

The True Witness.

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MAY 1, 1863.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The dearth of news continues, and is really very perplexing to the journalist; and this dearth is the more remarkable and the more provoking, because the disturbed state of society both in Europe and in America would seem to hold out the prospect of an abundance of news. Instead of this we have however only rumors, and very contradictory rumors too. One moment we are led to believe that the Polish insurrection is suppressed; and again the next moment we hear of fresh outbreaks, and of fresh victories gained by the insurgents. We hear too of threatening symptoms of revolution in Russia; of the general disaffection of the nobles who are irritated by the social reforms lately introduced by the Czar, and who appeal to the principles of '89. If these things be true, Russia would seem to be on the eve of a great social convulsion, and will have to postpone the subjugation of Poland to a more convenient occasion.

In the other extremity of Europe the loyal Neapolitan patriots still continue the unequal contest with the intrusive Piedmontese, and defy the utmost ingenuity and malice of the invader. The atrocities of the Convention against the loyalists of La Vendee are being re-enacted in the kingdom of Naples by the mercenaries of Piedmont, and under the orders of the King honest-man.—Fusillades follow fusillades in hideous succession, and still the Neapolitan people prefer death to Piedmontese rule. As a proof, both of the serious proportions which the contest has assumed, and of the horrid tyranny practised by the Piedmontese military authorities upon the Neapolitans, we may mention the fact that General Marmora has lately issued a general order, sentencing all peasants to be shot, without form of trial, if found without a pass. The vilest miscreants of the Convention never surpassed the cold-blooded atrocity of this.

The people of England do not desire a war with the Northern States; but if the people of the latter are, as from the absurdly blustering tone of their press would certainly seem to be the case—eager for, and determined upon war, they will not we suspect be balked in their object. The case of the *Alabama* has now been thoroughly discussed, and the British Government perfectly exonerated of all blame in the affair.

Since the repulse of the Federals at Charleston there have been no important military movements in the United States. Both parties seem to be averse to risking another general engagement, but another attack on Charleston is promised by the Federal press.

The *New York*, from Southampton 15th ult. has been telegraphed. We learn that France and Austria are preparing a joint action in the Polish question. Russia has offered an amnesty to all of the insurgents who shall have laid down their arms, and returned to their allegiance before the 13th of the present month. This offer has been rejected by the Poles.

The *Virginia* is reported as having taken in her armament of ten heavy broadside guns, and two Whitworth pivot guns, when near the French coast, and as having made sail to the westward immediately. We may expect soon to hear of her on this side of the Atlantic, as she is reported to be of great strength, and very fast.

The *Witness* is laboring diligently but ineffectually, to get up an agitation in Lower Canada on the School Question; but from the fact that neither in the Protestant press, nor in the Legislature have its complaints against the injustice with which the Protestant minority in this section of the Province are treated, found an echo—we are inclined to suspect that the allegations of the *Witness* are as false, as its arguments are vicious.

With respect to the latter, our contemporary contends that the Protestant or non-Catholic minority in Lower Canada have a right to separate schools because the schools of the majority are Catholic; but that the schools of the majority in Upper Canada being non-Catholic, the Catholic minority ought to be content therewith, and refrain from all demands for separate schools. Our contemporary states the case

falsely. The Protestant minority in Lower Canada are no doubt entitled to separate schools; not, however, because they are Protestants, or non-Catholics, or because the common schools are Catholic—but because they, as parents, are entitled to absolute control over the education of their own children, and have the right to claim exemption from all taxation for the support of schools to which they do not choose to send those children. This is the only valid argument for separate schools, for the Protestant minority in Lower Canada, that can be urged; and it is the only argument that can logically be urged why similar schools should be conceded to the Catholic minority in the Upper Province. The Legislature knows nothing about either Catholics or Protestants; it cannot, consistently with its own declaration that it is desirable to abolish all semblance even of connection between Church and State—discriminate between them, or recognize the ecclesiastical status of either. It knows citizens only, and must deal with all alike, and simply as citizens; and the only rights of which it can take cognizance are natural rights, or rights common to all men alike, irrespective of creed or national origin.

