

The True Witness

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE,

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1861.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

THE state of affairs in Italy remains unchanged since our last. Partial risings of the people in the South of Italy, the noisy demonstrations of a few bandits and hired agents of Cavour at Rome—and fresh rumours of the speedy withdrawal of the French garrison, are all that we have to chronicle. The death of Count Teleki is still wrapt in mystery, but the theory of suicide, though generally rejected, is by no means improbable. The Count having by his former rebellions justly forfeited his life and property, was freely pardoned by the Emperor of Austria, who exacted no other condition from his subject, but that for the future he should abstain from the trade of political agitator. This solemn pledge, the Count unscrupulously violated; and it is said that shame and remorse so preyed upon his mind as to hurry him on to the perpetration of the rash act which terminated his dishonored existence.

The various conflicting, indeed contradictory reports from the seat of war in the United States, present little of interest. We may gather, however, that a forward movement is in contemplation by the Northerners, and that a collision between them and the insurgents of the South may shortly be looked for.

MR. SCOTT'S SCHOOL BILL.—A respected correspondent asks us why we have not noticed the Bill introduced by Mr. Scott for amending the School Laws of Upper Canada? That we may not be suspected of indifference to the educational interests of our Upper Canada co-religionists, we will give the reasons of our silence.

We look upon the Catholics of Upper Canada as the best judges of what suits them, and as alone competent to decide in favor of, or against any measure of Legislation especially designed for their section of the Province. It is not therefore for us of Lower Canada to pronounce either for or against Mr. Scott's School Bill, until the Catholics of Upper Canada have given their verdict thereupon, and hitherto we have seen no signs that that Bill meets with favor in their eyes. Not a petition—to the best of our knowledge—has been presented to Parliament with reference to it from the Upper Canadian Catholic community; and we are not aware that a single meeting has been held, or an effort of any kind made by those most immediately interested therein, to secure either its success or its defeat in the Legislature.

Under such circumstances—and remembering how strongly public sentiment in favor of Separate Schools declared itself in Upper Canada a few years ago, through the medium of Catholic Institutes, of public meetings, and numerous signed petitions to Parliament—we conclude that the Catholics of Upper Canada look with perfect indifference, not to say apathy, upon Mr. Scott's Bill, and that, to say the least, they are not anxious for its success—or else they would long ere this have bestirred themselves actively in its support. It does not therefore become us of Lower Canada to interfere in the matter at all, as if we wished to force a School Law down the throats of our reluctant brethren of the Upper Province. From the total absence of any semblance even of political agitation amongst the latter on the School Question, we have every reason to believe that they are perfectly satisfied with the School Law as it is; and if they are satisfied, we have no right to complain; if they do not care to agitate the question, it is not for us, who are but remotely, and indirectly interested therein, to take up the cudgels in their behalf, or to disturb the profound peace which, in so far as the Catholics are concerned, has reigned in Upper Canada during the past year.

It cannot be too often repeated that, on the Upper Canada School Question, our position is simply that of auxiliaries; and that, if the Catholics of the West desire any change in their School system, they themselves must take the initiative, and bear the brunt of the fray. God only helps those who are willing, and who do their best, to help themselves; and certainly it would be not only Quixotic, but impertinent for us of Lower Canada to tender our assistance before we know whether it is required, or whether

if required, it will be accepted by those to whom it is tendered. The people of Lower Canada have no reasons for suspecting that the Catholic minority of the West any longer care one straw about amendments to the Separate School Law; for if they did, they would long ago have taken action on the subject, and brought their claims before the notice of the Legislature through the natural and legitimate channel of petitions and public meetings; and therefore it would be presumptuous for us to offer advice, or to agitate a question which the Catholics of the West have apparently agreed to drop. We have the modesty to believe that they are the best, the sole competent judges, of their own interests—whether amendments of any kind in their School system are required—and if required, when and in what manner they should be insisted upon.—

When they shall deem that the hour has come for demanding those amendments, and when they shall have agreed upon what amendments are necessary, then we trust that the Catholics of the Lower Province will, if called upon, be found prompt to second and enforce by all legitimate means the demands of their Western co-religionists upon the Canadian Legislature.

