

THE TRUE WITNESS

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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The True Witness.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOV. 5, 1858.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

OUR latest dates from Europe are by the *Im-
dian*. The Imperial Parliament has been further
prorogued to the 18th of November. A great
meeting of London Vestrymen, held to denounce
the practice of Confession, has caused much ex-
citement in religious circles: a revision of the
Liturgy, and a reform of the Book of Prayer
seem inevitable. The story of the assassination
of the French and British Consuls at Tetuan is
said now to be a hoax.

From India we hear of fresh disturbances, and
the extermination of two disaffected regiments at
Mooltan. The troops in the Punjab were being
disarmed, considerable doubts having arisen
as to their fidelity. In Oude, affairs appear to
be bad; the situation in Gwalior is growing
worse; and the difficulties in Central India are
said to be only commencing. Upon the whole
the last accounts from the East are anything but
cheering.

The great controversy of the day in the Ang-
lican Establishment on the "Confessional" is
still raging with undiminished fury, and threatens
to cause a serious schism in the ranks of Protest-
antism. Other controversies, arising out of a
hankering on the part of a section of the Angli-
can clergy, after Catholic doctrines, and Catho-
lic discipline, have been disposed of, or hushed
up, by the simple process of leaving them "open"
questions. Thus was the great Gorham ques-
tion ultimately settled; and by steadily adhering
to the principle that of contradictions both may
be true, and form a part of the Christian revela-
tion, the Church, as by Act of Parliament estab-
lished, has hitherto managed to put off the evil
day which has long menaced it; but which
now seems to be fast approaching, when men
shall no longer be content to believe according
to law, or worship God according to statute.

But this "Confessional" controversy will not
allow itself to be so disposed of. In the eyes of
Protestants, questions concerning "Baptismal Re-
generation" or the "Real Presence in the
Eucharistic Sacrifice," are but metaphysical ab-
stractions devoid of all practical consequences.
Tritarians, Socinians, and Sabellians can find
ample space to disport themselves within the
walls of the Government Zion, without trampling
upon one another's corns; and all kinds of beasts,
clean and unclean, may take refuge and obtain a
welcome within its pleasant pastures, provided
only that their views be not extreme, and do not
lead to any practical result. All manner of
heresies and infidelities, or "errors of opinion"
shall be pardoned to the Anglican; but "Romish
practices" which savor of self-denial or ascetic-
ism, these are the sins for which there is no
mercy, no forgiveness; and which consign the
perpetrator to everlasting exclusion from the
palaces and courts of evangelical Protestantism.

Thus fasting is held in supreme contempt by
Protestants; chastity is an abomination unto them,
and the very mention thereof drives them mad;
but the Sacrament of Penance, especially that
portion thereof which enjoins "Confession," and
"Satisfaction"—is the very devil. This is some-
thing practical; something terribly in earnest,
and therefore incompatible with an institution
which is itself a "sham." Small marvel then
that the "British Lion" is aroused, and lashes
his sides with his tail in noble indignation at the
rumors which have reached his Protestant ears
respecting the "Romish practices" of certain of
the Anglican clergy. These "practices" can-
not, like "errors of opinion" upon the nature of
the Godhead, the efficacy of the Sacraments, or
other metaphysical questions, as Protestants call
them, be winked at, or allowed to have a place
in the "Church By Law Established;" there
can be no compromise, no *via media*, discovered
to meet the exigencies of this case; and the
Church of England man who really believes that
Christ has left with His Ministers upon earth the
power of absolving from sin; who believes that
the words of his Lord,

"Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto
them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained"
—St. JOHN XX. 23,
are not, like their own thirty-nine articles, a mere
"sham," and that they mean what they certainly

imply—must either renounce his faith, or secede
to Rome; where alone he will find a "practice"
in perfect harmony or conformity, with those
blessed words which Protestantism has stripped
of all their meaning.

No! this is certain, that no matter how indul-
gent the Protestant world may be to what it
calls "speculative" errors, it will not tolerate for
one instant those practical errors which lead,
through Confession, to repentance, to mortifica-
tion, and amendment of life. Protestantism, in
its origin, was a revolt of the animal against the
spiritual; and can only be maintained by assert-
ing and upholding the superiority of the former
over the latter—of the lusts of the flesh, over the
Grace of God. With an intuitive consciousness
both of the strong and the weak points of its po-
sition, Protestantism is alarmed at the slightest
indication of a revival of spiritual tendencies
amongst its children; for it well knows that
where the spirit obtains the mastery over the
flesh, there its dominion is lost for ever.