Therefore in arguing the School Question, we have never been guilty of the monstrous absurdity of asking for separate schools upon religious, or supernatural grounds, of whose validity our Legislature, by its very composition, can take no cognizance; but upon those natural grounds, or parental rights, which all men have in common, and which the State is bound to respect. As Catholics, we have no right even to ask for anything from—in our distinctive religious character we have no right to approach even—the Legislature; but as parents we have the right to insist that our will, in the matter of the education of our children, shall be deferred to unreservedly, and that the State presume not to interfere with the sacred functions of the Family.

These are the only valid arguments that can be urged for separate schools for Catholics in Upper Canada, and these arguments are equally cogent in the mouths of the Protestant minority of Lower Canada. They can plead their natural rights as parents; and the plea is unanswerable in the mouth of Catholic or of non-Catholic, of Christian or of heathen.

If therefore, as the *Witness* pretends, the full exercise of these their parental rights—including therein the right to demand exemption from all taxation for the support of schools to which they do not choose to send their children—be in any manner or degree withheld from the Protestant minority of Lower Canada; or if the theoretical recognition of those rights be accompanied with a practical denial or restriction of them in practice—equal justice demands that the School Law be so amended or administered, as to leave the Protestant parents of Lower Canada sole and absolute masters in all things pertaining to the education of their children, even as we demand that similar measure be dealt out to the Catholic minority of Western Canada. We do not think however, as we said at the beginning, that the allegations of the *Witness* are founded on truth, or that the grievances which he complains of are felt by his coreligionists. At all events, they have as yet made no sign, uttered no complaint, proffered to the Legislature no prayer for redress; and as the proverb says, "*De non apparentibus et de non existentibus, calum est ratio.*"

Still whatever may be the fact as to the statements of the *Witness*, of this we can assure our contemporary: That neither he nor his coreligionists, if they feel themselves aggrieved, and if they will bring forward a Bill for the redress of their grievances in the matter of education—shall encounter any opposition or ill will from their fellow citizens of the Catholic religion, or from those who are more especially charged with the administration of the existing School Laws of Lower Canada. In their section of the Province, at all events amongst Catholics, are to be found more of those unscrupulous agitators and demagogues who infest the West. Catholics, though they have strong, immovable convictions, have neither prejudices against, nor any desire to tyrannise over, Protestants. That the latter have the right, as against the State, to educate their children as they please without giving an account to any man; that, as the corollary of this right, the State has no right to tax them for the support of schools to which they do not see fit to send their children, are propositions whose truth we hope that no one in Lower Canada will for one moment contest; and we are convinced that if Protestants have been wronged, their first demand for redress will be accorded to with an alacrity and unanimity as remarkable as the constant opposition offered by the Protestant Reformers of Upper Canada, to every attempt to obtain justice for the Catholics of the West.

ANOTHER CANADIAN STEAMSHIP LOST.—There is no end to disasters amongst the steamers of our line. To-day we have to report the total loss of the *Anglo-Saxon* on the 27th ult. She struck on a rock about four miles to the Eastward of Cape Race in a dense fog, and in about an hour went down. The boats were got out, and a number of passengers, amongst others, Mr. Young and family were saved; but it is to be feared that a still greater number have perished, as it is known that the *Anglo-Saxon* had on board a great many emigrants. The commander of the ill-fated vessel, Capt. Burgess, was lost.

The lamentations of the Protestant Reformers of U. Canada over Mr. Scott's School Bill are very amusing. To hear their groans one would think that some new principle, one unknown altogether to all previous school legislation, had been introduced and established; whilst the truth is that a Separate School law for Upper Canada has been in existence for years; and that the new measure only makes a few, and not very important, changes in its details. This is strongly insisted upon in a pamphlet, or circular, published by the Reverend Dr. Ryerson at the special request of the Ministry: and it is therefore not easy to understand why the Clear Grit mind has been so deeply and violently agitated upon the subject of Separate Schools, as if these were now about to be introduced for the first time. As the lately passed Bill tends to make Separate Schools more efficient, and if the people of U. Canada, were actuated solely by a sincere desire for the spread of education, and the multiplication of efficient schools, they would rejoice, rather than mourn, over the prospect that Separate Schools are about to be rendered more efficient, more numerous, and more available for the dissemination of sound learning. If they really believed that education tended to dissipate the mists of Popery, they would be as anxious as we are for the establishment of schools for Catholics—because, according to their theory of the antagonism of education and Popery, the worst and most imperfect system of education must be more favorable to Protestantism, than total ignorance. Better the glimmer of a farthing rush-light than utter darkness: better a well supported and efficient Catholic school than no school at all, or a school half started and thinly attended. Such we say, would be the conclusions of Protestants, were the spread of education their main object, did they really believe that Popery decays as learning flourishes.

