

THREE RIVERS CATHEDRAL TAX.

(From the Quebec Gazette.)

Of all the legislation of the past session, no act appears to have been so little understood as that of taxing the inhabitants of the Town of Three Rivers for the purpose of raising money to build a Cathedral.

The following is the resolution with the vote upon it. It will be seen that there were very few persons in the House at the time of its passage; but had the whole 54 been present, the resolution must have passed, as there was nothing in it, which we shall shew presently, to require the slightest compromise of the most ultra Clear Grit principles for its support.

Resolved, That it is expedient to raise by assessment from the Catholic Inhabitants of the Parish of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin at Three Rivers, the sum of five thousand pounds currency, payable in six years, at the rate of one-sixth per annum, to be delivered and paid over to the Bishop of Three Rivers, to aid in the liquidation of the expenses to be incurred in the erection of a Cathedral Church in the said Parish, to be also used as a Parish Church.

The said resolution being read a second time, was agreed to.

Yea:—Messrs. Badgley, Burnham, Cameron, Attorney General Drummond, Dubord, Fortier, Gamble, Gouin, Inspector General Hincks, Jobin, Lemieux, Macdonald of Kingston, McDougall, McLachlin, Morin, Poulin, Ridout, Robinson, Rose, Short, Stevenson, Stuart, Taché, Tessier and Wright of West Riding of York—25.

Nays:—Messrs. Brown, Mallock, Marchildon and Patrick—4.

For this resolution there is abundant precedent, and indeed, it is merely an extension of the law already in existence for the building of Churches, to enable a Cathedral to be constructed.

By an ordinance of the Governor in Council passed in 1791—during 34, George III, chap. 6, power was given to the Bishop or superintendent of the Romish Church, to exercise all the rights which were in existence previous to the conquest, and which gave the power to assess the people for the construction of parishes and parish churches.

IX. And be it further ordained, &c., that whenever there shall have been made by the ecclesiastical authorities, any order or decree for the location, erection and construction, alteration, removing or repairing of any parish church or chapel, or chapel of ease, or sacristy, parsonage house, or church yard, as hereinabove mentioned, it shall be lawful for the majority of the inhabitants, (being free-holders,) interested in such construction or repairs, to apply by petition to the said Commissioners, praying that a meeting of the inhabitants of such parish or mission may be called for the purpose of proceeding to the election of three or more trustees to carry the said decree into effect; and the said Commissioners may thereupon authorize such meeting and election, by an order to that effect.

These trustees are authorized to make an assessment on all immovable property, for the amount necessary for the construction of such parish Church, which act of assessment shall be exhibited at least fifteen days previous to its homologation being moved for. The nineteenth section says:—

And be it further ordained, &c., that when the act of assessment shall have been homologated by the said Commissioners, the trustees shall have a right to demand from the assessed the payment of their rates or assessments; and in case of the refusal of such payment, the same may be recovered before any civil court of the district, of competent jurisdiction, according to the amount thereof.

This ordinance has been amended by two different acts since. The first, 13 & 14 Victoria, chap 44; and 14 & 15 Victoria, chap. 103. These statutes, however, did not in anywise alter the main feature of the ordinance, viz: the power to assess. Their object was merely to improve the mode of assessment.

From these it will be seen that the law of Lower Canada authorises the assessment of the people for the erection of churches, and moreover it has frequently been done of late years. In 1850 a statute was passed, 13 & 14 Victoria, chapter 128, "to enable Louis Compe to recover a certain amount due to him by the parish of St. Edouard, in the district of Montreal."—The amount was a balance due to him on the erection of a church, and the method of payment ordered by the act was by assessment. We are not aware that the Globe objected to this bill, although it now makes such large professions of consistency; indeed, if we are not very much mistaken, it defended it. And yet, was it not as bad in principle to tax the inhabitants for the payment of a balance on the erection of a church as for its entire erection? But, it will be asked, if the law is already sufficient for these things, why trouble the House with further resolution on the subject? The circumstances of the case will fully explain this. The inhabitants of Three Rivers