It cannot therefore be doubted that the present
controversy on the subject of Confession and Sa-
cerdotal Absolution, is by far the most serious
and important that has agitated the Church of
England since its origin in the XVI century.—
Other disputes have for a season disturbed its
peace; but this one menaces its very existence.

The *Times*, the great exponent of British Pro-
testantism; *Punch*, and the majority of the Angli-
can Bishops who, in spiritual matters, rank next
in authority to the *Times*; the Low Church clergy
and the majority of the laity, have strongly de-
clared themselves against Confession. They take
their stand upon the Thirty-Nine Articles, which
are essentially Calvinistic, and therefore hostile
to, and irreconcilable with, the Liturgy or Book
of Common Prayer, which is compiled from Catho-
lic sources. The *Times*, especially, as the
chief ecclesiastical authority in the three king-
doms, loudly protests against the Confessional,
especially as used by the members of the Angli-
can clergy; upon the grounds that "if there is
anywhere in the world a class of persons who
can be trusted with confessions of a startling and
interesting character. . . . that safe depository
is not to be found in the clergy of the Church of
England."

On the other side there is, if not a numerous, at
all events a very influential section of that Clergy,
comprising indeed all that is most zealous and
distinctively Christian in the Establishment,
whose members maintain that Confession as pre-
paratory to Absolution is, if not of divine appoint-
ment, at all events a practice or discipline of the
early Church which the Reformers of the XVI
century would have done well to have retained.
This party takes its stand upon the Liturgy,
which certainly more than insinuates the neces-
sity of Auricular Confession, and explicitly as-
serts the doctrine of Sacerdotal Absolution.
Thus the "Articles" of the Church of England
are placed in open antagonism with its Liturgy;
and spite of the comprehensive character of the
Establishment, and its love of compromise, we
see not how in this case a reconciliation can be
brought about.

For this—as indeed is the case with all re-
ligious controversies in the Protestant world—is
a dispute that must be ultimately settled, not by
any reference to any universally recognised stan-
dard of truth, but by "public opinion." The
"vox populi" has in all Protestant communities
superseded the "vox Dei;" and it is beyond a
doubt that the former has strongly pronounced
against Auricular Confession. Its advocates
may plead the Rubrics, the words of the Liturgy,
and the practise of the early Church—but in
vain. They will be met with the reply that
"public opinion" in England is against all "Rom-
ish" practices in general, and against Confession,
in particular; that if the Liturgy teaches, or
countenances the practise, the Liturgy must be
revised and the objectionable passages expunged;
and that, no matter what the discipline of the
early Church, the opinions of the Fathers, or the
teachings of Christ, the custom of Auricular
Confession is repugnant to the modern Great
Britain, at variance with the public opinion of the
XIX century, and must, therefore, be put down
by Act of Parliament.

The *Minerve* finds it easier to misrepresent an
opponent than to refute him; and hence it is
that our cotemporary quotes, or rather misquotes,
the TRUE WITNESS, as arguing for the abolition
of tithes, as the logical consequence of the secu-
larisation of the Clergy Reserves. Whilst the
truth is, that we have always combated this line
of argument; contending that, as there was no
analogy of origin betwixt the tithes of the Catho-
lic Church in Lower Canada, and the Clergy
Reserves, so the abolition of the former could not
afford a precedent for the secularisation of the
latter.

On the other hand, we have shown that, if the
mere act of secularisation affords no such prece-
dent—from the manner in which that act was ac-
complished, and the general principle laid down
in the preamble to the Clergy Reserves Bill—
wherein it is asserted that it is "desirable" to
abolish all semblance even of connection betwixt

Church and State—the abolition of tithes, and
of all State aid to the Church and her Ministers,
does flow as a logical consequence. It was for
this reason that in 1854 we offered our sincere
though feeble opposition to that measure; and
denounced the inconceivable weakness, or rather
lache, of those men who, professing what the
Minerve calls "bons principes"—sound Catho-
lic principles—actively assisted in placing upon
our Statute Book a proposition so repugnant to
the teachings of the Church, and so fraught with
peril to our ecclesiastical institutions in Lower
Canada, as that which we have cited above.

