

The True Witness

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE,

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WEDNESDAY, JULY 24, 1895.

WORTH LOOKING INTO.

Some time ago a correspondent, whose name and residence we have since forgotten, stated that THE TRUE WITNESS was "very fond of finding fault." That we do find fault at times we do admit, but that we are fond of the occupation we deny. We only find fault when there is fault to be found and when we deem it our duty, in the interests of those whose views we voice, to play the part of public censor. We now refer to this communication because we feel that circumstances are such that we shall very soon have to make a number of complaints, and if the causes for such complaints are not removed we will have the unpleasant duty of substantiating some unpalatable facts.

On more than one occasion we have referred to the unjust treatment to which Irish Catholics have been subjected in this Province and elsewhere. As a rule our fault-finding was confined to the distribution of public patronage and similar cases. This time we have to do with another class—happily composed of the exceptions. We wish to draw the attention of the authorities concerned to the treatment of Irish Catholics in certain public institutions. When we move along the higher social grades we find representatives of our people marching side by side with the best and most gifted citizens of this land seeking to command that recognition which their superior qualities and qualifications demand. But, in every nationality there are members whose lives have been overclouded by misfortune. Some are unfortunate through a mere combination of adverse circumstances; others so through their own fault. The consequence is that Irish Catholics as well as Protestants, as French Canadians, as people of different races are to be found—happily the proportion is in their favor—in the institutions that society has built for the protection of some and the punishment of others.

If a man is guilty of an offence against the laws he is sent to prison; and there his treatment should be in accordance with his sentence and with the rules of that institution. But his nationality should in no way influence the degree of his punishment. All should be used alike. The men condemned to hard labor should be made to work according to their strength and to the degree of their crimes. If any favor is granted it should be for good conduct or other legitimate reason and always in accord with justice. We would be the last to ask any special privilege for an Irish Catholic, simply on the ground of his creed and nationality. When a man, by his voluntary and evil acts, leaves himself open to a legal condemnation, he forfeits a certain claim that he might otherwise have upon our sympathy, and he becomes anything but an honor to his race and religion. But if we do not, and never would, ask any special favor on the score of nationality, we most positively insist that the prisoner will not be given an unfair share of harsh treatment because he happens to belong to a particular race.

We have no intention of formulating any charges at this moment; but we have the best and most reliable authority for the fact that in many ways, in some of our public institutions, our people are unjustly discriminated against and are made to undergo far more than a fair share of the hardships. As a rule men, in prisons, are changed around, from time to time, are given one work this week and another next week. A man has been breaking stones for five or six days and suffering all the inconveniences of

the weather; the next week he is given an indoor occupation, to sweep, to scrub, to help in the kitchen, to whitewash, to do something or other that renders physical resistance possible. And such change or changes may be regulated according to his conduct or the terms of his commitment.

We know of a prison in which the one who frequents it sufficiently often will remark these changes and will find the man who was scrubbing yesterday, working with the cook to-day. But if there is an Irishman inside those walls he is sure to find him, day in and day out, from early morning till evening, sitting upon a pile of stones, with the red rays of a scorching sun pouring down upon his unprotected back, and the hard lime stone for his seat. He need not look for that prisoner in any other department. Others will be relieved as the circumstances permit; not so the unfortunate Irishman. He is sure to be found out in the yard, hammering away under the vigilant eye of a guard, who seems to count the strokes of his sledge. Woe be to him if he lets an idle half moment overtake him. He is not more guilty than his fellow-prisoner of another nationality; perhaps he is less guilty; perhaps his crime is almost excusable; perhaps his conduct is far superior to that of the other; no matter, there is no change, no relief, no consideration for him. He is only an unfortunate Irishman; there is a pile of stones to be broken, and it is better that he should break them than some more favored one. We are not exaggerating. Rather are we drawing it mildly. We state the simple fact that such is the practice in one prison—not a hundred miles from this city—and such is the character of the even-handed justice to be found in other institutions.

We do not seek to excuse the wrongdoing of any Irishman, simply because he is an Irishman; but we do hold and we persist that, free or bond, in the lowest as well as in the highest sphere, our people must receive fair-play. Not even the rights of an Irish criminal will be tampered with while we possess a pen, a voice, or an influence.

POETS AT WAR.

