the Scriptures as I understand them mean that." We understand them in a different sense; we consider our private judgment, our interpretation of the Scriptures, to be at least as good as the private judgment and Scriptural interpretation of all the Protestant commentators in existence; nor is there one of them for whose opinion upon matters of religion we care one straw. Private judgment for private judgment, we assert our private judgment against all Protestantism.

Hence when the Witness asks us "why the Church of Rome neglects and practically banishes the Word of God?" we deny that she does so; and assert that in her communion only can the "Word of God" be found in its integrity.—The "Word of God" is not the material Scriptures, or collection of writings to which the Witness alludes, but comprises all the teachings of His Holy Spirit, whether transmitted orally or scripturally. Not by scriptures, but by the teachings of a divinely commissioned and divinely assisted body of men, did Christ enjoin His Gospel to be propagated; and to the Church, as the sole means by Christ Himself appointed for that purpose, and to her teachings do we without reserve submit ourselves, as the sole depository, faithful guardian, and infallible expounder of God's Holy Word. If in this we err, it must be because Christ Himself has explicitly appointed some other means, besides a body of living teachers, for the propagation and preservation in its integrity of His Word. If the Witness pretends that Christ has done so, and that the Scriptures are the means so appointed, and as this is a simple question in history—we call upon our cotemporary for the proofs of his thesis.

ORANGE ROWDYISM.—We are never surprised at any acts of violence from these gentry; we are not, therefore, surprised, though we must confess to having been much pained by the accounts, which through the press have been made public, of the violence offered to Mr. McGee by the Orangemen of Simcoe, headed by a Mr. Ferguson, a Member of the Legislative Assembly; and one of the class of which that body would be mainly composed were the schemes of the "Protestant Reformers" for giving to Upper Canada a numerical preponderance in the Legislature, finally accomplished. We copy the details from the Toronto Globe:—

Mr. McGee, it seems, had been engaged by the Bradford Literary Club to lecture in that village; and had chosen for his theme a strictly non-partisan subject. That the Association at whose instance he was to appear, had no personal or political bias in making the arrangement, is proved by the circumstance that the lecture was to be part of an extended course; and that Mr. McGee's immediate successor was to be Mr. Hillyard Cameron. The enterprise in its management, was creditable to the literary taste and spirit of the residents, and was shared by persons of all denominations and all party leanings. Of the lecture announced by Mr. McGee, hundreds of our readers have a personal knowledge. It has been delivered at a dozen different points in Western Canada, without being challenged as in any regard at variance with the neutrality of the ground on which the lecture-going portion of the community are invited to stand. We notice these points, not because they at all affect the right of Mr. McGee to visit Bradford and lecture there on any subject whatsoever; but because they serve to render conspicuous and disgraceful the proceedings which now challenge public attention.

Certain Orangemen of the Riding, led by Mr. Thomas Ferguson, its representative in Parliament, resolved not to permit Mr. McGee to fulfill his engagement. They resolved not only that the lecture should not be delivered, but that Mr. McGee should not be allowed to set foot in the village. Nor was this mere bullying. What they threatened, they made arrangements to carry into execution. The "lumps" of the district were thoroughly organized for the purpose. No pains were spared to excite the passions, and to stimulate them to violence. Near relatives of Mr. Ferguson were most active in traversing the County, fanning the excitement, and maturing plans for giving it the desired effect. In all this, there was not even a semblance of secrecy. The precise arrangements, of course, were not publicly stated; but the leading points—the resolve, the organization, the available amount of force—were proclaimed as from the house tops. The member himself not only refused to aid in checking the affair, but publicly boasted of it—publicly and systematically encouraged it, directed it, and finally consummated it to his liking. And for the time this terror succeeded. The orderly people of Bradford became alarmed. The use of the public hall was deemed to save it

from demolition. A deputation was sent to Toronto to dissuade Mr. McGee from carrying out his visit, and so the "lumps" had things their own way. But though only pained at the success of Orange Rowdyism in Upper Canada, we must add that we have been much surprised as well as pained at the sight of the approval given to this fellow Ferguson and his brother ruffians, by such a journal as the Toronto Colonist. In its political antagonism to Mr. McGee, who is certainly one of the most brilliant lecturers in America, it entirely forgets the first principles of justice; and foolishly, as well as wickedly, smiles complacently upon deeds which are a disgrace to the community wherein they can be perpetrated with impunity, and which may, some day, be retaliated upon their authors. Amongst honest men of all persuasions and shades of politics there can be but one opinion as to the merits of the case above described; and we believe, therefore, that amongst many Protestants as well as by all Catholics, the conduct of the Simcoe Orangemen is held in execration.