Mr. Scott's Bill will we hope, and believe, place the Catholic schools of Upper Canada on a better footing than they have hitherto been; and will therefore enable the Catholic youth of that section of the Province to receive a better education than that which they have hitherto been able to obtain in their schools. Should these expectations be realised, not Catholics alone, but Protestants as well, will have reason to be glad. But it is replied by the latter—the efficiency of our schools will be impaired in the same ratio as that in which the efficiency of your schools will be augmented—and it is thus which provokes our hostility to the measure just passed. This we deny. The moral efficiency of Protestant schools will also be greatly augmented, if, by the withdrawal therefrom of all Catholic pupils—they be enabled to give some form of positive religious education to those pupils who remain. The most emasculated or Protestantized form of Christianity, is better than no Christianity at all; and in so far as Protestantism teaches anything positive in the matter of religion, it teaches what is true, although much of the value of the truths which it inculcates is lost, because they are severed from those other great and important truths with which they are logically connected, but which can be found in their integrity only in the Catholic Church. For our part we would much rather see children brought up as Methodists, as Anglicans, or as Presbyterians, than abandoned to the blank infidelity of the mixed or common schools, from whence all religious training must necessarily be excluded.

The violent agitation of the Protestants of Upper Canada proceeds not from reason, but from passion. The power which they have hitherto enjoyed of taxing Catholics for the support of their schools, is the form which Protestant Ascendancy assumes on this Continent; and it is as precious in their eyes, as the power of compelling Catholics to support a Protestant Church Establishment is precious in the eyes of the Protestants of Ireland. This power the latter would not readily resign; and the Orangemen who care not a straw for religion of any kind, who fears neither God nor the devil, who never sets foot within a place of worship, and whose spiritual aspirations do not extend beyond invoking damnation upon the Pope—is zealous for the maintenance of the Protestant church, because it is in the nature of man to take pleasure in having some one beneath him, some one over whom he can exercise lordship, and look down upon as upon an inferior creature. So the "mean whites" of the South who own no slaves, and never expect to own any, are bitter against abolitionism; because, if the nigger were a free man there would be nothing below them in the social scale. So too the Protestant Reformers are naturally desirous to retain in their hands the power of taxing their Catholic neighbors for the support of schools to which the latter entertain the most profound aversion; because this power removed from them, there would remain to them no vestige of their beloved Protestant Ascendancy.

It is the prospect of the loss of this power that has prompted the late exhibitions of hatred, malice and all uncharitableness in the Western section of the Province. The Rev. Dr. Ryerson has abundantly shown in his circular above alluded to, the unreasonableness of these exhibitions, and of the fury into which the editor of the *Globe* has lashed himself and is trying to lash his readers, as if by depriving them of the power of taxing Catholics for non-Catholic school purposes, some grievous wrong had been inflicted upon them. For this imaginary wrong however, redress must be had; and the *Globe* thus concludes an article on the subject:—

It remains for the people of Upper Canada to press upon the Legislature their claims to a new arrangement of the relations between Upper and Lower Canada, which will give to the Western Province the control of her own institutions.—*Globe*.

