

The True Witness

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G. E. CLERK, Editor.

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JULY 18, 1873.

ECCLIASTICAL CALENDAR.

Friday, 18.—St. Camillus of Lellis, C. Saturday, 19.—St. Vincent of Paul, C. Sunday, 20.—Seventh after Pentecost. Monday, 21.—St. Anacleto, P. M. Tuesday, 22.—St. Mary Magdalen. Wednesday, 23.—St. Apollinaris, B. M. Thursday, 24.—Vigil of St. James.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

A correspondent reports Marshal McMahon as saying to him that he accepted the Presidency of France to save the army, and rescue the Government from a hideous scramble for power and profit. He added that there is no reason why the present regime, in its amended constitutional form, with a military executive, who should reign over the country, and rule over the army, should not become established in France.

The Carlists in Carthagenia are masters of the entire town, with the exception of the arsenal. It is said that the latter cannot hold out long, and, with the ships in the dock, will fall into their hands also. Carbreas is reported to be the leader of the Carlists. The Minister of War has left Madrid for Carthagenia, but at last accounts was unable to proceed beyond the station at Palma.

A despatch from Khiva gives the following account of events subsequent to the capture of the city. The Khan voluntarily entered the Russian camp and gave in his submission, formally declaring himself a vassal of Russia. General Kauffman then restored him to his throne and appointed a council of administration to assist him in the Government during the occupation of the Khanate by Russian forces.

The Twelfth has passed over quietly, both in the headquarters of Orangeism in Ireland and in New York, and other places on this side where it has been celebrated.

In the English House of Commons Mr. Mitchell Henry, member for Galway County, gave notice of an early motion looking to the publication of faithful and impartial official reports of the proceedings of the House. He complained that the reports at present made were partizan in character and intensely hostile to the Catholic religion.

Prince Edward Island, under the title of the Province of Prince Edward Island, was formally admitted into the Confederation on the 1st inst.

THE REVISED WORD OF GOD.—Who is the Rev. M. E. Hale. Editor of, or contributor to, Old and New, quoted by the Montreal Gazette of the 30th June? That he is a Protestant minister of some sect or other we suppose; and that he is a most sanguine man, we are certain, from the absurdly rapturous anticipations in which he indulges of the consequences that are to flow from the Protestant revision of the Bible, or Word of God now in progress; but as the Bible is the "religion of Protestants," the revision of the Bible implies of course the revision of what is called the Protestant religion.

Great things are to flow from this revision according to the article quoted by the Gazette. First, the servile idolatry of a dead book, which for two centuries fettered half Christendom, will have to be abandoned; for as the Rev. Mr. Hale observes:—

"men do not scrape, and file, and polish the idol which they worship; they take it in all its ugliness, but they take it as it is and they do not pretend to refine upon it."

Setting aside the facts that the adherents of the Catholic Church have certainly for two centuries numbered a trifle more than "half Christendom," and that it has never yet been urged against them that they have been or are fettered by a slavish idolatry of a book—we gather from this the meaning that in the eyes of Mr. Hale, the Bible as it now stands is an ugly enough sort of thing; a sort of Fetish, which must be taken as it is, but which has no pretension to anything divine about it. Indeed, as the same writer explicitly assures us it is not the word of God, but of man, a mere "human record" of remarkable events. This is one thing that the revision of the Bible will establish; and this we are told "is a victory, and a great victory."

And secondly the Bible will be restored to its true place, if—only for, alas! there comes in the usual qualifying if—if men can only agree about it, and how to accept a common authority:—

"Grant"—says the writer quoted by the Gazette—"grant to a hundred of the purest and wisest men in England and America the right to determine which reading shall be selected, and which version used, and you have restored the Bible to its true place."

Unfortunately this postulate will not be complied with. First, who is to determine who form the "hundred of the purest and wisest men in England and America?" Secondly, as it is not in the power of any man or body of men to grant that which he or they does not himself, or which they do not themselves actually possess, it follows that no one, that no body of men, can "grant to a hundred of the purest and wisest men * * the right to determine which is the true version, which the correct reading, unless already he himself possesses, or they possess themselves that right; but if they have that right why confer it upon others?"