Since writing the above we have received from another respected correspondent at Ottawa the following communication on the same subject:—

To the Editor of the True Witness.

Sir,—Can you inform your numerous readers why the Act relating to Separate Schools has not been passed through Parliament during the present Session? The House will adjourn in a few days, and the Bill has not passed its second reading. Last session of Parliament Mr. R. W. Scott who undertook to carry the measure through, only introduced the Bill two days previous to the prorogation of Parliament. Mr. Scott well knew that the Bill could not be discussed at that late hour, consequently the measure was buried for that session, the *rule*, however, was too plain to deceive people.

During the present session Mr. Scott took time by the fore-lock, and introduced his Bill at the opening of Parliament. The Catholics of Upper Canada had then good reason to hope that before the close of the Session the Bill would become law. Yet what has been the result? The Bill was read a first time, and was never heard of afterwards. It has been buried a second time, and Mr. Scott is responsible.

You occasionally are very severe on the Grits and their leader Mr. George Brown, for their opposition to Separate Schools, and their Catholic measures; but I, for one, prefer an open foe to a false friend.

Your's,

A SUBSCRIBER.

The apparent apathy of the Catholics on the Separate School question, as manifested by the total cessation of all political agitation of the subject, and confirmed by the recognition by a portion of the same body of the Clear Grits or Protestant Reformers—the avowed enemies of Separate Schools—as their “natural allies,” has had the effect of persuading the great majority of the Catholics of Lower Canada that their Western co-religionists are perfectly indifferent to the fate of the School Question. How is it possible to believe that men who give political countenance to the Protestant Reformers, are in earnest in the advocacy of Separate Schools? This is one reason why the Catholic representatives of Lower Canada take no interest in the question; and why therefore it is impossible to press a good School Bill to maturity. Here is another reason.

At the Clear-Grit Convention, held a short time ago at Toronto, at which Delegates from the Catholics of Upper Canada assisted, professing to represent the views, and to express the sentiments of their co-religionists, it was declared—without a syllable of disclaimer from the said Catholic delegates or representatives, not only that all interference on the part of Lower Canada with the affairs of the Western Province was a grievance—but in express terms it was mentioned as one of the prominent grievances of which the people of the latter had to complain, that the Catholics of Lower Canada had given their aid to change the School Laws of the Upper Province, and to introduce therein a Separate School system contrary to the wishes of the Protestant majority. From this the only logical inference—[until such time as the action of the Catholic delegates to the Toronto Convention shall have been formally disclaimed]—is, that the Catholics of Upper Canada not only do not desire our interference, but actually resent it as an insult and a grievance.

For these two reasons it is impossible to persuade the representatives of Lower Canada that it is their duty, or even that they have the right, in any manner to interfere with the School affairs of the Western Province contrary to the wishes of the majority of the people; and without the co-operation of the members for Lower Canada, it is impossible to pass a Bill still further extending the Separate School system in the Upper Province. This is the reason why Mr. Scott's Bill has not been pushed forward. Its promoter knew that it had no chance of being carried;—for amongst the great majority of the Lower Canadian members of the House, the most profound indifference upon the subject prevails;—coupled however with the firm determination, since the Toronto Convention, never again to interfere with Upper Canadian Schools contrary to the wishes of the Upper Canadian majority, seeing that by so doing in the past, they have made themselves enemies both amongst Catholics and Protestants. They believe that by the former, the School Question was virtually drop-

ped the day when their alliance with the Protestant Reformers was concluded; and it will require long and vigorous action on the part of the Catholics of the West to undeceive them. For we believe that they are deceived; for we believe that the Catholic heart of Upper Canada beats sound as ever, in spite of some few defections; for we believe that the Catholic allies of the “Protestant Reformers” are, if the more noisy, not the more numerous or influential section of the Catholic community. This we hope will be made manifest at the next election.

