

The True Witness.

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JAN. 28, 1859.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The prospects of a general war in the Spring form the all engrossing topics of discussion in the European journals received by the last steamer. That that war is, if not inevitable, at least highly probable, is the opinion of most, and is grounded upon the too evident manifestations of the revolutionary spirit of '48 again rife in Lombardy; upon the language and preparations of the Sardinian Government, which "evidently deserves war," says the Turin correspondent of the London Times, under date 8th instant; and upon the strong expressions used towards the Austrian Ambassador by the French Emperor on New Year's Day—expressions which the Constitutional and other French journals have endeavored to soften down, and explain away, but which have nevertheless created a financial panic that still continues.

The mystery hanging over the late arrests in Ireland has not as yet been cleared up; and the British press seem to be still at a loss whether to praise the Lord Lieutenant for his wise and vigorous precautions, or to laugh at and condemn him for his silly fears, and ill-timed display of force. Hitherto no evidence has been obtained against any of the prisoners, save that of the approver; and on the unsupported evidence of these gentry, the Government would hardly like to risk the chances of a trial. In the mean time, the country remains remarkably quiet, in spite of the effects of a certain section of the press to represent it as the scene of constantly recurring agrarian outrages. It is said however that the Militia are implicated in the plot for subverting English dominion.

To-morrow our Colonial Parliament commences its Session; and we see by our Quebec exchanges that the Irish Catholics of that city are about to apply to the Legislature for an Act of Incorporation for their St. Bridget Asylum. In this laudable attempt we trust that our friends may be successful; but they will pardon us if we hint to them the propriety of seeing that their Bill be not encumbered with the insulting restrictions introduced with the assent of our Ministry of "good principles—bons principes"—into the Act of Incorporation passed last Session for the Academy of St. Cesaire. The Quebecers will therefore have to watch the passage of their Bill through Parliament very closely, and to insist that, in compliance with the Protestant prejudices of U. Canada, it be not tampered with en route; and if any attempt, from any quarter, be made to introduce the restrictions to which we allude, their representatives should be instructed to oppose a vigorous resistance to the efforts of our enemies to impose upon us in Lower Canada their Anti-Catholic policy. "A nod," says the proverb, "is as good as a wink to a blind horse;" and we trust that our friends will understand our hint to watch closely, and to judge most strictly, the conduct of their representatives; and to punish it without mercy, if it be conduct unworthy of the representatives of a Catholic constituency.

The correspondence betwixt the Rev. Mr. Ryerson and Mr. George Brown of the Globe, becomes every day more amusing; and gives certainly but a very low idea of the political honor and consistency of our public men. It is hard to say in fact, whether it is more damaging to George Brown, or to our Liberal Catholic Ministry.

In a late issue the Colonist announced that in a forthcoming series of letters the Reverend Superintendent was about to prove, amongst others, the following facts with regard to the much talked of Brown-McGee Alliance:—

1. That Mr. Brown had agreed, as one of the conditions of that alliance, "to pursue a different course in regard to the Roman Catholic Priesthood and Popery from what he has pursued in past years, and by means of which he has acquired his chief influence with a large class of Protestants in Upper Canada."

And 2. To "compromise on the Separate School Question what he has heretofore denounced, and what would really tend to subvert our School System."

Remembering that the best, incomparably the

best, speech on the School Question ever delivered in the Canadian Legislature was that delivered by Mr. McGee during the last Session of Parliament; and the firm stand taken upon that occasion by the junior member for Montreal on the right of the parent, and the right of the parent alone and to the exclusion of all earthly authority, to determine "how, by whom, and with whom" his children should be educated, we are by no means surprised at the revelations now being made through the columns of the Colonist by the Rev. Mr. Ryerson. We have asserted that any political alliance of Catholics with George Brown, involved necessary a dereliction of principle upon the School Question, by one or the other of the contracting parties; and we have maintained always, in spite of the insinuations and assertions of the Ministerial press to the contrary, that it was George Brown who had compromised; and that it was not the Catholic party who were obnoxious to the charge of abandonment of one iota of principle. In this our opinion we are now fully sustained by the Ministerial Colonist and the Chief Superintendent of Education. The latter says in a communication over his signature that the evidence against Mr. Brown is clear and conclusive; and whilst lavishing abuse upon the head of Mr. McGee, as a "Papist" and "the most ultra of all the Roman Catholics who ever spoke in the House of Assembly"—abuse which we dare say Mr. McGee is not very anxious to repel, and which he has certainly by his conduct during the last Session, well earned—the Reverend gentleman applies the lash in a most unmerciful manner to the back and shoulders of his principal opponent.