Besides if we reject an infallible Church, whose function, according to the Catholic hypothesis, it is to determine the true version of the Bible, and its correct reading, we feel ourselves quite competent to do all our own religious thinking for ourselves. We do not want the aid or intervention of a hundred of the purest and wisest men, even of such men as Beecher the great light of the Protestant world on this side of the Atlantic; we have full confidence in our private judgment, and ask no man's help. If, as towards the Church, we are all submission, as towards Protestants we are Protestants of Protestants. We spurn their proffered aid and spiritual guidance; we reject their opinions on the Bible and its meaning with scorn; because human opinion for human opinion, we would a good deal sooner trust our own upon religious matters, than that of all the doctors of Protestantism.

The revision of the Bible is and must be a farce, because it will never command the assent even of the Protestant world. Unitarians will repudiate it, should it seem to sanction the doctrine of the Trinity; Trinitarians will do the same should it appear to throw doubts on that doctrine. The revisors themselves too, are conscious that they are but humbugs or shams; for they do not so much as pretend to determine or to bring to a conclusion the great questions which for centuries have distracted the Protestant world. Few educated men amongst Protestants believe, or pretend to believe now-a-days, that St. Peter wrote the second of the Epistles attributed to him; that St. James wrote the Epistle that bears his name; that St. Paul was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews; that the whole of the Gospel called of St. Mark, was compiled by one and the same person, or that we are indebted to an apostle for the last of the four gospels. These things are held perhaps by the ignorant and uneducated amongst Protestants, by the old women of the conventicle, but are rejected as incapable of proof—if we reject an infallible church—by all scholars and men of education. What then was the first duty of the Revisors? what the first thing to which they would have addressed themselves had they felt themselves competent to the task of revising the Bible? Why! that of determining the canon of the

Scriptures which they were to revise. They have not done this; and till this be done they and their work can never be spoken of without derision.

RIGHTS OF CATHOLIC PARENTS.—In New York, the law as administered by Protestant judges, assumes that Catholic parents have no rights over their children, which Protestants are bound to respect. In illustration of this thesis we quote from the New York Tablet the report of a case that has just been tried before, and adjudicated upon by a Protestant judge of that city, Mr. Fancher.

Patrick Small is a Catholic and a father. His wife with whom he did not live happily was an habitual drunkard, who in a drunken fit, or in a fit of spite against her husband, decoyed his daughter Mary Elizabeth, aged 13, and gave the child over to a Protestant institution called the St. Barnabas Home. The father sought in vain for his missing child; he applied at the said Home, where he suspected that she had been secreted but the Managers insisted strongly that the child was not with them and that they knew nothing about her. Not satisfied, poor Patrick Small, against whom, except that he is an Irishman, and a Papist, nothing can be urged, applied to the law to help him, and having obtained proof that his child was being kept from him by the Managers of the above named Protestant institution he brought against them his action to enforce recovery of the child.

Thus pressed, and seeing it was no use to pretend ignorance any longer, the Managers produced the child before the Court over which Judge Fancher presided. The father claimed his child; showing that she had been taken from him without his knowledge or consent by a drunken mother, and that he was able and willing to provide for her.

To this, on the part of a Papist, somewhat arrogant demand, the Managers of the Protestant Home replied that the child had been committed to their care by her mother; that they had placed her out in service with a Protestant family of the name of Stephens by whom of course she would be redeemed from the errors of Popery; and they therefore invoked the protection of the Court against the pretensions of a Romish father. At once the Judge decided against the latter; here is the report of the case:—

"Is the child well taken care of where she is?" asked Judge Fancher.

"She is very kindly cared for," answered the clergyman. "She could not possibly have a better home."

"I will give no consideration," pursued the Judge, "to the question of the child's father being a Catholic and she under Protestant influence. The father can see the child, but he must not interfere with her. The writ is dismissed."

This is how the law deals with Popish parents in the U. States.

We learn from the Witness that an abortive attempt to unite into one body all converts of the several sects engaged in bringing French Canadian Catholics to the "Truth as it is in Jesus," and as preached by a drunken woman who calls herself an "escaped nun," and others of that stamp. Hitherto each sect has worked on its own hook as the saying is. The Anglicans fishing for Anglican converts; the Presbyterians for Presbyterian converts, and so on. The result is, as the Witness tells us, that here in Montreal, there are four congregations of "brands snatched from the burning"—with "scarcely enough material to make one." To remedy this farcical condition the agents of the several swaddling societies have lately held a meeting with the object of forming a union, and putting all their converts into one lump so as to look respectable like. Of course the scheme failed, for the simple reason that it is impossible for Protestants to determine what are the essential, what the non-essential articles of their faith. The Witness however sucks up consolation even from this abortive effort at union. "Although"—he says—"little more was effected than a general interchange of views on important questions of common interest, it has proved beneficial and highly encouraging to all engaged." To outsiders, Romanists especially it appears simply comical.