PRISON DISCIPLINE IN ENGLAND.—The Great Briton reads the exaggerated accounts of the dirty state of Neapolitan prisons, as given to the world by fellows like Edwin James, and turns up his eyes to heaven in holy rapture, giving thanks that he is not as other men are, and especially as those Italian Papists. From time to time however revelations as to the prison discipline of model England leak out, which would shock even the Neapolitan were they to reach his ears.

The subject was lately brought under the notice of the British Legislature by Mr. Kinnaird in the House of Commons; and the facts which he adduced, horrible, and discreditable to the civilization of the XIX. century though they be, were amply supported by official returns, and the depositions of magistrates themselves, the eye witnesses of the scenes by them related.—Nothing so atrocious has as yet been asserted of the prisons, and prison discipline of Naples.

Mr. Kinnaird commenced by calling the attention of the House to the system of “Juvenile Floggings” practised in English gaols, as illustrated by some Returns just laid before Parliament. “Hon. Members,” he said, “had just been expressing their indignation at the barbarity of the Chinese; but he hardly knew whether indignation or pity was more roused in considering the subject to which his question referred.” He then proceeded to details, and showed that, under the actual *regime*, little children of 10, 9, 8, and even 7 years of age were sentenced to floggings as severe as those which in other countries are inflicted upon hardened criminals; proficients in vice, and old in iniquity. He mentioned cases of little children of 8 years of age flogged with the cat-o-nine-tails, and of others whose bodies had been torn and lacerated by a new kind of instrument, of torture. From the report of the debate, as given by the London Times, we make some extracts:—

“I saw a boy marched along in custody, and was told that he was going to be flogged. His age was said to be 11, but he was a little and delicate-looking child. He was committed the day previous for three days and to be once whipped for stealing. The boy was ordered to take off his trousers, and he was fastened by his waist to the barbed arms extended, and further secured by straps. The person who had to administer the punishment was a strong, stalwart man, and he was armed with a huge birch rod, about two feet six inches in length. The child received eight strokes, and then presented a picture of agony and terror, his eyes almost starting out of his head. I inquired how many such strokes constituted a flogging, and was told 18, and that that number was always inflicted if the prisoner's physical power would admit of it. I appealed to the surgeon, who said he could not interfere so long as the boy was physically capable of enduring the punishment. I asked whether we, as magistrates, could not prevent its proceeding further, and was then told that we had the power to mitigate the sentence. This, of course, was at once did, as we should certainly have done at the first stroke had we received that intimation previously. I never witnessed so pitiful a scene, and hope I never shall again.”

“The place where these floggings took place was a vaulted chamber under the gaol, where no sound could reach beyond those present. He could scarcely believe that such a thing as this was possible (hear, hear.) These returns read more like old tales of slavery or Eastern torture than anything which could take place in England (hear, hear.) It could scarcely be said that such punishments were necessary, for they were confined to a few districts mostly in the North, while in other districts they were not used at all. He did not deny that in extreme cases the thing ought to be done; but that it should assume this ordinary character, and be inflicted on children of such tender years to such an extent, was a national disgrace (hear, hear.) He should be glad to hear from his right hon. friend that he had had the subject under his consideration, and that he would be prepared to take some steps to put a stop to the practice.”

Sir G. Lewis replied, but was obliged to admit the truth of the statements made by the previous speaker. From some extracts from the Returns, which Sir G. Lewis read to the House, it appeared that these severe floggings had been inflicted for very trivial offences. One boy of 14 years of age had been sentenced to a severe flogging with the “cat” for “shouting in his cell at night;” another of 11 years of age had received 36 lashes for “shouting in his cell,” and another had received 48 lashes for “whistling and shouting.” Colonel North having heard the official reply, “pronounced the floggings in prisons to be of the most tyrannical, brutal and disgusting description.”—Times

