

THE TRUE WITNESS

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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WEDNESDAY,.....JANUARY 11, 1893

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

Now that we are entering upon the new year, and THE TRUE WITNESS is doing its utmost to please every one and doing so successfully, we would remind our subscribers that we are at a very heavy expense, and although each little mite that is due may be very small indeed, still the aggregate of these subscriptions amounts to thousands of dollars. It is very unpleasant for us to be constantly sending out duns. If our subscribers would kindly relieve us of the necessity of writing these unwelcome letters, we would have so much more time to devote to the improvement of the paper.

MUSIC IN THE SCHOOLS.

Under the heading of "Our School Girls" we have been following up the different parts of a complete Convent or Academic course. Last week's article brought us to what we style the *ornamental*, or the embellishments, and we spoke of the three classes of girls who take music lessons: the unmusical, the ordinary clever, and the exceptionally brilliant. With regard to the girls in the first category, they have no business to take lessons at all; as to those of the third category, they require all the attention that can be lavished upon them; but the young ladies of the second category—who are by far and away the most numerous—deserve particular mention.

We repeat, what we said last week, that they must receive the rudiments as thoroughly as possible, otherwise they will never be even pleasing players. The attitude, the hands, the fingers, the touch, all these should be carefully directed; the scales should be completely mastered before a piece is attempted. Above all, care should be taken that the ear be kept in subjection until it is well trained.

Let us suppose the case of a young girl who has a fair musical talent and evidently may be, one day, a very good player. After the elements of music—the A B C, so to speak—have been completely grasped, the teacher will commence to give the pupil simple and easy pieces, by degrees the compositions set before her become more difficult; finally, she reaches a point when the works of great masters can be given to her. That girl comes out of school with a complete education: she has had a sound drilling in the *necessary* part, a thorough training in the *useful* part, and she has carried off the honors in the *ornamental* part, and particularly in music. She is evidently prepared to enter upon the world with a certain amount of *eclat*, her *début* in society is anxiously looked forward to; and finally it comes.

She is called upon to play upon some public occasion, at a church concert or a

literary and musical entertainment, she acquits herself surpassingly well, she plays a piece from Mozart or one from Haydn, and the audience applauds, and the neighbors say, "what a fine girl; how accomplished; what a grand musician!" And, very likely, these remarks are richly deserved. Let us change the scene! It is an evening at home, in the family parlor; the father, mother, older and younger brothers and sisters, and a neighbor or so are seated around the central table, and there is a glow of contentment and happiness upon all faces. After a while the father asks his daughter to play something for his friends. The old gentleman who had just "dropped in to have a chat over old times," is anxious to hear a few of the airs that always recall so vividly the scenes of long vanished joys or the faces of dear ones long since departed. The father, to please his good neighbor and perhaps to show what his daughter can do, asks her to play some of Moore's "Melodies," "The Harp that once," "The Minstrel Boy," "I saw from the Beach," or some other one of these immortal and soul-enchanting *chefs d'œuvre*. It may seem very strange, but nevertheless it is a fact, that the girl who can rattle off a piece of Wagner's composition, does not know one of these "Melodies." Perchance, if she has not been under her parents' care, she would say—as has been said—"Oh! Pappa, these melodies are Irish; I don't know any of them; they are too common."

The above words are not exaggerated; they fell from the lips of an Irishman's daughter, one evening after she returned home from the completion of her education, and the father was so much ashamed that his heart sunk in his breast and all the joy and merriment of the evening fled from his face, as a bright moon-lit spot upon the field disappears when a cloud passes over the luminary. And no wonder. But, you may tell us that we have chosen an extreme and very exceptional case. Not at all: the young girls may not reply in the exact same words, but they probably never once played an Irish melody, a Scotch national air, or an old English tune. Still, if there is anything really beautiful and touching in the music of earth, it certainly is to be found in the imperishable airs that have cheered the souls of many generations of Irishmen. After all, what is the object of music? Is it not to please? Is it not a language that is common to all the world and that speaks to the hearts of men, in every clime and in every age? Then why not make use of it with a view to pleasing those who listen to your execution? Let us suppose that you read a passage from Homer for a thorough Greek scholar, he will go into ecstasies over it; read the same, with all the power you may possess and all the elegance of delivery, to a man who has never heard the language, who never read a line of it, who does not know as much as its alphabet, and your most magnificent passage will "be Greek to him." It is precisely the same in music; for the person who does not understand classical music, but whose soul is stirred into exultation and whose heart is caused to throb with delight at the familiar notes of some memory-haunting melody, a young lady might just as well perform a series of evolutions in calisthenics before him as to rattle out variations that have no meaning for him.

One time McGee remained over two days in Florence for the express purpose of hearing an Italian Prima Donna singing the "Last Rose of Summer" and "Erin, the tear and the smile in thine eye." These two items upon the programme sufficed to interrupt a hurried

journey from Rome to Canada. After the anxiously-expected concert was over, a friend asked McGee how he liked it all, and if he were not enraptured to hear the Irish melodies so grandly rendered. His reply was characteristic: "I felt, sir, like choking her, when I heard her smothering every trace of the original in her meaningless variations and insane screeching." The truth of the matter is that our girls, when they come forth from school, make use of the music they have learned to *show* what they can do, but not to *please* others and make their society a happiness. A girl should know when and where to play her classical pieces, when and where to touch the simpler chord of the familiar air. If she does not, her education—despite diplomas and medals—is unfinished. Would she talk to an educated man in the same language that she would use in conversation with a professor? She should, if her course is complete, not be unable to play the more difficult compositions, but she should never be above playing the most simple, if it be the most pleasing, piece. We will continue this subject as the weeks go past.