In a recent number of an American magazine appeared an article on Canadian poets; several of our most prominent writers of English verse were mentioned and their works appreciated. One of the poets discovered that, for some reason or another, he had been slighted by the author of the article in question, and that all his fine qualities were not mentioned. He at once proceeded to criticise the critic, through the columns of a Canadian journal, and the result was a regular "tempest in a teapot." The incident serves us very well as a text for a few remarks we deem pertinent on this subject.

We can readily understand that one gifted with the poetic faculty may feel very "touchy" and often consider that the critic treat his productions unfairly; but it seems to us the height of folly to make a public exhibition of all that natural sensitiveness. Extremes of praise or censure are always injurious, and no wise man—no matter how great his opinion of his own powers and acquisitions—will be either carried away by the former or depressed by the latter. If a work is really devoid of merit all the flattery in the world cannot put life into it, if it positively contains the germs of success, no amount of jealous, ignorant, or harsh condemnation can extinguish it. Consequently it is very childish to fly into a passion on account of real or supposed injustice at the hands of critics. This leads us to ask what poetry is and who are the poets.

It seems to us that poetry consists in the expression of fine sentiments, lofty ideas, touching and noble thoughts. It is not necessary that such expression should take the form of verse. Many a gem of true poetry is found in simple and effective prose. The poets, to our mind, are the men who conceive inspiring and elevating ideas and impart the same to others—no matter by what means, or through what medium. The making of verses, that have a certain number of feet and a certain rhyme at the end, is no more the work of a poet than is the measuring off and curving or otherwise shaping a coping, by a stone-cutter, the work of an architect. No two minds are cast in the same mould; no two intellects are of equal capacity; no two beings possess the exact same faculties in an exactly similar degree of development; consequently what one may consider the perfection of poetic expression another may find extremely prosaic. This critic may discover faults where that one sees beauties and the other finds perfections.

But if a man feels that he has the poetic gift, and if he employs it to the best of his ability, and seeks by that means to add his share to the enjoyment, the happiness, the amelioration, or the elevation of others, he need not feel down-hearted if his merits are not universally recognized. He is conscious of having done his best, of having placed the talents he received to the greatest advantage, and not all the praise that a

thousand writers might bestow upon him could equal his ultimate satisfaction. Moreover there is another consideration that must not be overlooked.

It is certainly an enviable gift that of true poetry—as is that of oratory or any other kindred one. But there is nothing to be proud of in the possession of such a boon. God gave it; and in a flash He can withdraw it. The real merit is in the use made of the faculty. The gift of poetry is a curse to some—for it enables them to do more wrong and perpetrate more evil than they can ever repair. If it be true, as Horace says, that "the Poet is born, not made," then the poet should not feel in any way elated on account of that which a wise Providence has seen fit to bestow upon him. The very same Hand that lit the torch of poetry in his mind can, at any moment, extinguish that light and reduce the gifted child of genius to the condition of a poor, demented creature. He has no positive lease of his faculty; at the very time that he is most vain of his superiority the thunderbolt of ruin may be poised to strike down forever the source of his pride. Rather should the one who claims to enjoy the advantage of a poetic mind be careful and tremble under the weight of his responsibility. We think that the more certain a person is that he has been so endowed, the more necessary for him is deep and true humility. In fact the more humble the man the more elevated his poetry, and the less he imagines that he is superior the more will the world exalt him.

These few reflections were suggested to us by the aforementioned incident. Like many others we, too, have imagined, at times, that we could write poetry; but, after all, it was only imagination. A pleasant past-time, as long as no person is injured thereby: like the marks made by a child, with a stick, on the sandy sea-shore—one tide of time, and it is all effaced. What, then, is the use of quarrelling?

THE BRITISH ELECTIONS.

Two weeks ago we predicted, in an editorial, that the present Imperial elections would result favorably to the Irish cause. We were strongly criticised and positively contradicted upon that question. The contest commenced with a very rush of success in favor of the new Government; and the wave of Conservative and Unionist triumph that swept, last week, over England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, seemed to give color to the arguments of our critics. During the past week between the third and half of the seats were contested. The wonderful series of triumphs in favor of the Salisbury Government might certainly excite the opinion that the Liberal party was doomed forever. Still we adhere more strongly than ever to our forecast.

What we claimed was that the final result will be favorable to the Home Rule cause. Even if the Government has a small majority it will be unable to safely carry on the affairs of the Empire. A union in the Irish ranks would again place the balance of power in their hands. The Liberal party is far from being crushed; and the stronger it is the better the opportunity for the Home Rule party to control the working of the House. Now as to the result so far!