To this verdict we think that there are but few who will refuse their assent. Severe corporal chastisement may be, is no doubt, often necessary to restrain the vicious propensities of hardened criminals; but to treat little children of tender years, young things who should still be in their mother's arms, with cruelty such as that described above, is a practice we believe unknown in any part of Continental Europe, and from which the most hard-hearted executioner of the law's decrees in the kingdom of the much abused Francis II. would recoil with disgust.—We have no sympathy with the maudlin philan-

thropy of the age; we believe in hanging, and that it is the best use the murderer can be put to. We believe in flogging too in certain cases, as a most effectual check upon vicious, criminal propensities; but we do not believe in tying a little child of 7 or 8 years of age to the halberds, but we do not believe in the policy, any more than in the Christianity, of thus dealing with infants whose offences are generally the result of the parents' neglect—perhaps perpetrated at the instigation of some drunken father or mother—and whom it should be the object of the magistrate to reform rather than chastise.

“Suffer the little children to come to me, and forbid them not,” were the words of Our Lord; and the professed disciples of Him Who loved little children with such tender yearning love, who embraced them in His arms and blessed them, tie these little ones, for whom Christ died, to the halberds, and visit their childish offences with a severity which would be extreme in the case of the grown up man, and the accomplished felon. Can we then wonder that the Reformatory Prison system of England is a failure, and a disgraceful failure—a disgrace to the intelligence, to the humanity, to the morality, and the Christianity of the age! that it corrupts and hardens the hearts of those subjected to it; and that the poor wretch who entered the Protestant Reformatory merely a careless, idle, neglected child, comes out at the expiration of his sentence thoroughly brutalised, and with every feature of the divine image in which he was created, scourged out of him—an adept in crime, a confirmed reprobate, the pest of society, and the very likeness of an incarnate devil, hating man, and defying God!

THE ELECTIONS.—It is rumored that a general election will take place about the month of July next, and the *Morning Chronicle* of Quebec strongly recommends this proceeding, upon the grounds that delay will but give the Opposition time to organize, and that the assessment roll of last year will be in force in the month of July; whilst if the elections are put off until the winter, they will be based upon the roll to be made next autumn—which, the *Chronicle* insinuates, will very likely be cooked; the “Opposition being far more unscrupulous than the Ministerial party.”

That election frauds, and of the grossest description, are the rule, rather than the exception, in Canada, can we fear hardly be questioned; but we believe that it is equally true that “Ins” and “Outs” are alike unscrupulous as to the means by them employed to effect their several objects. Political honesty is a virtue unknown in this country, not because we are either worse or better than our neighbors, but because our peculiar form of Government is essentially “Government by Corruption.” It would be the same, and to the same extent, in England where the representative principle obtains, were it not for the admixture of the aristocratic element, which is the salt of the Constitution and prevents it from sinking; it is the same in the United States, whose social circumstances are identical with those of Canada, and where the grossest corruption prevails in every department of the State; and it ever has been, and must be the same in every community among whom the distribution of official patronage is regulated, not by a regard for the exigencies of the public service, but from party motives, as a reward for political services rendered, or as a retaining fee for political services to come. We do not therefore join either in the outcry of the *Chronicle* against the honesty of the “Outs,” or in that of the “Ins” against the personal integrity of the “Ins.” They are both what circumstances make them; what public men ever have been, and ever must be, in every age and in every clime, when exposed to similar corrupting and degrading influences. In England no man deems that he can possibly enrich himself, or indeed avoid a very considerable curtailment of his means, by entering Parliament, or embarking in political life. Here on the contrary, a seat in the Legislature is looked upon as a means for acquiring a fortune, for accumulating wealth, and for advancing the pecuniary interests of its possessor. Here therefore the standard of political morality is not only lower than, but is essentially different from, that which obtains in a partially aristocratic community like that of Great Britain, from which we have borrowed our Constitutional system, with the exception of that important element which cannot be borrowed, or indeed imitated—its House of Lords, and aristocracy. For the want of this salt, the copies, or rather parodies, of the British Constitution which prevail in Britain's Colonies have universally become corrupt, and do for the most part actually sink.