This can be effected simply, effectually and equitably by the Repeal *pur et simple* of the existing Legislative Union betwixt the two Provinces; and we think that Mr. George Brown

will meet with few obstacles from the people of Lower Canada, if this be his sole object—it indeed all he aims at "be the securing to the Western Province "the control of her own institutions. Why then does he, as its spokesman, not make Repeal of the Union a prominent feature of the Clear-Grit political programme? Because the word of Protestant Reformers can never be relied upon; because even when they tell a truth, they never tell the whole truth; and always have an *arrière-pensée*. In this case, "the control of her own institutions" is not all that they demand for Upper Canada, for this could be fully assured by Repeal of the Union. They want, however, to retain "control over the institutions" of Lower Canada, as well as absolute control over their own; and of control over the institutions of the former, they would be deprived by such a simple, effectual, and equitable measure as Repeal of the Union. Here then is the proof of the insincerity of our Protestant Reform enemies—That whilst they mendaciously pretend that all they ask for is, free control over their own institutions, they refuse to accept a certain means by which that control would be assured to them, because its acceptance would carry with it a renunciation of all control over the institutions of the other Province.

The *Montreal Witness* is imprudent in criticising the moral influences of the Catholic Church upon the aborigines of North America, because by so doing he provokes a contrast betwixt the actual condition of the Indian tribes in those portions of this Continent originally colonised by Catholic Nations, and that of the Indians whose lands were taken possession of by the upright, and godly Puritans of New England. Where the latter set their feet, the red men—the ancient sons of the forest, have been exterminated. The Puritans mercilessly shot down the Indians, believing that in so long they did God service, and that their mission, as that of a chosen people, was like the mission of the Israelites of old—to exterminate the heathen, yea to smite them with the edge of the sword. Well and faithfully did the Pilgrim Fathers accomplish their self-imposed mission. *Selah*. They slew and took possession; and wiping their lips with bloody hands, gave God thanks for His tender mercies towards His elect people.

The Popish settlers, however, destitute of sanctuary privileges as of course such benighted creatures were, actually looked upon the idolatrous heathen as fellow-creatures, for whom Christ died on the cross, and whom therefore it was their duty to convert and baptize, rather than to hunt down and shoot. In Canada, consequently, the aboriginal races were, through the instrumentality of Romanism, preserved from the swift destruction and utter extermination which were the lot of the Indian in every Protestant settlement. The Jesuit priests preached the Gospel to the swartly savage; and the latter under the influences of Romanism, and raised by the Sacrament of Baptism to the dignity of a Christian, received from the intruding race, an ample compensation for the hunting grounds of which he was dispossessed. The material as well as the moral, well-being of the Indian tribes which were thus converted to Popery, is evidenced by their presence amongst us in large numbers at the present day: just as the rapid depopulation of the Sandwich Islands by loathsome disease, is a proof of the immorality of the pet converts to Methodism in that most favored seat of Protestant Missions.

But the *Witness* is not content with this; and unkindful of the brutalities of his heroes, the Puritans of New England, towards the now exterminated red-man, our contemporary has the surpassing impudence to reproach the Catholic Church with its short-comings with respect to the flourishing, moral and Christianised Indian communities in Lower Canada. The occasion of which the *Witness* avails himself for preaching such a solemn moral lesson in this.

A Bill has been brought in for enabling the Indians of Sault St. Louis to sell their lands to any other person, and authorising the purchaser, if a white man, to settle upon the lands so acquired. The reason assigned in the preamble of the Bill for this change in the existing law, is,— "an amount of negligence and apathy"—(on the part of the Indians)—"with respect to the cultivation and improvement of their lands, the keeping in repair of roads, and the fulfilment of the other duties of proprietors, which is a continual source of inconvenience to the inhabitants of the neighboring parishes." In other words, the Indians are asserted to be indifferent farmers, and to keep their roads in bad order; whereupon the *Montreal Witness* breaks out in the following strain of invective against the morality of the Catholic Church:—

"The charge brought against these Indians says very little for the moral influence of the Roman Catholic Church, under whose care they have been for several centuries."—*Witness*, 25th ult.

We might well retort upon our Protestant contemporary with this question: If the actual condition of the Indian races of Catholic Lower Canada "says very little for the moral influence of the Roman Catholic Church," what, and how much, does the condition of the same races in Protestant Connecticut, Vermont, and Massachusetts say "for the moral influence" of Protestantism? But we will waive this obvious rejoinder, and we will at once admit that the "moral influence" of the Roman Catholic Church does not make those subjected to it good farmers, or smart managers of their property; but that it is confined to making chaste, honest, sober, and pious Christians. That it has done this with respect to the Indians of Lower Canada, is evidenced by their numbers, and by the mere fact of their existence as large communities, although surrounded by white men. Promiscuous intercourse of the sexes, impurity, and the use of ardent spirits, are as fatal to the aboriginal races, as are the bullets of the white man; and only by the practice of the Christian virtues of chastity, and temperance can the former, when brought into contact with the European, be preserved from swift and certain destruction.—That they are at all, and that they still thrive and multiply, is a proof that the Indians, under the care of the Roman Catholic Church in Lower Canada, are free from those vices which, within a few

years after the landing of the first Protestant missionaries, depopulated the Sandwich Islands.