For, either the Catholics—the men of "bons
principes"—who asserted by their votes that it
was "desirable to abolish all semblance even of
connection betwixt Church and State," believed
in the truth of the principle therein laid down,
or they did not. If they did, their first duty as
honest and consistent men is to urge its general
and immediate application; in which case we
contend that the State assistance given to the
Catholic Clergy in the matter of tithes will soon
be withdrawn. Or if on the other hand they did
not believe—which we opine was the case)—in
the desirableness of the abolition of all sem-
blance even of connection betwixt Church and
State, then we cannot find in the English lan-
guage words strong enough to depict in its pro-
per colors the baseness of those, who knowingly
and deliberately ratified by their votes that
which in their inmost hearts they knew to be a
lie. Rather than assent to a principle which he
believed to be false, an honest man would allow
himself to be torn in pieces by wild horses; ra-
ther than risk their salaries and government
situations, "les hommes a bons principes," as
the *Minerve* calls them, regardless of their
duties as Catholics and as the sworn legislators
of the country, basely consented to perjure
themselves before God and man. For, by what-
soever sophistry the *Minerve* may seek to pal-
liate the foul act, the man who as a member of
the Legislature votes contrary to his conscience
is to all intents and purposes guilty of perjury.—
Perhaps now the *Minerve* may be able to un-
derstand the reasons for our sentiments of con-
tempt towards those whom it qualifies as "*hom-
mes a bons principes*."

The *Minerve*, by way of defending its patrons,
urges that the prime movers in the act of secular-
isation, and the great sticklers for the principle
of the desirableness of abolishing all semblance
of connection betwixt Church and State, were
the Clear Grits, or "Pharasaical brawlers;"—
and that it was only when longer resistance was
hopeless, that the "men of good principles" of
Lower Canada submitted to the measure.—
"ont subi la mesure." They did more than
this however. They not only passively submit-
ted to the measure, as to an inevitable necessity,
but they gave their active assistance to carry it
through the Legislature; which, if believing the
measure to be essentially bad as involving a false
principle, they would not have done, had they
been possessed of common honesty; or if their
profession of "good principles" had been any-
thing better than "Cant"—which, as Carlyle
truly observes, is the "*materia prima* of the
devil." What should we say of the soldier who,
entrusted with the defence of an important out-
work, but deeming his position no longer tenable,
should not only abandon his post, but go over to
the ranks of the enemy, and do battle under their
colors against his former comrades? Now this
is precisely what a considerable portion of the
"men of good principles of Canada" did in the
matter of the secularisation of the Clergy Re-
serves; and hence the scorn which the TRUE
WITNESS most sincerely entertains towards them.

What the *Minerve*, what his friends "a bons
principes," do not, or will not understand is this:
that there is no difference betwixt public and pri-
vate morality; and that God has not given us one
standard of truth for the individual, and another
for the politician. The old French Marquis
might console himself with the reflection that
"most assuredly God would think twice before
damning a person of his quality;" but we doubt
greatly if the Canadian member of Parliament,
or Government officer, has any good warrant for
laying the like flattering unction to his soul. Our
cotemporary may, and most probably will, accuse
us of holding "Rouges" principles, and of being
tainted with "Clear Gritism;" but nevertheless
we avow our belief that, both for the office holder
and non-office holder, for the Statesman as well
as for the private citizen, there is but one rule of
right and wrong; that a lie is still a lie, though it
be engrossed upon parchment, and cunningly
bound up with red-tape; and that before the
judgment seat of Him Who shall one day judge
both rich and poor, the exigencies of the "*double-
majority*" will hardly be admitted as a valid plea
for dereliction of duty. If there were two Per-
sons in one Cabinet Minister—of whom one
might be saved, irrespective of the ultimate con-
dition of the latter—we could understand the
Minerve's line of argument; and we should then
acknowledge the justice of testing the acts of the
official, by a different standard from that by which
we test the acts of the private individual. But
until our cotemporary shall have made good this
"*Bi-Personal*" theory of the Government Of-
ficer, we shall still judge the latter's public con-
duct by the same rules as these that we apply to
the private conduct of the non-official citizen.

ILLEGITIMACY IN SCOTLAND.—Some of our
cotemporaries have been very unreasonably severe
upon the TRUE WITNESS for some remarks that
from time to time have appeared in its columns,
with reference to the close connection betwixt
Puritanism and Immorality, betwixt Calvinistic
Antinomianism, and Impurity. We say "un-
reasonably severe," because for every assertion
in support of our thesis we have given Protest-
ant testimony; and surely every man must be
admitted to be a good and competent witness
against himself. If we have attributed the
drunkenness that prevails in Scotland on the
Lord's Day, to the absurd, unscriptural severity
with which all innocent relaxations are on that day
forbidden to the working classes, we have done so
on the authority of Scotchmen themselves; who
through the columns of the *Scottish Press* have
first given to the world those statistics of drunk-
ness and impurity, which we have reproduced.
Indeed of the facts themselves there can be no
doubt, for they are, alas! only too well attested.
As to the exciting cause of that well attested im-
morality, there may be differences of opinion.
Some may attribute it to a defect inherent in the
Scotch character. Others, amongst whom we
rank ourselves, contend that naturally the
Scotch are no more addicted to vice or impurity,
than are their neighbors; that the immorality
which all candid men must admit, and all true
Christians deplore, is the result of a supernatural,
not of any natural, deficiency; and that the Cal-
vinistic training of the people, and the Pharasaical
interdict placed by a Calvinistic clergy upon
the innocent amusements of the people, are
amongst the chief causes why the latter rush
headlong and with fearful rapidity, into the gulf
of dissipation.