There are six hundred members to be elected. The system of issuing writs is very different from our more reliable and commendable one. Here all the writs are issued upon the same day and the elections take place all over the country on the same day. It is much easier to thus secure a fair and unprejudiced expression of public sentiment. But in Great Britain the Government of the day issues its writs just as it deems proper. The consequence is that the party in power makes sure to open out the constituencies most likely to be favorable to its cause. This is done with the expectation of securing a number of victories and thereby influencing the more uncertain and even the antagonistic constituencies. The hope is that the Opposition, finding everything going for the Government, will lose heart. Such was the case at the last general election. And the final result was a Liberal triumph.

It will be remarked that the government commenced by issuing the writs for the boroughs—the pocket-boroughs especially—and kept the provincial constituencies back. As a natural consequence the great tide of Government success seemed to be universal. But in politics as in the ocean there are both ebb and flow. The boroughs and metropolitan constituencies raised the Conservative and Unionist prospects to high-water mark. Then the ebb naturally had to set in and the final result is yet to be known. Even should the Government have a working majority of seventy or eighty, it is not sufficient to secure it for seven years in the heavy work of Imperial legislation. The balance of power must fall into the hands of the Home Rulers. The position we would like to see them occupy is one of such freedom of action that both Conservatives and Liberals would have to rely upon them for any measure of success.

But there exists one great obstacle—it is apart from all other considerations of

political prospects for Government or Opposition—it is the internal strife that has ruined, and will ruin as long as it lasts, all hopes of immediate success for Home Rule. Close up the ranks; cement the divisions; unite the factions, and we adhere more than ever to our prophecy that the result will be favorable to Ireland's cause.

TIME TO KEEP COOL.

We are in mid-summer, and the heat has driven all who can afford to go away to the sea-side or to the country. It is a time when every person is desirous of "keeping cool." It is very wise, on the part of those who can manage to defeat the attacks of summer heat, to avoid everything that tends to excitement and consequent weakness. As it is in the physical and social domains so it is in the political or national sphere. Most decidedly, while the summer heat of a semi-religious, quasi-political agitation is upon us, it is time to "keep cool." During the past few weeks we have had enough of sensational rumors to satisfy even the most exacting. The Twelfth of July orations came to add their fire to the flames that were kindled in the House of Commons and that have spread over the country—particularly over the prairie Province. Men grew warm in debate, others in controversy; religious animosities were raked up by some and the embers were trampled upon by others. In the glow and perspiration of the excitement many hot things were said and many extravagant statements were made.

The dog-days are over; it is yet very warm and as none of us are anxious for a political sunstroke, we sincerely advise keeping cool. We have six months to draw breath, to calmly weigh and measure the situation and the events, and to form just judgments while shaping rational courses. We trust that the moderate and patriotic people of Canada will "keep cool" and calmly study the pros and cons of the difficult question that the next session of Parliament must decide. We do not expect to convert any person to our views; some are so blinded by prejudice or actuated by self-interest that they are beyond conviction. But we do fondly hope to secure a certain degree of impartial reasoning and fair treatment from all sides. The extremist will cling to the Manitoba Government's contention; the moderate man will be inclined towards justice in favor of a minority. Both parties will fight the battles over and over in the press, or in private disputations.

All we ask is that a spirit of tolerance be allowed to sway the public mind during the next six months. There is no necessity of vituperation, of recriminations, of insults. If a man cannot be reasoned with let him alone; if it is found impossible to touch the question without hurting the feelings of others, don't touch it. Let us remember that we are Christians in a mixed community, and that we must be fair, tolerant, just, and while firm in our convictions we must be charitable to all.

BLAKE'S APPEAL.

Canada is the only colony, the only country, outside the limits of the British Isles, that has sent an active representative to do battle for Irish Home Rule in the arena of Imperial politics. When an appeal comes across the Atlantic from the Irish-Canadian representative in the British House, it strikes a very special chord in the heart of every native Irishman, and every Canadian-born Irishman, in this broad Dominion. We know that some narrow-minded men, whose opinions are too prejudiced to be recognized and whose prejudices are too ignorant to be combatted, have sought to cast a doubt upon the motives that actuated the Hon. Edward Blake in the heroic course he has taken. Not for their benefit, but for that of all reasonable and justice-inspired lovers of truth, we purpose briefly referring to the position which that gentleman has voluntarily accepted.