After quoting some choice paragraphs against Popery from the Globe of former years—Alas! Alas! quantum mutatus ab illo Hecatore!—the Rev. Mr. Ryerson continues as under:—

"The paragraphs above quoted are specimens of your Protestant game of past years, when you rode a high Protestant horse,—a very Bucephalus of his kind—with the banner of 'broad Protestant principles' floating in the breeze. Your zeal to destroy the alleged adversaries of Protestantism was quite as great as that of Jehu to destroy root and branch the house of Ahab, and quite as selfish. Tens of thousands of Protestants came to regard you as a standard-bearer of Protestant principles and liberty, and to view through the medium of the Globe all who did not follow you as the poor errand 'tools of Popery,' and enemies of our noble school system. It was thus that such men as Messrs. Stevenson and Gamble, and others who had borne the burden and heat of the day in supporting and defending that school system when you were assailing it, were hunted down by the Globe as trucklers to Popery. One of the crimes of the Government of the day was, that it had 'Roman Catholic supporters,' and that was held up as a sign and proof of its Popish character. To have 'Roman Catholic supporters' was then very sour grapes, nay, was a great crime against Upper Canada; but how sweet did those grapes become the moment they appeared within your reach, and how soon did that crime become a virtue when Mr. McGee, the most ultra of all the Roman Catholics who ever spoke in the House of Assembly, was found available as your 'political ally,' with, as you say, 'his influence among the Roman Catholics of Upper Canada.' From that hour no such paragraphs, as those above quoted have found their way into the columns of the Globe. Even the Kidnapped Mortara could not find space in your columns for a decent account of his sufferings (except some statements of a London letter-writer) until two days after I drew attention to the subject in my fourth letter, and that copied from the New York Times as news, unaccompanied by a single editorial remark, lest offence might be given to your new 'Roman Catholic supporters.'—Colonel Tache, and other Roman Catholic members of the Legislature are liberals indeed, in comparison with Mr. McGee, as shown by his speech quoted in my last letter. Col. Tache's allusion, some years since to the Globe's assailants of the Church of Rome as 'pharisaical brawlers,' was echoed and reechoed by the Globe in every part of Upper Canada for years as an insult to Protestants; but of Mr. McGee's most ultra and insulting speech, such as was never before delivered in the Canadian legislature, you have not one word to say, but you embrace Mr. McGee himself as your 'political ally,' and denounce me for not doing the same. The Globe is now as free from anything against 'Romish priestcraft' as it formerly was full of it; and even Bishop Charbonnel's fighting Vicar-General Bruyere pats you on the shoulder, and commends you for no longer pursuing your 'former course,' and the Montreal True Witness himself pronounces you a much better friend to separate schools 'than the Rev. Mr. Ryerson.' To complete the picture, we now see you—the former supposed Achilles of Protestantism—in the very position you represented 'the poor errands of the Ministry' in 1855, 'down on your knees' to the said Mr. Cauchon, to Mr. Drummond, the author of the 'Papistical school Bill,' to Mr. Dorion, the earnest advocate of it, to Mr. McGee, the man of 'more power to the Pope,' in the hope of getting into the offices of these 'poor errands,' so as to 'eat your leek with all humility.'"

The best of the joke is, that the writer of the above, and his Ministerial friends, are at the present moment pursuing the same course as that with which they reproach the Globe as having pursued during bygone years. They and their organs of the press are themselves now actively engaged in making for themselves Protestant political capital, by appeals to the fanaticism of an "enlightened Protestant public" upon the "Mortara case;" by abuse of the Pope, and denunciations of "ultra Roman Catholics." The latter are of course the especial objects of the Rev. Mr. Ryerson's vituperation, as they are of the hostility of all place-holding Liberal Kautcholics.—Of the latter we have but too many in Parliament; for it is to them and to their "liberality" that we are indebted for the unsatisfactory state of the "School Question" at the present moment. But the "ultra Roman Catholic" is scarce indeed; and his presence in the House is deprecated by all who wish to retain a "State-Schoolism" and their official salaries. His voice, his words, his every gesture are a reproach to his more "liberal" co-religionists, and a rock of offence to his Protestant neighbors. It is only when the Catholic "with bated breath, and in a

bondsman's key," addresses the House in an apologetic whine, as if heartily ashamed of his religion, and as one craving forgiveness for the offence as the misfortune of his birth and education, that he has any chance of a favorable hearing. We sincerely trust then that during his future career Mr. McGee will do his best to deserve the Rev. Mr. Ryerson's reproach of being an "ultra Roman Catholic;" for so only can he merit the confidence of his constituents, or what to him should be of higher value, the approval of his own conscience.