Of the fact of the general immorality of the
great mass of the rural population of Scotland,
there can be as little doubt as there can be of
the marvellous purity of the women of Catholic
Ireland; a purity which even from the mouths of
Protestant tourists, has extorted reluctant expres-
sions of praise. The Scotch journals in their
statistics of illegitimacy in Scotland, furnish us
with proof, against which no candid person can
cavil. Thus in the *Dumfries Courier*, we find
an article on that illegitimacy, which without
censure from its Protestant cotemporaries, the
Montreal Gazette copies; and which we there-
fore trust that we also may be permitted to trans-
fer to our columns:—

ILLEGITIMACY IN SCOTLAND.—The second quarterly
return of the Registrar-General for Scotland con-
firms the melancholy fact, established by the return
for the first quarter of the present year, that the pro-
portion of illegitimate births in Scotland is very high.
We directed attention to this at the time the first re-
turn was published, and to the position of the south
of Scotland compared with other parts of the coun-
try, and we regret to say that the second return is
almost as deplorable as the first. The southern coun-
ties are, next to the north-eastern, the worst in Scot-
land in this respect, and the Stewartry of Kirkcubright
stands at the head of the black list for the sec-
ond quarter of all the counties of Scotland. The
proportions for the first quarter were:—Dumfries,
15.7 per cent; Kirkcubright, 14; Wigtown, 8.4.—
For the second they are—Dumfries, 12.2; Kirkcubright,
15.9; Wigtown, 9.6. The favorable contrast
for Wigtownshire compared with the adjoining coun-
ty of Kirkcubright is maintained in the second re-
turn, and the causes of this contrast are well worthy
of investigation. We believe that there are no hiring
fairs for farm servants held in the county of Wig-
town, the only gathering of the kind being an annual
one for the engagement of harvest laborers, while
the number of such fairs in Kirkcubright and Dum-
frieshire is very great. This fact, coupled with those
disclosed by the returns, seems to show that the al-
legations made as to the injurious character of these
hiring fairs are well founded. Their abolition, how-
ever, will not be an easy matter, for they are almost
the only holidays which the toiling rural popu-
lation possess; and should the register system be
adopted some compensation must be given to ser-
vants for the loss of these days of recreation.—
This subject is both a delicate and a difficult one,
but it must be firmly grappled with, and we wish
to see the way paved by discussion of a more kindly
tone than that which has been adopted in the cor-
respondence which has recently appeared in our
columns. The question betwixt masters and ser-
vants should not be viewed as a class one, for the in-
terests of both are, or ought to be, the same. On one
point, however, there can be no doubt; these re-
turns of the Registrar-General speak trumpet-
tongued to the necessity for improvement which
would arise therefrom. In this respect the duty of
landed proprietors especially, but of their tenants
also, is clear and absolute.—*Dumfries Courier*.

Here is the fact broadly stated, and by a
Scotch journalist; who also endeavors to trace
the evil to its source, and to suggest a remedy.
That he has failed in both these attempts, we
think none will deny; for a moral evil of such
immense magnitude as that which provokes his
comments, must surely also have a moral cause,
and cannot be accounted for by a mere material
accident. If the people who meet together at
the "hiring fairs" for instance, were habitually
chaste, if their moral training had previously
been sound and thorough, it is not likely that such
a trifle as a "fair" would induce them to re-
nounce forthwith all their ancient habits, to tram-
ple under-foot the precepts of their religion, and
to set at naught the obligations both of the natu-
ral, and of the revealed law. The peasantry
of Catholic Ireland, of both sexes, are, and
always have been, in the habit of meeting to-
gether on festive occasions; and yet the statistics
of Ireland clearly show that those meetings have
not been attended with the same disastrous re-
sults, as those which the *Dumfries Courier* at-
tributes to the "hiring fairs" of Scotland.