Yet if it should open the eyes of the authorities to the danger and gross impropriety of giving any semblance even of countenance to Orangemen, or any other secret oath-bound politico-religious organisation; should it have the effect of convincing them of the truth, that in a mixed society of Catholics and Protestants, no member of such an organisation, whether he be an Orangeman or a Ribbonman, is fit to be entrusted with any share, however slight, in the administration of the law—this Simcoe not will not have been without its advantages. Where the impartial administration of justice is liable to be suspected even, there will respect for the law, and for its duly constituted tribunals be lost; and where respect for, and confidence in those tribunals are lost, there will spring up, as a necessary consequence, a spirit of violence and insubordination, menacing the very existence of civil society. We are no advocates of the proscription of any class; but we do, and ever will insist, that neither the Ribbonman nor the Orangeman can safely be entrusted with any share in the administration of justice.

Though we publish Dr. Cahill's letters to his countrymen in Ireland, we must not be understood to endorse their statements, or to adopt their conclusions. On the contrary, we know that, in so far as his moral and spiritual interests are concerned, the Irish Catholic emigrant to the United States is in every way a loser; whilst in so far as his material interests are concerned, we doubt very much if his condition is improved by emigration. This at all events is certain—that in the State of New York, there is as much destitution, and in proportion to its population, as many able, willing, and industrious laborers seeking for, but unable to find, employment to keep them from starving, as there is in the poorest country of Europe—as there is in any part of the British Empire. Under such circumstances, we do not think that the advice of the man who recommends emigration to the U. States is advice which the Irish Catholic would do well to follow; for we know that in a moral point of view the Irish Catholic is always a loser, and in a material point of view rarely a gainer, by a change of residence from Ireland to the U. States.

SUMPTUARY LAWS.—The following paragraph, which we clip from the Montreal Witness of Saturday last, contains conclusive testimony of the worthlessness of Prohibitory Legislation upon the subject of drinking. Men can not be reformed by Statute; Acts of Parliament are impotent to effect moral reforms; diseases of the heart cannot be cured by Legislative politics. So with drunkenness, which proceeds, as do all other vices, from the corrupt heart of man, it is now found that it cannot be repressed by parchment enactments. These may divert the current into another channel, but they cannot arrest its progress, or even throw up barriers or embankments against its ravages. Indeed it would seem from the report of the Vermont State Temperance Society, that under the operation of the Prohibitory Law the amount of drunkenness has actually increased, though there has been a decrease in the quantity of "open drinking." The people of Vermont have put a respectable coat of white paint over their sepulchre, and are now discovering that its contents are as fetid as ever:—

"The report of the Vermont State Temperance Society sums up the results of the Prohibitory Law thus:—With the exception of a few localities, the testimony is uniform, that so far as open and default violation of it is concerned, the law is respected, and that it is regarded with favor by a large majority of the community. Take the State through, open drinking is seldom seen and drunkenness of rare occurrence. On the other hand with two or three exceptions, the test money is equally uniform, that while the law is outwardly respected, it is secretly broken; that the habit of drinking, especially among young men, is alarmingly on the increase; that the enemies of temperance and our law are untiringly, and by the most ingenious devices, at work to evade and violate the law; and that, in many cases, they have become so bold, by impunity, that they have thrown up all disguise, and buy and sell in open day."—Montreal Witness.

This is the result that we have always predicted for Prohibitory Laws. These of course, put an end to the open sale of spirits, but cannot reach the haunts of the unlicensed grog-seller; and all that society gains by them is, that the traffic whilst carried on as extensively as ever, is no longer under the surveillance of the police.

CONVERSIONS.—The Times records the conversion, and reception into the Catholic Church, of the Revs. Messrs. Forthgill and Wormal, Ministers of the Anglican Establishment, and Curates of the Parish of Knightsbridge. The first named of these gentlemen officiated at Saint Paul's, the other at St. Barnabas.

COUNTING HOUSE CALENDAR.—For the Year 1860—J. C. Beckett, Great St. James Street, Montreal. This Calendar is got up in Mr. Beckett's usual elegant style, and is an ornament, as well as an indispensable companion of the office of the man of business.