In Canada he was educated; here he formed all the domestic and popular ties that can bind a man to a country; here he married and built up his home; here he established his wonderful professional practice in the pursuit of which he had the bench within his reach as a final goal and had emoluments sufficient to make an ordinary man independent; he had political opportunities of the rarest; he was Minister of Justice in the administration when his party was in power, and he was the undisputed leader of that party in Opposition, within the range of human probability was the Premiership of the country for him; in a word, he laid aside political advantages, professional prospects, opportunities of wealth, and even family and personal attachments, and expatriated himself for the land of his fathers. He did more.

Any person acquainted with Edward Blake must know what a proud and unbending character is his. He would not stoop to ask, much less to beg, for himself or his dearest friend; he would never descend to accept favors at the hands of the public. And yet, the same man, for the sake of the Irish cause,

trampled upon his own nature and humiliated himself to the degree of becoming a voluntary solicitor of pecuniary assistance. In the cities of Canada and the United States he lectured and asked for money to carry on the work. And now he is in the thick of the fight, he is not discouraged by reverses, and he practices what he preaches to others.

It was said of Meagher that he could speak of the sword but perhaps he could not wield it. On the American continent he proved his capacity of executing what he had advised. It was then said that he neglected the interests of his soldiers and led them into unnecessary dangers. He again vindicated himself by proving that every order he gave was in obedience to one from a superior officer, and that he never asked his men to face a danger that he was not the first to meet. From the heights of Fredericksburg to the slopes of Antietam; by the James and the Rappahannock, by the Potomac and the Chickahominy, wherever the American Irish Brigade went into conflict, the green plume of Meagher was in the van, and his sword—"like the cross at Milan"—glittered in the haze of battle and pointed to victory.

So with Blake on another, a less bloody but none the less important field of strife. In the Flavian Amphitheatre of Imperial politics, where the Irish victim was ever exposed to the British lion, Blake had taken his stand. After giving his time, his talents, his opportunities, he goes down into his pocket, and draws forth, from his ever-decreasing funds, five thousand dollars to head the list. No matter what other reasons may be given, for or against, it is scarcely possible that Irish-Canadians can resist the appeal from such a man.

OUR SCHOOL BOARD.

With the close of the last scholastic term came that period when the annual change on the Board of Catholic School Commissioners should take place. The Board consists of nine members, three chosen by the Archbishop from the clergy, three by the city authorities, and three by the Government of the Province. When the year expires the longest appointed member in each section retires, but is eligible to re-nomination. This year being the first that the new Board has been in existence, all its members were equally entitled to remain. Consequently lots were drawn and the three who drew the lowest numbers were considered as the retiring members. In the ecclesiastical section His Grace re-appointed the Reverend gentleman who drew the retiring number; the same course was followed regarding the city's nominee; but in the case of those appointed by the Provincial Government—or Lieutenant-Governor in Council—the retiring member, who has done good service and has devoted much of his time and talents to the cause of education, does not desire to continue in office. Were he desirous of the place we have no doubt that the Quebec authorities would have recognized his many services and his great merit, by re-naming him for the next term. But matters being otherwise it is now incumbent upon the Government to appoint some person to replace the retiring officer.

We must here state, in justice to all concerned, that since the appointment of the new Board, and particularly since the entry of its members upon the exercise of their duties, great changes have taken place, ameliorations in the administration of affairs have been most noticeable, the old beaten path has been left when it was necessary, and, in all cases, it has been repaired and made more in harmony with the new requirements. The different members of the Board have well, faithfully and conscientiously performed their duties. Of course in one year they could not be expected to do miracles and to deal with every question that required particular attention. But they have commenced the work, have cleared away the underbrush, and prepared the soil; in another year they will be able to sow the much required seed; and before long a fine harvest will be ready for reaping.

Under all these circumstances it would be well for the Provincial authorities to carefully select their next member on the Board. They should be sure to name a man who will be in harmony with the spirit of the present Board, a man calculated to help rather than retard the advancement now being made. It seems to us that this end could be attained, and, at the same time, the Government would be doing a most gracious act, in recognizing the fine qualities and the sterling characteristics of a member of the old Board, and one who, while he does not want the place, would, by his experience and business capacities, render important aid to the new Board, by appointing Mr. Frank Hart to the vacant seat. We make the suggestion to-day on our own responsibility and without the slightest knowledge, on that gentleman's part, of our intention. He may not be pleased with us; but we feel that he will excuse the liberty we take, in consideration of benefits, all around, that would follow from such a course. We trust the Government will appreciate our motive and we can assure its members of the popularity of the nomination.