Had we space at our command we should most certainly take care to re-produce the entire of the Brown-Ryerson correspondence; so fully does it bear us out in every word that we have written with respect to an alliance of Catholics with George Brown. Time after time we have denounced that alliance as impossible, and not desirable if possible. Impossible, so long as Mr. Brown adhered to his anti-Separate School policy; and certainly not desirable even if by his abandonment of that policy, the said alliance should become possible. Because as it was only by riding the "High Protestant horse" well nigh to death that he obtained his political importance, so by dismounting from the beast for one moment, or by allowing it even to slacken its speed, that political power or influence—without which an alliance with him would be worthless—would be lost to him for ever.

In justice, however, to Mr. Brown we must add that of late he has betrayed no symptoms whatever of any intention to support the claims of Catholics on the School Question. On the contrary, through the columns of the Globe he declares himself to be still, and as firmly as ever, the champion of a mixed or common system of education; and thus shows us that though the hopes of obtaining office, and the immediate prospects of a Government situation may for a moment have induced him to vacillate, he is still the same George Brown as him whom we have known for years as the calculator of our clergy, the ribald slanderer of our Sisters of Charity, and the inveterate enemy of our religion.

And if he has not changed, so neither have we; nor will we ever consent to accept anything short of our full claims. We claim—and in these few words may be comprised all that we ask on the School Question—for the individual parent the right as against the State of educating his children as he pleases, and to determine for himself, "what, by whom," and "with whom" they shall be taught. This we claim as a right that the parent holds immediately from God, and of which no human legislation, therefore, can rightfully deprive him; and as the consequence of this first claim, we claim in the second place, that no man, be he Catholic, or be he Protestant, be compelled to support either Church or School to which he is conscientiously opposed. Is there any honest and reasonable man, who with his hand upon his heart, will dare to say that these our claims against the State are not most just, and most reasonable?

CIVIL MARRIAGES AND DIVORCE.—"If our cotemporaries"—says the Toronto Leader of the 17th, alluding to L'Ordre and the TRUE WITNESS—"be prepared to argue the question"—(the question of Civil Marriages and Divorce)—"we have no objection to meet them; but to menace and denunciation the only possible reply is defiance."

Neither L'Ordre nor yet the TRUE WITNESS, have in our opinion menaced the Leader because of the latter's peculiar views with regard to the sexual unions of a professedly Christian people; though that both have denounced, or in other words condemned strongly the principles laid down by our cotemporary, is perfectly true; and seeing that L'Ordre and the TRUE WITNESS are Christian and Catholic, their conduct in this respect is also perfectly natural. No Christian, no one who believes that by Christ Himself the sexual union of baptised persons has been raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, and declared typical of the holy indissoluble union that exists between the Lord Himself and His Church, will shrink from denouncing as essentially anti-Christian, and as fraught with peril to the very existence of Christian Society and Christian Civilisation, a proposition for degrading matrimony to the level of a mere civil contract. To the Christian there is something so revolting in such a proposition, that he cannot refrain from denouncing it, and we have denounced it; but "menace" towards the Leader and its friends, we would never dream of employing, so confident are we in the excellence of our cause.

We shall be, therefore, most happy to "argue the question" with the Leader, provided only that he will clearly state his thesis, giving at the same time a plain, and full definition of the terms "civil contract;" and on our side we engage ourselves to prove that—if marriage be in the eyes of the State, but a "civil contract"—and since it is of the essence of all mere "civil contracts" that they can at any moment be annulled by the mutual consent of the contracting parties—the State must, as a logical consequence, recognise the right of divorce. But the recognition by the State of the right of divorce would

be fatal, not only to morality, but to the "Christian Family;" which in its turn underlies, and is the foundation of "Christian Society" and "Christian Civilisation." That which essentially distinguishes the latter from the Society and Civilisation that obtained in the most polished heathen nations before the coming of Our Lord, is the peculiar institution of matrimony; peculiar to Christians in this, that it has been raised by Christ Himself to the dignity of a Sacrament, and is therefore by its very nature or essence indissoluble, except by the death of one of the contracting parties. "One with one, and for ever," is the fundamental principle of all "Christian Society," which cannot be touched without imperiling the entire superstructure.