It is of no use to complain of the evil however, unless at the same time he who complains be prepared to propose a remedy; and under our actual circumstances, any political remedy for or a mitigation of, the evil, we look upon as impossible. Corruption is the original sin, the ineradicable vice of all democracies; and the tendency of the age, and more especially in this case in America, is towards ultra-democracy,

which has been aptly and truly defined as the “aristocracy of blackguardism.” The monarchial element in our Constitution is unfortunately becoming daily weaker and weaker, until it is little better than the mere shadow of a name.—Loyalty and honor, if they interfere with commercial pursuits, interrupt the flow of profits, or disturb our speculations in “Pork” or “Ashes,” are sneered at as old fashioned, illiberal, and denounced as *Lese-majeste*, and as treason against the spirit of the age. Both in the New World and in the Old, men and nations seem to be marching with ever accelerating velocity towards the abyss of democracy, which again leads directly down to Imperialism or Cæsarism, which is the Devil.

Political or secular remedy we see none; and if our downwards progress is at all, or by any agencies, to be stayed, it must be through the influences of religion, and the instrumentality of the Catholic Church. The sentiments of loyalty and of old fashioned feudal “honor” having been irretrievably lost, the salvation of society depends upon our power to evoke the sentiment of “duty” to counteract the sentiment of “interest”—personal and pecuniary interest—which is the governing political principle of all democracies. Men require to be taught that political power, or privilege, implies, not so much a right to be capriciously exercised, as a sacred duty—yes, as a duty towards God—to be conscientiously fulfilled. The elector requires to be reminded that he should cast his vote in the same spirit, and with the same intent, as that in which he says his prayers—with a view, first and above all things, to the honor and glory of God, and the good of His Church. An election should almost be—not to say it profanely—a high solemn and public act of religion, or *auto-de-fe*, and should certainly be conducted with a lively, ever present sense of the immense responsibilities which it imposes upon all called upon to take part therein, and with the conviction that God Himself will one day take cognizance of the manner and of the motives by which the latter were actuated, and discharged their several duties; every voter should therefore bear in mind that he will one day have to give an account for his vote at the tribunal of an All-Seeing God. In this spirit, and with this sentiment of “duty” should an election be conducted; but religion alone can inspire with that spirit, but to the Catholic Church alone does it belong to evoke that sentiment. In these then, and in these only, do we put our trust that society may yet be saved from the dark gulf of democracy and its fatal consequences.

IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION.—Whatever may be the ultimate effect of the struggle now pending in the United States upon the fortunes of that country, it has already been productive of most beneficial results to Lower Canada, for which every patriot, every Catholic should be truly thankful. Not only has it checked the ruinous emigration of French Canadians from their native land, to a country wherein they unfortunately often speedily learnt to throw aside both their language and their religion, but it has had the effect of driving back to Canada thousands who had been induced by false representations to abandon it for the neighboring Republic. This is a fact of high importance; for when we consider the material or moral interests of this country, we must deprecate emigration, and above all the emigration of French Canadian Catholics to the United States. By that sad step Canada lost many of her citizens, and the Church has been compelled to deplore the eternal death of thousands of her children.

But the troubles in the United States have, thank God! changed all this, and the Canadians are flocking back to their own land, to the land which they should never have abandoned, in thousands. How to make this restoration permanently profitable, is an important question, and one which it is to be hoped will receive the attention it deserves from our legislators, and public men. In so far as the former emigration of French Canadians to the United States is attributable to material conditions over which the government has any control, those conditions should be so modified as to remove all inducements to future emigration, and to give every encouragement to the industrious citizen desirous of establishing himself in his native land. Before attempting to attract hither the stream of European emigration, we should see if there be not means for retaining at home our own indigenous population.

Simultaneously with this “homeward-bound” movement of the French Canadians there is, we are sorry to say, an increasing exodus from Ireland. Partly owing to the pressure upon the means of subsistence, partly to the false and flattering colors in which the United States have been depicted in the columns of the press, a veritable mania for emigration has again seized upon the people of Ireland, and is driving them by thousands to the sea-ports to seek shipping for the New World. This we regret, as much as we rejoice in the return of the French Canadians. At best emigration is a desperate remedy for