

The True Witness.

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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NEWS OF THE WEEK

No progress had been made towards the adjustment of the Danish question, and a speedy resumption of hostilities was dreaded. Another meeting of the Conference was announced for the 26th inst., and from the Paris *Constitutionnel*, we learn that Prussia and Austria had consented to a prolongation of the armistice for a fortnight. The other European news is devoid of interest.

From the seat of war on this Continent there is nothing of great importance to report. Gen. Grant seems to have established his base on the James River, and to design an attack upon Richmond from the South. The statement that Petersburg had been taken last week by the Yankees, now turns out to be false. Gold 201.

THE POLITICAL CRISIS.—The Tache-Carter Ministry having been outvoted by 60 to 58 on a motion amounting to "want of confidence" we have had another "crisis" as it is called—the third or fourth within the last eighteen months. It is only some three months since the present Ministry came into power, their predecessors having abandoned office because not strong enough to carry on the business of the country.

Under these circumstances Ministers placed their portfolios at the disposal of the Governor General, who gave them *carte blanche*, either to appeal again to the country, or to try and form a coalition which should result in the formation of a Ministry commanding a majority in the present Legislature; His Excellency evidently being desirous to avoid, if possible, the delay, the expence, and other inconveniences of another general election at this the business season of the year.

Accordingly the Legislative Assembly and the country were startled by the announcement that overtures had been made by the present Conservative Ministry to Mr. George Brown, with the view of forming such a coalition.

Of the morality of this proceeding it is scarce necessary to speak, neither need we comment upon the melancholy spectacle presented by men called the supporters of Catholicity, and French Canadian nationality, extending the hand of friendship to the scurrilous libeller of their religion, to the malignant enemy of their race. The prophet Isaiah indeed speaks of a day when the wolf and the lamb shall feed together—*lupus et agnus pascentur simul*—and of a time when the lion and the ox shall eat straw—*leo et bos comedent paleas*; but the Seer had no inkling of a greater marvel still; of a day when Catholics and Clear Grits should herd together, of a time when the sheep dogs, the deputed guardians of the flock, should eat dirt in pleasant company with their assailants. Alas, the sordid game of politics in Canada, like poverty, makes men acquainted with strange bed-fellows, and compels them to seek shelter beneath unclean gaberdiens, even the gaberdiens of such a one as Mr. Geo. Brown—the bosom friend of Garazzi, and of every one whose hand is against the Pope!

The expediency however of the coalition in question we may discuss; and we hesitate not to express our firm assurance that it will come to naught, and bring but ruin and infamy on all parties thereunto. Coalitions are no new things; though a coalition between such extremes, or irreconcilable antagonistic parties as Lower Canadian Catholic Conservatives, and Mr. George Brown and his No-Popery crew, the world has never yet seen. The fate of all such coalitions is recorded in history. Always and everywhere have they proved failures, injurious to the community which tolerated them, fatal to the parties therein engaged; and the reason is obvious.—Every coalition implies a dereliction of principle, on one side or the other, generally on both sides; and however low may be the standard of political morality in a community, such a dereliction cannot fail, sooner or later, to destroy all confidence in, all respect for, the delinquents. Even if, in spite of dereliction of principle, inevitable internal dissensions did not make all coalition Cabinets necessarily short lived, the contempt of the people, for, and their mistrust of, the members of such a Cabinet ensure its speedy and ignominious dissolution. The laws of morality can no more be violated with impunity than can the physical laws; and as health and longevity are in a great measure dependent upon a due regard and obedience to certain salutary laws, to moderation in diet, personal cleanliness and good ventilation, so political vigor and endurance are impossible to any party in the State, which outrages the canons of political morality. Thus though we do not pretend to affirm, that the pre-

sent Ministry and Mr. George Brown will not coalesce, will not agree to certain terms and mutual dereliction of principles—the one consenting to sacrifice the independence of the Catholic Church, the interests of religion, of morality and education, and the autonomy of Lower Canada; the other suppressing for the nonce his obscene ribaldry against our Clergy, our religious Sisterhoods, and consenting for a season to suspend his attacks upon our ecclesiastical endowments, upon the property of the Church, and separate schools in Upper Canada—we have no hesitation in expressing our firm assurance that a Cabinet so formed will be of but short duration and will speedily be overturned amidst the scornful execrations of the people of both sections of the Province.