Hence it is that before entering into any argument with the Leader upon the subject, we would respectfully invite our cotemporary to give a definition of a "civil contract," as he understands it; and to tell us what he means when he talks of a "civil marriage." We insist the more upon this, because from an article in the Leader of the 20th inst., it is evident that our cotemporary's ideas on this point are very vague and obscure; and that the only thing clear and definite is, that he does not know what "civil marriages" are. He tells us, for instance, that "civil marriages" are at the present moment "not only sanctioned but performed by Roman Ecclesiastics in Upper Canada"—(though why the intervention of an ecclesiastic in a purely civil function should be invoked, he explains not;) and as a case in point cites the following:—

"What will be the horror of these journalists"—(L'Ordre and the True Witness)—"when we inform them that civil marriages are actually, at the present time, not only sanctioned but performed, by Roman Catholic ecclesiastics, in Upper Canada? To come to particulars. In the month of November or December, 1857, the Very Reverend Vicar General Bruyere, performed one of these marriages in St. Michael's Cathedral, in this city. It was one of those mixed marriages, on which the Church of Rome has generally looked with disfavor, and sometimes refused to allow. The bridegroom was a Roman Catholic; the bride a Protestant. At the time in question, the Roman Catholic Bishop of the Diocese of Toronto was absent; and the Vicar General, we believe, had some communication with the Bishop of Hamilton, on the subject, before he would undertake to perform a legal marriage between parties to whose union, as he said, the Church does not give its religious sanction. The result of that communication was that the Very Reverend Vicar General consented to perform the marriage, in a way that should make it legally binding; but at the same time he refused to allow it with the religious ceremony prescribed by the Roman Catholic Church. It was simply a civil or legal marriage; nothing more. And it was performed in this wise. The intended bride was required to ask her intended husband whether he would take her to be his wife; and an affirmative answer having been received, he, in turn, asked her whether she would take him to be her husband. The answer having been given, the parties signed their names, in a book, and the deed was regularly witnessed by persons present. The next thing was to pay the fee of \$20, and thus the marriage was legally performed."

"What will L'Ordre say to civil marriages after this? What will the True Witness say? Here is proof that mere civil marriages are performed, in Upper Canada, by high ecclesiastical functionaries of the Roman Catholic Church; and that, too, between parties whose union that Church refuses to sanction religiously. Nor is this case a solitary one. On the contrary, we believe this kind of marriage frequently occurs. How inconsistent, then, is it in L'Ordre and the True Witness to object to civil marriages, when they are practically sanctioned and actually performed by the Church, in whose behalf these journals profess to write!"—Leader, 20th Jan.

What we have to say to the above is this.—That the marriage therein alluded to by the Leader was, in the eyes of the Catholic Church, and to all intents and purposes, a "Sacramental" union, and therefore not a mere "civil marriage"—that is to say, a sexual union, abstraction or elimination made of the religious and essentially Christian element. This may excite the "horror" of the Leader; but it is strictly true nevertheless, as he himself would admit did he but know the Catholic doctrine respecting the Sacrament of Marriage, its Minister or rather Ministers, and its effects. And if by asking the sanction of the State to "civil marriages" he means no more than this, that the State shall recognise as valid, and give civil effect to sexual unions contracted in the manner described above, the TRUE WITNESS for one will have no objection; because, though mixed marriages are generally unhappy, such unions are really and essentially Sacramental, as distinguished from mere "civil" contracts. The persons contracting are bound in holy matrimony, and the tie that binds them is Sacramental, and therefore indissoluble.

But with the example of Great Britain and the United States before our eyes; and witnessing, as we do, the fearful immorality, and total disruption of all family ties which are the logical and indeed inevitable consequences of all tampering by the State with a Christian institution, which in its essence appertains to the domain—not of the State or Civil Magistrate, but—of the Church, we do hope that our Legislators will be very careful how they allow themselves to be induced to give the slightest appearance of sanction even to the change in the "Marriage Laws" of Canada that are evidently in contemplation. For Catholic members of Parliament, upon any pretence, to give their aid in relaxing the existing laws would be unpardonable; and if our Protestant Legislators were wise, instead of receding from, they would draw closer to us in their opinions as to the nature and effects of Christian marriage; and would endeavor to assimilate their system to that of the Catholic Church, as eminently conducive not only to the moral and eternal, but to the physical and temporal well-being of the human race. Never, we say, has that system

been deviated from, or even partially relaxed, without the appearance of the most grave disasters. Had for instance would we say to the Leader, and carefully meditate the meaning of the following extract from the London Beacon, a Protestant journal; and remember that as the recognition of the right of divorce by the State is the inevitable consequence of degrading Matrimony from the supernatural to the natural order—from a Christian Sacrament to a "mere civil contract"—so the "Divorce Courts" of England, with all their unspeakable filth, are the inevitable results of the system of Legislation that of late years has been adopted in England; and which the Leader and its Ministerial friends have it in contemplation to impose upon us in Canada:—

