

The True Witness

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE, PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY BY THE EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR, GEORGE E. OLERK, At No. 223, Notre Dame Street.

TERMS: To all country subscribers, or subscribers receiving their papers through the post, or calling for them at the office, if paid in advance, Two Dollars; if not so paid, then Two Dollars and a-half.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOV. 22, 1861.

TO OUR READERS.

Mr. Gillies, of the TRUE WITNESS office is now on a collecting and canvassing tour through Canada West. He has full authority to receive all monies due to this office, to give receipts, and to make such arrangements as he shall deem most convenient.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

THE Pope is still at Rome, and the intentions of Louis Napoleon, in so far as they can be discerned from words and acts, are that the Pope should remain there still. This is not pleasant news for the Italian revolutionary party; but they must make up their minds to wait a good while before the "Kingdom of Italy" takes rank as an *ait accompli*.

By way of stimulating the zeal of the revolutionists, and of throwing dust in the eyes of the world, the Piedmontese got up a *fete* a few days ago at Naples, in honor of the Plebiscite. Much did the Neapolitans wonder as to who this new Piedmontese saint, the *San Plebiscito*, might be; but with the exception of wondering at it, and what it might mean, the good people of Naples took but little part therein.

Altogether the *fete* was very cold; there was little shouting, few rills, and with the strongest desire to see the realization of an "United Italy," if it be sincere and practicable, I cannot but think that if the plebiscite had been taken yesterday, the results would not have been what they were last year.

Little or no progress has been made by the Piedmontese soldiery towards putting down the Royalists. Mitica, one of the leaders, has been captured, murdered in cold blood by the *Liberals*, who afterwards paraded his head about the Province of Reggio on the end of a pike.

The condition of Poland grows daily worse. The following extracts from the *Times*' Warsaw correspondent throw strong light upon the subject:

"I have repeatedly mentioned the increasing severity and violence of the Russian authorities. Any corporal is master of the lives and properties of the inhabitants. Never during the most melancholy period of the reign of the Emperor Nicholas, and even after similar excesses seen. The city presents the gloomy aspect of a necropolis. The churches, the theatres, the public gardens and schools are closed. The courts of justice are reduced to silence. Arrests are made without distinction of age, sex, or quality. The most revered prelates and ecclesiastics, selected to make a report on the violence and indignities committed in the churches, have been carried away from their houses during the night and incarcerated. The number is so great that I will increase only a few: The prelates Niknan and Bazarzewski, the canons Wyszynski-Siecki and Chmielowski, the Abbe Biernarchi, the priest Magoniaki, and the Abbe Pyzalski. The latter was dragged out of a church and cruelly beaten. There are several members of the delegation of citizens incarcerated. It was they who, in the opinion of the late Prince Gortschakoff, alone maintained order in Warsaw. Several bankers and some of the most wealthy landed proprietors are in prison. General Kornow, Governor of the department of Plok, who distinguished himself above all Russian Generals for severity, and who lately commanded that three ladies of the best families in the town should be publicly flogged in front of the church of Plok, is now appointed president of the secret commission which is to conduct the prosecution against the prisoners in the citadel. These prisoners are treated with the utmost cruelty. They are locked up in narrow cells without light, and permitted to walk for only five minutes during the day in a small court.

"The accounts received from the provinces are not better. The colonel commanding at Kolo sent soldiers after a carriage in which were two ladies and a gentleman dressed in mourning. The soldiers tore the ladies' dresses off their backs and arrested the gentleman. The same officer paraded a landed proprietor, loaded with chains, through the town. An English gentleman, who was severely beaten by the soldiers on the 16th of October, has addressed a complaint to Lord John Russell. He says that, though such acts have been committed in Siberia and in Asia, he never expected to see anything like it in Europe. It is asserted that the chief of the secret police at St. Petersburg, the most unpopular man in Russia, is appointed Military Governor of Warsaw. Orders have arrived here to prepare quarters for fresh troops. The army of occupation in Poland is to be increased by one-third."