As we write the results of the negotiations are unknown; but it would appear that the basis of the arrangement is the substitution of a Federal for a Legislative Union betwixt the two Provinces. Discarding for the moment the consideration that a Federation is only possible betwixt Sovereign and independent States, this arrangement implies of course the repeal of the existing Legislative Union: for as two different bodies cannot at the same moment of time, occupy the same place, so the existing Legislative Union must cease to be, before it can be replaced by the proposed Federal Union. So far, so good; but the question presents itself, by whom shall the conditions of the latter Union be determined? By the existing common Legislature for the two Provinces, or by the Legislatures of the two Provinces acting separately and independently? Then comes the question—what are to be the functions of the Federal Government—Legislature? We are told that its functions will be to legislate upon all matters of interest common to the two Federated Provinces, and that other matters will be left to the action of the several State Legislatures. Again, so far so good; but again the all important question presents itself, who is to determine what matters are of common interest, and therefore to be legislated for by the Federal Legislature in which the principle of representation by population will obtain—and what matters are of separate and local interests, and therefore the subject of State Legislation? If the settlement of this question be left to the Federal Legislature, the autonomy of the Province with the smaller population is destroyed and its local interests placed at the mercy of a hostile majority—alien in blood, in language and in religion. If it be left to the State Legislature to determine what matters fall within their Province, the Federal authority is naught, and a Federal government would be as useless an incumbrance as the traditional fifth wheel of a coach. In short, the whole scheme is a bung, and is merely the gilding with which it is proposed to cover the bitter pill of Representation by Population, in order to induce the people of Lower Canada to swallow the obnoxious or rather the deadly drug. "For ten years past"—says the *Globe* of Monday last—"Mr. Brown and a large section of the Upper Canada Opposition have not ceased to declare that, until the question of Parliamentary representation was dealt with fairly and finally, there could never be peace or prosperity in Canada." What "dealing fairly" with the representation question means in the language of Mr. G. Brown and Upper Canada Clear-Grits, we all know. It means simply the political ascendancy of their section of the Province; and unless they believed that their proposed Federation would amply ensure the attainment of that cherished object, we may be sure that they would never consent to accept it as a substitute for a Legislative Union with Representation by Population.

THE BOGUS COMMITTEE.—The parturient mountain has brought forth its ridiculous mouse. Mr. George Brown's Committee on sectional difficulties, and constitutional reform has presented us with its Report, and a most absurd little bantering that Report is. It is the product of only one portion of the Committee, and in substance it amounts to this—that many of its members have thought a good deal about a Federation of the British North American Provinces, or of the two Canadas at all events, and that the only definite conclusion by them arrived at is, that they should meet again, and lick their unsightly cub into some kind of presentable shape. We have, we suspect, seen the last of this bogus Committee.

Of course we do not pretend to attach any blame to its members, for not having done more or better, for the problem presented to them for solution is, by its very terms, insoluble. The "sectional difficulties" which render the Government of the United Provinces, in a manner satisfactory to both Upper Canada and Lower Canada impossible, cannot be removed or mitigated; and only two possible, or even conceivable solutions of the question—"How is Canada to be governed?" present themselves. Of these, one would not be satisfactory to the people of one section of the Province; the other is one which though uppermost in men's minds, no one is bold enough to enunciate.