"A DANIEL COME TO JUDGMENT."

There are many kinds of prophets, the "weather prophet," the "commercial prophet," but worst of all the "political prophet." Of this last class we have very few of any note, still one has suddenly arisen in our midst. Mr. H. J. Cloran, whose career so far as political aspirations and successes are concerned, certainly has neither been "a prophet in his own country," nor in any other place that he ever chose as a field for his ability, has just made the following prediction: "Riel said that within ten years from the date of his death every man in the Cabinet would be out of political existence. Seven years have elapsed, and ten of them have passed from the scene; but the greatest fall he (Mr. Cloran) thought was reserved for Hon. Mackenzie Bowell, the man who had compelled the Government to hang Riel, and Sir John Thompson, the man who had signed the warrant."

Evidently, with Mr. Cloran "the wish is father to the thought." It was a very easy thing, seven years ago, to guess that ten years would bring about so many changes that most, if not all, of the men of that day would have changed their spheres of activity. But Mr. Cloran forgot to mention that the men and party that were wasted into power, with overwhelming strength, by the Riel cry, have long since vanished, and forever, and have not left a single vestige of their political shipwreck behind. He also omitted to inform his hearers that he, himself, was wiped out repeatedly, not from political existence—for he never had any—but from all chance of ever becoming a political factor in the country. These prophecies cost far less than the investigation of a jury system, and they are just as ineffective in the end. We think it very strange that the patriotic Mr. Cloran should have lost so much breath crying out for the rights of his Catholic fellow-countrymen, and that he now squanders his few remaining spasmodic sighs predicting some strange and undefined calamity to the only Catholic that, since Confederation, ever rose to the high station of first minister of the Dominion. It is a pity Mr. Cloran can't find some constituency to elect him to Parliament; it would be refreshing to hear him pour forth his seer-like lore upon the floor of the House. If it be not an intrusion upon his prophetic territory, we would like to predict that he will never be wiped off

the political scene—as his Rielite friends have been—simply because he never had any hold upon it. Between Dr. Douglas and Mr. H. J. Cloran, Sir John has a hard time of it. Yet he seems to be entirely undismayed by his enemies. Try your hand at the "weather," Mr. Cloran; Prof. Wiggins can give you pointers, and you may have better success?

A CATHOLIC PREMIER

There is nothing in the constitution of Canada to prevent a Roman Catholic from occupying the high post of Prime Minister of the country; but there is something in the political constitution of the two parties that renders the position a most difficult one indeed for a Roman Catholic to hold. High as the station may be, Sir John Thompson's lot is not an enviable one. "Weary the head that wears the crown," and heavy, at times, the heart that beats beneath the purple. Leaving aside all question of the government's policy upon trade matters—a subject that does not come within the sphere of our organ—we find that no matter what course he takes, on account of his Catholicity he will find men to upbraid him. We do not now refer to the Douglas class; that fretfully bigotted gentleman has let off his steam, and we may expect peace for a couple of months until he has had time to replenish the boiler. It is of another category of anti-Catholics that we speak.

Let us take for an example the vexed question of the "Manitoba Schools." The ultra-Protestant party threaten all kinds of terrible things should the Catholic Premier attempt to settle the matter to the satisfaction of the Manitoban minority; the ultra-radicals of the French and Catholic section send forth similar threats should he dare to allow the constitution to regulate the difficulty. The *Mail* hammers at him, upon this question, because he is a Catholic and will be partial towards the people of his own faith; *La Patrie* fires its arrows at him, in regard to the same question, because being a Catholic he might try to conciliate the Protestant element, to the unjust detriment of Catholic interests. Doctor Douglas—a fire-eater, and erratic fanatic—denounces the Catholic Prime Minister: Mr. Tarte—another fire-eater, or rather fire-brand, and mountebank politician—denounces the same Catholic leader of the government, and threatens some inconceivably horrid attacks.

Between these two ranks of bitter enemies it is no easy or pleasant matter for a Catholic Prime Minister to run the gauntlet. It is the first time in the history of our Confederation that our country has been governed, from that lofty position, by a Catholic. Judging by his past, if it can be looked upon as an index of the future, we have a pretty fair idea of the course Sir John will probably pursue; but considering that he has not, as yet, had even one session in the House, as Premier, we think that "fair play" would dictate another course to those men of fire and loud-voiced patriotism. Let the *Mail* wait until Sir John performs some act that can be styled manifestly unfair to the Protestant element, let *La Patrie* be calm until he has actually taken some step adverse to the sacred interests of the Catholics of Canada: then it will be time enough to howl. Meanwhile we have full confidence that before three years are passed, the people of Canada, will realize the fact that never was more even-handed justice dealt out by any man than had been by the Catholic Premier.