Since the first success of the Naval Expedition against the South, the Northerners have had no more victories to boast of. They would appear to be intent upon firmly establishing themselves in their position, in the heart of the enemy's territory, and to be preparing for an appeal to the negro population. To this it will most likely come at last; and a servile war seems impending over the Southern States. We know but little of the plans, or actual condition of the Southerners. It is said that they have hoisted the "black flag," as a sign that they will neither give, nor ask for, quarter in the war now forced upon them, for all that as men, as husbands and fathers they hold most dear. The Southerners are right.—Menaced with a slave insurrection, which means death in its most hideous shape, and outrages worse than death—the people of the South are right; and they would be less than men were they to treat the invaders of their soil otherwise than as brigands and pirates. They have also, and most properly, declared their intention of hanging the leading men amongst the prisoners in their hands—man for man—should the Northerners carry into execution their threat of hanging the Southerners whom the fortune of war has delivered over to the North. Thus the war threatens to become a very war of extermination, unless the North consent to carry it on according to the principles recognised amongst all civilised nations—Hideous and revolting as is the prospect, it must be acknowledged that the Southerners are justified in the reprisals which they menace; that they have not only the right, but are in honor and duty bound, to employ every means within their reach, to protect the lives of their brave soldiers captured by their enemies; and that the only means they have to effect that legitimate end, is to hang their prisoners—man for man—beginning of course with those of the highest rank. We hope the North will not force this dread alternative upon the South.

THE FAMINE IN IRELAND.—All our Irish contemporaries seem to anticipate another period of great distress. The potato crop—still flourishing, unfortunately, the chief article of food for a great part of Ireland's population—is a failure; and the harvest is generally below an average; and though it may reasonably be hoped that the famine will be only partial, yet there are good reasons for fearing that in many districts the condition of the people will be as deplorable as it was during the ever memorable famine of '47. It is of less consequence to dispute how this melancholy state of affairs has been brought about—than it is to inquire how it may in some degree be remedied, and its probable consequences mitigated, if not altogether averted. Most men will, we think, admit that for the sad social condition of Ireland of the XIX. century, the iniquitous legislation of the XVIII. is responsible; and that bad government, and the most infamous political system that the world ever witnessed, pursued towards Catholic Ireland during the reign of the four Georges, have had their share in producing the state of chronic suffering under which that country labors, even during the mild, and certainly well-meaning reign of Queen Victoria.

This much we think that most will admit; but how? and by whom? is the famine with which Ireland is again menaced to be averted, are questions not so easily answered. Every body exclaims "Something must be done," and nobody seems clearly to know "what should be done," in the impending crisis. The laws of political economy appear to be at fault, and its fundamental principles repugnant to sound policy, and the dictates of Christian charity. So whilst the rulers are disputing as to what should be done, the people will probably in great numbers, starve.

There are many who contend, and with unanswerable argument, that it is not the legitimate function of the State, or civil magistrate, to find food for the people, or to interfere with the ordinary or natural course of trade; that the British Government is constitutional, and therefore not paternal—having neither the rights of a parent over, nor the duties of a parent towards, those whom it claims as its subjects; and that State aid necessarily degrades and demoralises the recipients; by accustoming them, like the Romans of a degenerate age, to look only for bread and games from their rulers. Men who hold these opinions insist, therefore, that in all times, and under all circumstances, the feeding of the people should be left to private enterprise, to private charity, and the natural course of trade.

Others again point to France, Russia, and to

other absolute Governments, which claim paternal authority over their subjects, and exercise, in return, the functions of parent towards the latter. And it cannot be denied that, in comparison with these, the "let alone" policy of the British Government appears very hard and oppressive.—Yet it should be remembered that it is precisely because the British Government is not paternal—because its authority over its subjects bears no analogy to that of the father over his child—that it is so extremely difficult for it to deal with such a case as that which now presents itself in Ireland. A paternal Government is a despotism; its chief holds direct from God, and owes no account to those over whom he rules, as to the manner in which he exercises his heaven-derived authority. He reigns by "right divine" and is responsible to God alone. Such right the British Government does not possess; and not having the "rights," it would be absurd to expect from it the "duties," of a paternal Government.