The first solution—that which the people of

Upper Canada, and the Anglo-Saxon and Protestant portion of the population really wish to adopt—consists in the complete subjection of Lower to Upper Canada, of the French and Catholic section, to the Protestant and Anglo-Saxon section of the Province. This solution, though unjust, is possible; and though it would be unsatisfactory to the subjected Province, it would remove the governmental difficulties which at present exist. It would not reconcile indeed, but it would crush out, and extinguish the antagonism of Lower Canada; it would stifle the voice of the latter, by placing her in the same position with respect to Upper Canada, as that in which Poland now stands towards Russia.—This is the solution of the problem which presents itself naturally to the minds of Clear Grits, Liberals, and Protestant Reformers of the George Brown stamp.

The other solution consists simply in the *Repeal per et simple* of the Legislative Union, which binds together the two antagonistic Provinces in unloving embrace. This solution would inflict no wrong, no injustice upon either: it would leave both free and independent, but it would not satisfy the Protestant Reform party, of which the real object is Anglo-Saxon and Protestant Ascendancy.

No other solution of the problem than these given above is possible or even conceivable.—The machine of Government stands still, because there are in our political system two equal forces, constantly pulling in two directly opposite directions. If we want motion therefore, we must do one of two things. We must either destroy the existing equilibrium betwixt the opposing forces or in other words so increase the power of the one as to enable it not only to neutralise the force of the other, but to drag it along helpless in its train; or we must detach the one from the other, in which case also motion will be produced, and freedom of action restored. It is because our legislators refuse to recognise the plainest truths in politico-dynamics; because they will persist in striving after the impossible, and in endeavoring to elicit motion from an arrangement which can only give rest or equilibrium, that our political machine stands still. Instead of motion, heat is generated: political heats and animosities, which if not extinguished in time may lead to a blow up and a general smash.

These questions have been put to us—"Did not all Divorce Bills passed by the Imperial Parliament, before the creation of a special Divorce Court, originate in the House of Lords? Why so—why did they not originate in the House of Commons?"

To the best of our belief, all Divorce Bills did, and by the usages of the Imperial Parliament, were required to, originate in the House of Lords.

The reason for this is not, we believe, to be found in any particular Statute; but in the fact that the House of Lords exercised judicial functions, and that the House of Commons could not.

This at least appears to us to be the only assignable reason for the mode of procedure; for the reason must be looked for in some functional difference betwixt the two branches of the Imperial Legislature. Wherein their functions are identical no reason can be found why a Divorce Bill should not originate in one House as well as in the other.

Now in two respects the functions of the House of Lords differ from those of the House of Commons. The former cannot originate, or amend a "Money Bill." The latter has no judicial functions whatsoever. In the exclusive right of the House of Commons to originate Money Bills, we can find no reasons for its incapacity to originate a Divorce Bill; and we are therefore compelled to find in the fact that, of the two branches of the Legislature, the House of Lords alone could exercise judicial functions, the reason why in the latter alone could a Divorce Bill take its origin; since the reason of this exclusive right must be looked for in something wherein the functions of one branch of the Legislature differed from the functions of the other.

If our argument be good; if the fact be as we assume it to have been—that, according to the usages of the Imperial Parliament, the House of Lords alone could originate a Divorce Bill; and because to that House alone appertained judicial as well as legislative functions—it follows as a logical consequence that in Canada, neither the Legislative Council, nor the Legislative Assembly, can, according to the usages of the Imperial Parliament, originate a Divorce Bill; since to neither appertain any judicial functions. We give our argument for what it is worth; and are open to correction if in error either as to our facts, or to our deductions therefrom.

To talk of any analogy betwixt the British House of Peers, and any Colonial Legislative Council, is absurd, and betrays a ludicrous ignorance of the British Constitution. The House of Lords represents something, and that something is an essential ingredient of the British social system. It is the representative of the great hereditary landed aristocracy of the Empire, and in this is the sole reason for its being.