We must look therefore further, and deeper
down, for the source of that prostitution, and dis-
regard of chastity which is so very prevalent
amongst the rural population of Scotland; and

in this search we are greatly aided by a certain
Book; much quoted, though little understood, by
our Protestant friends. One Who spake as
never man spake before, tells us that it is not
from "hiring fairs," but from the corrupt heart
of man, that proceed "evil thoughts, murders,
adulteries, fornications;" and if this be so, the
question presents itself, why should the heart of
the Scotch Protestant be more corrupt—as
is evidenced by the evil fruit in the shape of for-
nication that it produces—than that of the Catho-
lic peasant of Ireland? It is this question
that the *Dumfries Courier* fails to solve; be-
cause like the majority of his brethren he hopes
to find in the material order, that which belongs
exclusively to the moral order.

And yet there is much significance in his ad-
mission, when speaking of those "hiring fairs,"
he says they "are almost the only holidays which
the toiling rural population possess." True no
doubt; but who robbed them of that hebdomadal
holiday, which ere the great apostasy of the
XVI century they, in common with their Catho-
lic co-religionists of Europe, enjoyed!—who de-
prived them of those other seasons of innocent re-
laxation which the Church in her wisdom, and in
her tender regard for the spiritual and temporal
welfare of her children has appointed? Protest-
antism boasts of its perpetual activity; glories
that it has no useless holidays to stop the roar of
the factory, or to interfere with the everlasting
grind of the cotton mill. Its Sundays even are
no longer holidays for the poor; but rather sea-
sons of rigid austerity, so that no more is their
coming hailed with delight by the children of toil
—and what is the result? Why this: that out-
raged nature spurns indignantly the heavy yoke
imposed upon it by Pharasaical Calvinism; and
that in rejecting that yoke, it at the same time,
and by the same act, throws off the salutary re-
straints of morality and religion.

The lessons of experience are thrown away
upon some men. In vain for them does history
unroll its ample page, or *Punch* launch his satire-
barbed shafts; facts can make no impression
upon their thick heads, fly they never so fast
and thick, and heavy; they are insensible to ar-
gument, their armour is impervious to ridicule, their
bides so thick that if you poke fun at them they
hardly feel you. These are they who confound
austerity of manners with purity of morals; who
accept a sour face as a sure sign of a good
heart; with whom the practise of virtue consists,
in so sinning as not to be detected; and whose
whole system of ethics may be summed up in the
old saw "A blot is never a blot until it is hit."
These are they who have denounced the TRUE
WITNESS for its comments upon the drunken-
ness, and immorality of the spiritual children of
John Knox; and who, instead of attempting to
disprove our facts, or to controvert our logic, as-
sail us with abuse. From these men, of course,
we expect no justice; but we defy those who
have read, and meditated upon the articles copied
by us from the Scotch Protestant press, to point
out a single fact relative to Puritan immorality
given in our columns, for which we have not pro-
duced unexceptionable evidence; or to show that
the conclusions at which, from the consideration
of these facts, we have arrived, are not the legiti-
mate deductions from our premises. At all
events the fact is patent that, in proportion to its
population, illegitimate births, are more rife in
Scotland than in any other part of the British
Empire. But "this effect, defective," as honest
Polonius would say "comes by cause:"—

"That we find out the cause of this effect."
It is for our adversaries, therefore, who object
to our hypothesis, to assign some other cause
than that by us assigned for the very unenviable
notoriety which Protestant Scotland enjoys in the
matter of prostitution, drunkenness, and illegiti-
mate births.

A SHUFFLE.—We learn from the *Toronto
Mirror* of the 29th ult., that Mr. Sheriff Corbett
has, in a letter to one of the Kingston papers,
endeavored to shuffle out of the disagreeable
position in which his impertinence towards the
Irish Catholic Clergy of Canada had placed
him, by means of another piece of impertinence
towards the Ministers of his own denomination.
He says now in short, that by "Irish priests,"
whom, together with "whiskey," he denounced
as the "curse of Canada," he meant, not the
priests of the Catholic Church, but the Irish
clergymen of the Church of England.

Here we are well content to let the matter
rest: for a more abject apology for his insol-
ence no man could desire than that which Mr.
Sheriff Corbett has offered through the columns
of the Kingston press, and the *Toronto Mirror*.
He has swallowed his own words; and a very
tough and indigestible morsel he must find them
to be.

For he knows that no one will accept the ex-
planation he offers; or be simple enough to doubt
that it was the Irish Catholic Clergy, and not the
Ministers of the Protestant Establishment, to
whom he alluded in his speech at the Kingston
Synod, and in conversation in the U. States. For
in the first place, the term "Priests," though to
be met with in the Rubrics, is rarely, or never
in conversation, applied to the Clergymen of the