What then can the British Government do, to alleviate the horrors of the impending famine? We believe that it can hardly actively interfere at all, without aggravating the evil. It is one of the consequences of the blessed and glorious Reformation, the price in fact that we must be content to pay for our glorious Protestant religion and the establishment of our Holy Protestant Faith—that a failure or serious deficiency in any generally grown crop must be almost irremediable. Not because Protestants are by nature cruel or hard-hearted; no: because they have not the will, nay, the ardent desire, to alleviate suffering, and to carry succour to the distressed; but because in an evil hour their ancestors ruthlessly destroyed the sole machinery by which relief can be given to the poor, without disturbance to the legitimate course of business, and without degrading the recipient. That machinery existed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, before the savage hands of the Reformers had destroyed the Convents, Monasteries and Religious Houses, at whose gates in the days of Popery, the hungry were fed, and the naked clothed, not upon the principles of political economy, but upon those of charity; but now that these have been destroyed, to what agencies can we have recourse to do their work?

Nothing is easier than to collect food and clothing for the destitute, nothing more difficult than to distribute those succors impartially and judiciously; and without the old Popish machinery this difficulty becomes insuperable. The funds intended for the poor are invariably, indeed must be, absorbed by a swarm of hungry officials; and long ere they reach those for whom they were exclusively designed, they disappear, even as streams running through sandy deserts shrink, dry up, and finally disappear—as they increase their distance from their springs. And thus, though we are confident that the sad tidings of the suffering impending over the Catholic peasantry of Ireland will deeply move the Protestants of England, and prompt them to make generous subscriptions for the relief of their afflicted fellow-subjects—yet from want of any efficient machinery to distribute the proceeds of those subscribers will be frustrated, and the wants of those for whom those funds were intended will remain unalleviated.

Unless indeed the Great Britain can be persuaded for once to throw aside his "No-Popery" prejudices, and to entrust the management and distribution of the succors, which his naturally kind and generous heart will prompt him to collect, to the hands of those who alone are competent to administer and distribute those succors impartially and judiciously. This, however, is, we fear, too much to expect; and yet this is the only feasible plan that presents itself for preventing a repetition of the horrors of '47, and the deaths, by wholesale, of a large portion of the population by famine, and its twin-sister, pestilence. In the several Conferences of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, in the Catholic Clergy, and the still existing Religious Houses of Ireland there is to be found the requisite local machinery, or gratuitous organisation, for distributing and making the most of, such means as private charity, and a vote of the Legislature may provide for the Catholic victims of the famine; and in like manner, the sum destined for the relief of the Protestant sufferers, should be entrusted to the Protestant clergy, and to the several charitable societies which have grown up under their auspices. It is by pursuing this policy, far more than by its arbitrary and generally most injudicious interference with the course of trade, that the French Government has been enabled either to ward off altogether, or greatly to mitigate, the otherwise inevitable consequences of bad harvests, and other public calamities. The humble Society of St. Vincent de Paul has proved far more effectual in its operations than a "law of the maximum;" and that which has been done in France, may, we are convinced, be done in Ireland, if the same means be resorted to in the latter, that have been adopted with successful success in the other.—Government can thus come in aid to, or complement, Christian charity, though it cannot sup-

ply its place. "Public Works" are a humbug, or worse than a humbug for they must some day collapse, or fail; and the most approved axioms of political economy before the presence of actual famine vanish away. But charity never faileth; and from it alone therefore can we expect any sensible mitigation of the affliction with which long suffering Ireland is again seriously menaced.