Having unfortunately no aristocracy in Canada, or anything bearing the most remote resemblance to an aristocracy, there can of course be no reason, no place, for the existence of an aristocratic branch of the Legislature. We have therefore two democratic branches, substantially identical in origin and in composition; the chief and most important difference betwixt them being, that the hall or chamber in which one meets is a trifle more elaborately ornamented than that in which the other branch of the legislature holds its sessions. In short our Legislative Council cannot even be called a caricature of the House of Lords, since it does not possess one single thing in common with the latter; and from every caricature, however extravagant, some resemblance to the thing caricatured is necessarily expected. At the utmost it may be said to *smidge*, or ape the House of Lords; but even this expression is too strong, for there is far more resemblance, and a much closer analogy betwixt a man and a monkey, than there is, or can be, betwixt the House of Lords, and any branch of the Legislature of a community in which an hereditary landed aristocracy does not exist. It is silly therefore to attempt to conclude from the rights and privileges of the one, to the existence of similar rights and privileges in the other; or to argue that, because the House of Lords could legally originate a Divorce Bill, therefore a Canadian Legislative Council is constitutionally entitled to do the same.

The obnoxious Bill has, however, passed through the Council, all the Catholic members with one or two exceptions, voting against it.—Amongst these exceptions we regret to find the name of the Hon. T. Ryan, who excused himself from voting upon the grounds that, though as a Catholic he condemned the measure, he did not wish to enforce his views upon Protestants. We do not, we cannot accept this excuse as valid. It is true that, when Divorce Bills were under discussion in the House of Lords, the Bench of Bishops always absented themselves, and took no part in the proceedings.—They did so, because their position did not allow them to vote for a Divorce Bill—since the Church of England, in so far as it can be said to have any doctrines at all, teaches that marriage is indissoluble; and because respect for their lay brethren prevented them from imposing their peculiar doctrinal views upon others. This may have been all very well in Anglican Bishops—but surely it should not furnish a precedent for Catholics to follow. The Anglican Church is, as its friends boast, a compromise; but no Catholic should compromise betwixt truth and error. "*Pacta sunt servanda*" should be the motto of every Catholic; never should he pause to consider whether his conduct, his vote, or his speech will offend this man, or make that man his enemy. He has his duty to do; that duty his Church will teach him; and having learnt what is his duty, no fear of consequences, of unpopularity, or loss of friends or popularity, should deter him from performing it. So in this case. Not only is the Catholic legislator bound in conscience to do no evil himself, but he is equally bound, in so far as he has the power, to prevent evil being done by others. He is as much bound to use his vote for good, as he is bound not to use it for evil. We regret therefore, not only for Mr. Ryan's sake, but in the interests of religion and morality, that gentleman abstained from doing his duty, and failed in putting on record, his protest—even an ineffectual protest—against the anti-Christian and immoral proceedings of the Council of which he is a member. Half measures, temporising and compromising when principle is at stake, never succeeded in conciliating enemies, and are sure to alienate friends: whilst a bold, manly course cannot in the long run fail to compel the respect and esteem even of those to whose prejudices it may run counter.

Of the votes and speeches of the Protestant members of the Council we take no account, because in speaking and in voting in favor of Divorce, they did but follow their principles, and gave no scandal to Catholics, who are in no danger of being seduced by the bad examples.—So when Protestants calumniate the Popes, and accuse the Church of having sanctioned Divorce we care not to reply; for after all it is but little harm that their speeches can do, because no Catholic, however ignorant of the facts of history, will give credit to them. On this point we need fear no controversy with Protestants, for truth is on our side, though it is idle and indeed childish to attempt to argue with Protestants as to whether Christian marriage is, or is not, indissoluble. No argument is possible except where common premises exist; and as in the Christian or supernatural order there are no premises common to Catholics and Protestants, so no argument that the former can adduce to prove the indissolubility of marriage, can have any effect upon the latter. They will admit indeed, or if they will not, we can force them to admit, our *minor* premise—"The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the marriage unions of Christians are indissoluble;" but they do not admit, and without the grace of God they cannot

be brought to admit, our *major* premise—"All that the Roman Catholic Church teaches is true;" and therefore, we say, it is the height of nonsense to discuss with Protestants and on supernatural grounds, the question of the indissolubility of marriage. There is a previous question to be discussed, and settled in every controversy in the supernatural order betwixt Catholics and Protestants; and that is the question of the infallibility of the Roman Catholic Church, on all matters affecting faith and morals.