The ministers of the Free Church of Scotland are much troubled in spirit at the sight of the degeneracy of the age. Many of their people, it seems, ministers and office bearers even, when in the North and in the vicinity of Balmoral on Sunday—"not content with the Free Church" actually go to the parish church of Craithie where Her Majesty resorts. Of all forms of Sunday breaking this is apparently deemed the worst.

The manufacturers in England, especially in the hardware line, are much alarmed at the serious decrease in the orders they receive from the United States and the British Colonies. These begin to find that they can manufacture their own goods cheaper than they can be bought in England, owing to the fearful advance in the price of coal, and the rise in wages.

WRITTEN FOR THE TRUE WITNESS. SHORT SERMONS FOR SINCERE SOULS. No. XXXVIII.

"THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY." As there is nothing more advantageous to Christians, nothing which will assist them to advance in piety more effectually than devout books; so there is nothing so injurious to morals, nothing more certain to engender impurity in the heart than bad ones.

We have already seen, Christian soul, the terrible evil of an unguarded eye. We have assigned to it the bad pre-eminence of being the most powerful of all the causes of impurity. And yet I doubt whether the reading of bad books be not an equally powerful cause. For although our animal passions are undoubtedly aroused through our senses; and although undoubtedly of all our senses our sight is the quickest and most sensitive, still in the presence of all immodest objects there is a certain native modesty, a certain innate bashfulness which acts as a check upon the temptation. Even the most abandoned when they see an immodest object, instinctively look round to see whether any one of any decency or respectability is near hand, and if there be, a sense of outward propriety, at least, causes them to turn aside. This check does not exist in reading immoral books. There the reader is alone with the narrative; the pictures it conjures up are presented to the mind without the embarrassing presence of the conjurer. No need to blush, because there are no witnesses of his shame. He can gloat over the infamy without check or hindrance. Hence the immoral book has a power for evil peculiarly its own. And there is another power which it possesses: the book is always at hand; it can be consulted at any moment; the narrative can be read over again and again. The images, therefore, that it depicts can be evoked at will and whenever the awakened animal passions will cause them to be most relished. They can be gloat over; they can be meditated upon; and by meditation can be made part and parcel of the soul. Who then will be so bold as to deny that the reading of immoral books is most unworthy of a Christian? unworthy of a Christian who ought to dedicate all his knowledge and all his talents to God; unworthy of a Christian whose every thought ought to be worthy of that divine Master whom he professes to follow; unworthy of a Christian whose mind should be as pure as the God of all purity.

Even the pagans, Christian soul, knew the terrible effects of immoral books. Living as they did only for this world; being as they were neither men nor Christians, but only citizens, they yet recognised the evils which would befall the commonwealth, if immoral reading were permitted. It was for this reason, as Valerius Maximus relates, that the Spartans forbade the reading of a certain Poet. "They were unwilling that the minds of their children should be imbued with the sentiments of his books lest their morals should be injured more than their minds would be profited." And to a certain pagan Greek defending his works on the plea that they were founded on facts, the pagan Aristophanes answers: "Yes, according to facts, but you should not have produced what is evil and bring it upon the stage to pervert the minds of youth." Now, if the pagan, Christian soul, aided only by the light of reason, and living only for this world, could recognize the dreadful power for evil of bad books, how much more ought the Christian to recognize it; and recognizing it to shun them?

But some one may challenge me to prove that this evil exists to any extent in the world. I accept the challenge, and my proof shall be drawn from a speech delivered in the House of Representatives in the neighboring republic, on a Bill to suppress obscene literature. On March 7th, 1873, the Hon. C. L. Merriam thus spoke: "The pride of our people in their schools may well be humbled over the revelations presented by one young man in New York in the employ of the Young Men's Christian Association whose hand, with determined and commendable energy, is falling heavily upon the workers in this detestable business. He exhibits to us more than fifteen thousand letters seized from the dealers and publishers in New York city; letters written by students of both sexes throughout the land ordering obscene literature. Amongst the seizures made in New York are found twenty separate orders recorded on the books of a dealer coming from the librarian of a public school in one of our proudest western cities. By examination into the accumulations at the dead letter office, and the seizures in New York city, we find that the dealers in obscene literature have organized circulating libraries which are under the charge of the most vicious boys in the schools, boys chosen and paid by the vendors, and who circulate among the students, at ten cents a volume, any of the one hundred and forty-four obscene books heretofore published in New York city." This is but a short extract, and yet it speaks volumes. 15,000 letters written by young people of both sexes throughout the land ordering obscene literature! Public