Particularly does it behoove the landlords of Ireland to exercise this virtue in the present crisis. Much depends upon them, and upon their forbearance towards their unfortunate tenants. If they be extreme to insist upon the full payment of their rents; if they will not make the abatements which sound policy, as well as charity, exact, the consequences may be morally as well as physically disastrous. Unfortunately in Ireland we find but little of that kindly, quasi feudal relation betwixt landlord and tenant, which still, in a great measure, subsists in the sister island. In Ireland, the relation is purely commercial; the landlord in many instances, and in spite of recent legislation for facilitating the transfer of land, is still an absentee, unacquainted with his tenantry, and therefore less keenly sensible of their wants, than are the resident landlords of England and Scotland. This is one cause why a bad season and a deficient crop in Ireland are so much more serious than are similar calamities in the latter. There they are alleviated by mutual forbearance betwixt landlord and tenant; in Ireland they are aggravated by old political animosities, by social feuds, and the antagonism of hostile churches.

A SPECK OF WAR.—Since our last a very serious event has occurred, which it is to be feared, may lead to an open rupture betwixt Great Britain and the Government at Washington. The facts are these.

Messrs. Slidell and Mason, Southerners, and it is said, the bearers of important despatches from the government of the Seceded States, had taken their passage for Europe on board the Royal British Mail Steamer *Trent*. This vessel, being on the high seas, was stopped and overhauled by the *San Jacinto*, a Yankee man-of-war under the command of Captain Wilkes; and the passengers above-mentioned were by him arrested, though under the protection of a neutral flag, and carried off as rebels and as prisoners. The *Trent*, without further molestation, was then allowed to proceed on her voyage.

This high-handed act, not to say outrage, and violation of national law as laid down by the United States' Government itself, is justified by the Yankee press upon the grounds that the *Trent* was giving aid and countenance to one of the belligerents, by conveying its despatches; contrary to the law of nations in general, and the terms of the Queen's proclamation in particular. But this plea will not serve the object for which it was advanced; because, if valid, it would have been the duty of Capt. Wilkes to have detained the *Trent* as good and lawful prize; seeing that by the authorities quoted, it is laid down that the penalty of conveying despatches from belligerents is the confiscation of the neutral ship carrying them, and of her cargo. Inasmuch then as Capt. Wilkes did not pretend to have any right to confiscate the *Trent*, he virtually admitted that she was not engaged in any unlawful act at the time he fell in with and boarded her. If she was in any manner violating the laws of neutrality as laid down by writers upon natural law, and by the Queen's Proclamation, it was his duty to have detained her and to have brought her into port; if she was not so engaged, he had no right to exercise any manner of jurisdiction over her and her passengers. Taking the law of the case, as laid down by the Yankee press, it is clear that Capt. Wilkes has done either a great deal too much, or a great deal too little; and from either the British, or the Yankee point of view his conduct is indefensible.

Our neighbors cite also precedents in justification of the act; forgetting, however, that the precedents by them cited are either not at all to the point, or have been protested against by their own Government. Thus we are reminded of the high-handed acts of British cruisers, which led to the last war with the United States—acts which no British subject of the present day would attempt to justify. In claiming to stop and search neutral ships, and to arrest deserters they might have on board, the British authorities of the beginning of the present century put forward a monstrous claim, which the Americans did well to resist, and which has long ago been abandoned. The arrest of T. B. MacManus in '48, on board of an American ship is not to the point; because the vessel from which he was taken was at the time actually in Cork harbour, that is to say in British waters, and subject therefore to British jurisdiction—whereas, the *Trent* was on the high seas, and therefore not subject to American jurisdiction. No one doubts, or would contest, the right of the American authorities to pursue a fugitive from justice, and to arrest him on board of a British ship lying in the harbour of New York. In like manner the arrest of Lucien Bonaparte in a Sardinian port, was not on the high seas, but in a place tem-

porarily occupied, with the consent of its legitimate rulers, by British troops; and the only case at all, in point, is that of the attack upon the Caroline in American waters, during the rebellion in Upper Canada. This act was not, perhaps, strictly legal; but as the vessel was actively engaged, and with the connivance of the Yankee authorities, in acts of aggression upon loyal British subjects, her seizure and destruction invoked no breach of the spirit of the law of nations.