We cannot chop Scripture with heretics.—No Catholic who respects himself or his Church would ever condescend to do so, because by so doing he would, by implication, admit the Protestant "Rule of Faith." We believe that marriage is indissoluble; we believe that God has ordained it to be so; and we so believe as a matter of faith, because, and only because, the Church which is the one divinely appointed guardian and interpreter of the divine oracles so teaches. Other reason, in the supernatural order at least, for believing that God has ordained the indissolubility of marriage we have none; though in the natural order it may be argued, and very forcibly, that the right of divorce under any circumstances, is injurious to the material well being of society, because it saps the basis of society, which is the "Family;" and that therefore God, Who is the author both of the natural and of the supernatural orders, and Who has also ordained all things for good, must have ordained that which reason shows is best for the stability of society, and the perpetuation of the Family.

"But while we cannot regard it as a wise and manly thing for any class of men blindly to accept the teachings of any Church, we suppose they have a right to do so if they think fit."—*Globe*, 13th inst.

These are the terms in which the organ of Mr. George Brown expresses its contempt for the folly and unmanliness of those Catholics who accept the teachings of their Church upon questions in the supernatural order—that is to say, questions upon which our natural faculties can throw no light whatsoever. Though applied particularly to the question of Christian marriage, the sneers of the *Globe* at the folly of Catholics, is equally applicable to all other questions betwixt Catholics and Protestants, and for this reason only do we notice it.

We know not if the *Globe* admits the fact of a revelation from God to man; but if he does, he, by implication admits, that the subject matter of that revelation transcends human reason, and man's natural faculties, and is something upon which, therefore, man is incapable of "exercising his own judgment." It is only upon the hypothesis that there are things which it imports man to know, but which by the exercise of his reason, or his natural faculties he cannot discover for himself, that the necessity for, and fact of, a revelation from God to man can be logically asserted.

But if God has made a revelation to man, He has made that revelation either immediately to every man in particular, or mediately. We know not how it may be with the *Globe* and with Mr. George Brown. To the editor of that journal, and to the leader of the Clear Grits, God may have made an immediate revelation of His will, but He has not so dealt with us. If at all He has revealed Himself to us, if at all He condescends to speak to us, and to make known to us His will upon matters which transcend our natural and limited faculties, He has done so not immediately, but mediately. It follows therefore as a logical necessity of these premises that, if God has made a revelation at all, He has also given to us a medium by and through which the contents of that revelation can be fully and infallibly communicated to us. If God has given us no such medium, then God is neither wise nor just, and is unworthy of the adoration of the wise man or of the just man.

The only possible question therefore betwixt those who admit the fact of a divine revelation; and who admit also that God is wise and just, is this—"What medium has God appointed for fully and infallibly conveying the contents of His revelation to all His creatures?"

The answer to this question which the Catholic gives is this. "The body known in history as the Roman Catholic Church is the one divinely appointed medium for conveying to all men, and throughout all ages, the contents of the Revelation made by God through the person known in history as Jesus Christ." Now unless it can be shown from history that God has appointed some medium other than the said Catholic Church, it cannot be foolish to believe with Catholics that their Church is that one divinely appointed medium; and unless it be foolish so to believe, it cannot be either foolish or unmanly, to accept the teachings of that Church as the infallible exponent of the Divine will or law. It is true that we Catholics "do not pretend to have arrived" at our conclusions "after having investigated the subject of divine revelation, it transcends our natural faculties, and human reason is as incompetent to deal with it, as the ear is to judge of