school librarians applying for it! Young boys hired to circulate it! Who after that will deny that the evil is very great and deeply rooted? Yes, alas! Christian soul, an immense multitude of Christians, less scrupulous, and less prudent than the pagans, make a constant occupation of reading these books: and as the devil well knows that they are the most powerful means of destroying morals and ruining souls, he leaves nothing undone; there is no artifice which he does not use to multiply them, and distribute them over the land. Capital invested; companies formed; authors employed in order to poison the minds of youth, in order to foment their passions, and thus raise up an impure generation. As though the animal passions were not rendered strong enough by their triumph over the will and the understanding in the fall of our first parents; as though we were not already sufficiently impelled by our very nature towards impurity, these demons in human shape, these men of intellect who, like Lucifer and his fallen spirits, should be angels to save, but are devils to damn, do all in their power to excite the animal passions into rebellion against reason and religion, and to render the battle against impurity more difficult than ever, if not wholly impossible.

It was for this reason that the Councils of the Church guided by the Holy Spirit forbade so severely the reading of these books. Listen to the Divine Spirit speaking through the Fathers of the Council of Trent (16th rule). "Those books which treat of disgraceful and obscene things, which narrate them or teach them must be absolutely forbidden, because not only is it necessary to watch over faith, but over morals also, which can so easily be corrupted by the reading of books of this kind." The Roman Catechism composed by order of the same council specially enumerates bad books amongst the several causes of impurity. It declares that those books which treat of carnal love and obscenity have a great power to arouse the fire of concupiscence and criminal pleasures in the heart. The 2nd Council of Nice decrees that those infamous books which recount indecent things shall be entirely proscribed. St. Charles Borromeo, that great prelate whom God raised up to reanimate the world for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, in these later days knew the great evil of bad books; and feeling that they were furnaces of incontinency, he wished them not only to be banished from the houses of the good, but that those degraded beings who should refuse to put them aside should be denounced to the Bishop at his visitation.

"But," asks the modern liberal, "is not this a great tyranny? are you not infringing on my rights as a man in thus preventing me from reading whatever books I wish?" Alas, poor soul! you have no rights as against the law of God. That law has declared against impurity and you are bound to give up all rights in order to obey. What rights has man as against God? "It is a tyranny" you say forsooth. Yes, all laws are a tyranny. The angry man thinks it a tyranny that he may not slay his injurer. The thief thinks it a tyranny that he may not take to himself all that he beholds. We have many tyrannies. The tyranny of fashion; the tyranny of politeness or good manners; the tyranny of right reason; the tyranny of all temporal government. And the commands of all these must be obeyed; but the commands of God, who created all and governs all, must not forsooth be obeyed. Oh, senseless and stiff-necked generation! The law of God a tyranny forsooth! Yes, the law of God is a tyranny if it be tyranny to promise man an eternity of happiness for a few short years of self-restraint. Yes! the law of God is a tyranny if it be a tyranny to give more than ten thousand worlds for a pepper corn. Yes, the law of God is a tyranny, if it be a tyranny to prevent a man from casting himself headlong and for all eternity into a furnace of fire. "But I only read these books to improve my style, to inform myself, and to be up to the world. Like the bee I only suck the honey and leave the poison." "An error!" cries out Tertullian, "an error! What flowers can you find on these reeking dunghills?"

Yes, Christian soul, what good can you hope to find in these books, which will compensate for the loss of purity? "You wish to improve your style." What! by reading filthy ideas? by reading books that present impure pictures and which foment the animal passions? Is this the style you wish to cultivate? And even if amongst these impure images you could learn a pure style; what will it avail you to obtain it at the expense of purity of heart? Is it not better to know how to live purely than how to write elegantly? Is not a pure heart better than a pure style? "A miserable Christian! recall the words of the pagan and tremble with him, lest your morals should be injured more than your minds be profited by this dangerous literature."

The new iron lightsail, built in England, to be placed at the entrance to Halifax harbor, is now on its passage out.