According to that law, as laid down by themselves, and in their own behalf, there can be no doubt that the act of Capt. Wilkes is perfectly unjustifiable; but then our neighbors have very elastic consciences, and invariably have one law for themselves and another—a perfectly different law—for their neighbors. Protesting loudly against the "Right of Search" in the case of their own slave-ships, fitted out, and furnished by the sleek puritans, and abolitionists of Boston and New York, our neighbors claim for themselves the right, not only to stop, and search, vessels sailing on the high seas under a neutral flag; but claim and enforce the right to arrest thereon those whom they denounce as rebels, and fugitives from justice. It is as if T. B. MacManus had been seized by a British man-of-war from on board an American vessel, half way betwixt Europe and America, upon the plea that he was a rebel, and an offender against British law. How the Americans would have acted, had such an outrage and insult been offered to their flag, no one who remembers their indignity, and well-founded protest against the arbitrary proceedings of the Captain of the British frigate *Leopard* towards the United States frigate *Chesapeake*, can doubt. How the British Government will act remains to be seen; but we cannot believe that it will tamely acquiesce in such a wanton outrage; or content itself with less than a disavowal by the Washington authorities of the acts of Captain Wilkes, and the restoration of the unjustly arrested Southerners to the protection of the British flag.

Should, however, the rights of the Northerners to seize the British mail steamers, carrying letters and despatches from the Southerners to Europe be recognised, the consequences to our weekly line from Boston and New York may be very serious. These, there can be no doubt, carry important letters from the authorities at Washington to their representatives at European Courts; and if therefore it were lawful for the *San Jacinto* to arrest the *Trent*, upon the plea that the latter had on board despatches from the Southern Confederacy to Europe, and was therefore guilty of a breach of neutrality—so in like manner we must be prepared to admit the right of the armed cruisers holding commissions from the Southern States, to arrest and seize upon our Cunard steamers, upon a similar pretence. The story of the despatches is however only a flimsy pretext, as is evident from the fact that Captain Wilkes did not dare to detain the *Trent* and confiscate her cargo. The Northerners were anxious to get possession of some leading men from amongst their opponents; and, as to affect this object, they scrupled not to violate the law of nations as expounded by themselves, so also will they not scruple to lie, and to lie impudently, in justification of this violation.

FRENCH DOMINATION—THE WORST OF IT.—It is always a comfort to know the worst, and to be assured that there is no lower depth into which we can fall. Hence we thank the *Globe* for the following reassuring announcement:

"We have had many instances, since the Convention came into office, of submitting to Lower Canada domination, but this is about the worst which we can at this moment call to mind."—*Globe*.

What is this horrid thing then, this "worst" instance of "Lower Canada domination?" Simply this: That, having at the public expense sent salaried agents to the North of Ireland and to the North of Europe to promote an exclusively Protestant emigration to Canada, the Government has at last appointed and salaried two agents to encourage emigration to Canada from the South of Ireland, and the South of Europe, where the populations are almost exclusively Catholic. This, thank God! is the "worst" instance of "Lower Canada domination" that the *Globe* can cite; and if this be the "worst," it is not difficult to estimate the gravity of the other and lighter instances of "Lower Canada domination" of which the great organ of the Protestant Reformers complains.

The *Montreal Witness*, the worthy fellow-laborer of George Brown, in like manner takes up the parable against this outrage on Protestant Ascendency. To our *Montreal* cotemporary, it appears most tolerable and not to be endured; that at last the same encouragement should be given to Catholic settlement in Canada, as has long been accorded to exclusively Protestant settlements. "Send to the South of Ireland!" he exclaims in unctuous transport of indignation—"Send to Belgium and France indeed, for Catholic immigrants! Are not the Orangemen of Ulster, and the Protestants from Norway, better than all the hosts of Popery? May we not have them and be full?" So he takes up his pen in a rage, and utters all manner of foolishness and hard things against the Government.

We can make allowance for men who have been so long accustomed to dominate, that they lost all idea, even of the legal equality of Catholics and Protestants; but for their own sakes,