desired that a cathedral should be erected in their town, and for this purpose a public meeting was held, at which the specifications for the building were laid before the people, and the amount necessary for the construction of a suitable edifice declared to be £7,000 currency. As the law did not refer to cathedrals, the bishop offered, if the building were erected, to furnish the sum of two thousand pounds, which would leave the amount to be raised by the inhabitants only £5,000; the proposition was unanimously adopted, and the member for the place requested to get the sanction of Parliament for the assessment. This, then, is the whole matter about which so much has been said, and on which so much holy indignation has been wasted. Had the usual course been adopted—had the Governor appointed the Commissioners and the people the trustees, and proceeded to assess the immovable property, and levy the tax, there would not have been a syllable uttered about the matter.—But because, a cathedral instead of merely a parish church, is to be erected, and because the people are to save £2,000 by the transaction, we are declared as being priestridden, &c., and the reformers of Upper Canada who voted for the bill are pronounced traitors to their principles. It is abominable to see men endeavoring to make political capital out of such matters, and it is particularly despicable to see reformers endeavoring to split up the reform interest, and throw the country into the hands of their political opponents, the Tories, by such means.

The Globe, attempting to account for the fact that no petitions were presented against the resolution, says that the people can neither read nor write, and that possibly they have never heard anything of the matter. We have to tell the Globe that at least two-thirds of the inhabitants of Three Rivers can both read and write, and that, moreover, the meeting to which we have referred was one of the largest and most enthusiastic ever held in the parish. We hope the Upper Canada journals, who are influenced by other motives than those which evidently move George Brown and the Globe, will put this matter in its proper light, and exonerate those gentlemen who, properly understanding it, voted for it, from an unjust and ungenerous imputation.

MELANCHOLY DISASTER.—LOSS OF FOUR LIVES.—On Friday morning, at about half-past one o'clock, a fire broke out in the premises in McGill Street, occupied as a confectionary, bake-house, and dwelling, by Mr. R. King. All the household consisting of Mr. King, his wife, four children, three servant maids and six apprentices, were buried in slumber. The front door was locked and there does not appear to have been any means of exit to the rear. Mrs. King searched some time for her keys, and the poor girl, Jane McIntyre, remained with her, holding the baby. All the others except two of the children made their escape from the gallery in rear of the second story. Mr. King left his wife and children on the third flat to open the back windows on the second floor and afford them means of escape that way. The young servant girl followed, and was the last to leave the third story; after searching about in the smoke for the children, she rescued one and bore him bravely safely through the smoke and over the sheds and fences in the rear. Mr. King finding it impossible to return, he says, made his escape from the second story, and so saved his life. The poor girl McIntyre, on being called away, said she would not leave the house while Mrs. King and the children were in danger, and so her heroic fidelity cost her her life. When Mrs. King found she could not get down the stairs with her babe she dropped it from the window into the arms of Mr. Hunt, a painter, in the city, who deserves credit for the care and dexterity with which he saved the little creature from harm, as also for the attentions he paid to the remainder of the family, taking them to his house and furnishing them with food, clothing, &c. After Mrs. King threw down her babe, she re-appeared at the window with another child, but sank down before she could lift it over the sill. There are few more estimable people in their rank of life than those who have perished, and great numbers will mourn their melancholy end. Mr. King's stock was insured for £300 at the Montreal Office, and £300 at the Alliance, but his loss will be very much beyond the sum recovered. The building was owned by Mr. Wm. Stephen, and we believe was about covered by insurance. This sad accident shows the necessity of having fire escapes, or good ladders placed about the city, where any one can get at them, as is the case in London. In this case before any of the Fire Companies could reach the ground with their apparatus, it was too late to save life. When the firemen did get there they behaved admirably, and the fire was kept within the limits of the building where it originated.—Montreal Gazette.

SUICIDE.—We learn from the Chronicle, that at about half-past ten o'clock, on Wednesday night last, a soldier of the 54th Regiment, being on guard at St. John's Gate, slept within the enclosure of the Ordnance Laboratory yard, and shot himself through the body, death being instantaneous. The man, whose name we have not learned, bore a tolerably fair character in his regiment, and had been some six or seven years in the army.—Quebec Gazette.

Rev. Dr. Phillip, missionary in North Africa, states on authority of a German traveller, that near the kingdom of Bambara, is a large number of Jewish negroes. Nearly every family among them possesses the Law of Moses written upon parchment. Although they speak of the prophets, they have not their writings.

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