NIL DESPERANDUM.

In another column will be found an editorial which we wrote last week while yet the ultimate result of the Imperial elections was uncertain. We might refrain from publishing it; but we deem it better that our readers should know the reasons we had for confidence in the outcome of this great contest. We were somewhat mistaken; the tide did not turn at high-water mark, rather did it sweep over the dykes, and like the Zuyder Zee around Holland, deluge all before it. And still we are no way disheartened. We yet have confidence in the final triumph of the Home Rule cause. If this great political flood could only drown forever the divisions of the Irish representatives, it might form the very waters upon which the ark of Irish liberty could float securely.

There is but one cause for all this sad state of affairs, and we do not hesitate to point it out. All the loss, the defeat, the shattered hopes, are due to the dissensions in the Irish ranks. The men, with few exceptions, who pretend to be leaders of Irish thought and representatives of the nation are living examples of the "anti-Irishman."

Their own petty ambitions, their miserable jealousies, their personal animosities, their abominable divisions, have disheartened the truly honest and patriotic and have alienated the sympathies of all who might see the justice of their cause and be willing to help in bringing about a fair settlement of Irish affairs. This is not a new story; it is as old as the hills.

As far back as 1848 we found similar factions destroying every prospect of success; we find the great Liberator going down broken-hearted to the grave, and the men who united against him turning upon each other. It was in Cork that Meagher, in a burst of fiery indignation, cried out: "From the winter of 1846 to the summer of 1848 the wing of an avenging angel swept your sky and soil; the fruits died as the shadow passed, and men, who had nurtured them into life, saw in the withered leaves that they too must die." * * * And all this time you are battalions into faction, drilled into disunion, striking each other above the graves that yawn beneath you, instead of joining hands and snatching victory from death." As it was in 1848 so it is in 1895.

There are numbers of our people who call themselves patriotic, who do not wish to be told the truth; unless you proclaim them the possessors of every virtue imaginable, and unless you agree in every iota with their views, you are ready to denounce you as false to the nationality. The day for self-glorification and tinsel-praise is gone past; it is mere nonsense to be proclaiming our own greatness when all the world is laughing in our face and counting our follies and measuring our littleness. We want no more sham-patriotism. We require honest, sterling, national worth. The man who through inclination or ignorance, through personal ambition or spite, through one motive or another, thinks, speaks or acts in a manner unbecoming a high-bred person and an honorable citizen, is a disgrace to our people and we want him not. Ireland has long enough been the subject of caricature and burlesque; the cause is sacred and cannot be bartered to please the whims of every faction-creating self-seeker. Let the Celtic race the world over rise and demand a united party in the old land, and then the result will be one of early triumph. We don't care what political party grants justice to Ireland; one or the other must do it. If a solid party, an unbroken phalanx of Irish representatives, can be secured, Providence has the destinies of the nation in His hand; we are confident that He intends an Easter of glory to follow the long Lent of suffering; but He will not help those who do not help themselves. Reconstruct the body of representatives and success is inevitable.

CATHOLIC art is to be found in every age, and it is not dying out even in our material and progressive epoch. We learn that:

"At Beuron, a Benedictine abbey on the Danube, due north of the Lake of Constance, a new school of Catholic art has arisen. The monks have painted the decorations of the cathedral at Constance, the frescoes of the life of St. Benedict in the sanctuary at Monte Cassino near Naples, and the life of the Blessed Virgin in the Abbey Church of Emaus at Prague."

The Archbishop of Melbourne, in sending a cheque in aid of the local Jewish charities, stated that the Jews so rarely appealed to the general public for aid, and they so frequently help those of other religions in similar movements, that he was pleased to support their efforts. The spirit of Melbourne's Catholic Archbishop is one that we would like well to have introduced into Canada. There are no more useful citizens than the Jews; they are never dependent upon the public and are always ready to assist in any just cause. We think that a lesson could be taken by some in authority from the course adopted by the Australian prelate. There are Hebrew institutions in our midst that deserve better support than they are getting.