"The Divorce Court is becoming a serious nuisance. Crimes and squabbles alternate; grave scandals and coarse comicities are rife in the columns of every daily paper. In other days we were occasionally disgusted by the details of some trial for crim. con., and the delicacy of society, long outraged at length insisted upon putting an end to the action. But now publicity seems to be the normal condition of domestic life. The institution of holy matrimony itself is brought into contempt. All the diseased parts of the social state are laid bare every morning, and all the lovers of gossip are supplied regularly at their breakfast-table with an accurate picture of an interior, as faithful and as unrestrained as any of those Dutch pictures which require painting over before they can be hung in our dining-rooms. A lady appeals to Judge Cresswell and a jury to relieve her from her husband, because he gave her a tin bed-candlestick to go to bed with; and the Court is engaged two days in coming to the conclusion that the lady may, notwithstanding this and similar outrages, return to the matrimonial domicile without danger to her life. At other times we are admitted to all the discoveries of detective policemen, who have bored holes through doors and windows; or we are called upon to take interest in the foul language of two vulgar people, a publican's widow and a discarded preacher. These peeps into the domestic life of English people are not edifying either to natives or to foreigners. A witty Frenchman says, that if you wish to know the sequence of a marriage de convenance in England, you must read the proceedings of the Divorce Court, and if you desire to see the consequences of a marriage d'amour you must refer to the reports of the insolvent Court. We are not about to reopen the question of the constitution of this Court, but surely something might be done to prevent these public scandals and to protect the public taste. At present Judge Cresswell's Court is more thronged than a theatre; and we believe that all the expenses of the judicial staff might be paid by a judicious arrangement of reserved seats and additional galleries, and by a scale of prices for admission properly graduated. The jury system is decidedly a failure as newly applied to these cases. The verdicts have been very often palpably wrong, in some instances ridiculous. Moreover, it is absolute oppression to call steady tradesmen away from their business and shut them up for days to listen to the mutual recriminations of a shrew and a fortune-hunter. Lord Brougham has written a letter to the Law Amendment Society intimating his fears that many of these parties are acting in collusion. We confess we cannot share in this fear, and we could almost wish it were better founded. The collisions are numerous and loud enough; the collusions must be very rare.—The example given by this exhibition must be frightful, and we believe that all the injury is being occasioned, not by the Court itself, but by the publicity given its proceedings."

Yes, indeed! The "institution of matrimony" may well be held in contempt there, where it is no longer held to be a "holy," but a mere "civil, contract;" there too will a violation of its obligations be looked upon as a venial offence at worst, and often as a pleasant joke, where a pecuniary compensation is admitted as a full and honorable reparation for conjugal infidelity—as indeed it is, if marriage itself be, and adultery in consequence be but the breach of, a "mere civil contract."

Of this indifference to vice, this obtuseness of the moral sense, which the habitual disregard of chastity and the obligations of the marriage tie engenders amongst all classes of the community, the writer in the London Beacon, a zealous evangelical organ, of high standing in the conventicle—indeed supposed by many elderly females of the Little Bethel to emit an odor of sanctity—in the above extract affords an instructive and ludicrous example. As an exposition of Protestant ethics, it is perfect; and may be said to comprise the whole of the "law and prophets" as held and practised by the respectable evangelical classes of the British Empire. It is not with the filthiness, the general bestiality and disregard for the precepts of common decency which the proceedings in the English "Divorce Courts" divulge, that the writer is shocked; but with "the publicity given to its proceedings;" and the source of the "injury" is to be looked for, not in the infamous and anti-Christian law which sanctions adulterous sexual intercourse upon the pretence of granting divorces betwixt married persons, but in the notoriety given by the public journals to the daily transactions in the said eminently—(heathen we were about to say)—Protestant tribunals, the English "Divorce Courts." One great commandment did the Reformers of the XVI. century leave to their children, which may be thus summed up—"Behave yourselves afore folk;" and this injunction their spiritual children of the XIX. century observe with more than Judaical scrupulosity.

VERY ALARMING.—The Montreal Witness, from a careful study of the prophecies of Scripture, and the disturbed state of the North of Italy, is inclined to believe that a regular "break up" is not far off, and indeed may be expected at any moment within "the next ten years."—He says:—

"It is worthy of remark in this connection, that a very great majority of the expounders of prophecy have made out the end of the great prophetic period, so often mentioned in Scripture under various figures, as likely to take place within the next ten years. If so, the greatest events the world has yet seen must be even now looming up and bearing down upon us."