Viewed however from his own, that is to say, the Protestant standpoint, the "moral influence of the Roman Catholic Church" upon savage races can not be properly appreciated by the *Witness*. Catholics and Protestants, respectively, attach such entirely different meanings to the word "moral," and expect such entirely different results from Christianity; that it is impossible for them ever to come to any agreement upon the respective merits of Catholic morality, and Protestant morality. Morality, according to the Protestant use of the word, is synonymous with thrift, industry, sub-soil ploughing, the proper use of manures, Swedish turnips, and worldly prosperity. That system of training which tends to promote these things is "moral;" that which does not, is one in whose favor little can be said—and Popery, it must frankly be confessed, does not so much as pretend to do any of these things. It professes neither agriculture nor road making; it neither fills the belly with good things, nor does it cover the back with respectable broad-cloth. It is not a profitable religion, if in this world man's destiny is to be accomplished, and if material enjoyment be the one end for which he was created. In these matters Popery is the very opposite of Protestantism, and of its "moral influences" very little indeed can be said.

But as preparing man for another world, by teaching him to despise and trample upon this world, as unworthy of the serious affections of a being destined to immortality, and whose end is God—the Catholic Church has her advantages. She, if her precepts are heeded to and put in practice, will indeed make men, not rich, but virtuous not millionaires, but heirs of a heavenly treasure. She holds out no false hopes or prospects. She does not pretend that she has the promise of temporal, as well as of eternal blessings; but she plainly tells all her children, that if they would establish a claim upon heaven, they must begin by renouncing all claims on earth.—There is no mystery about the matter. Every man, as a general rule, can and will succeed in that line of business to which he devotes himself,—provided only that he devote himself to it exclusively. Thus if a man begin life with a fixed determination to succeed in business, and to die worth half a million of dollars, he can have his will no doubt, provided only that he give his whole heart and soul to his business, and to the accumulation of dollars and cents—but then he has no right to expect anything else. So if another man determine to be a saint, he can, if he will but use the means which Christ has left at his disposal, gratify his wish—but then he will have no right to complain that he is not also a wealthy capitalist, and a Bank Director. Now the "moral influence" of the Roman Catholic Church, of which the *Witness* speaks so slightly, is exclusively directed to preparing men for the other world; and therefore is it that she often fails in making of them thrifty, skillful and prosperous denizens of this. The latter is the proper task of Protestantism which is of the earth, earthly—and this task Protestantism accomplishes. It fills its votaries with good things, clothes them in purple and fine linen, and crowns them with roses and with wreaths of flowers. The Catholic Church accomplishes in like manner her allotted task, which lies however in quite a different order. She too has her rewards for those who follow her precepts, and walk in the narrow path which she has traced out for them—but that path leads not to the pleasant places of this earth, but over the rugged steps of Calvary. She too has her crown—but the crown with which she encircles the brows of her most favored children is a crown of thorns.

The Irish Romanist is the scape-goat of the Protestant Israel, upon whose back is laid the burden of the sins of the entire community. It to-day the poet ask:—

"Who made the quarter loaf and Luddites rise?"
"Who filled the butchers' shops with large blue flies?"

the answer is no longer, "*Bonaparte*," but the "*Irish Romanist*." He it is who has to bear the blame of every offence that is committed within the precincts of the British Empire.

There have been as our readers know, bread riots in the North of England, amongst the distressed operatives, goaded to crime, by hunger, by the cries of their starving wives and children, and by the brutality, and cruel insolence of pampered Poor Law officials. Amongst these hungry rioters there were no doubt some Irishmen, and some Catholics; but the great majority of them were English born, and as innocent of holy water as a certain unmentionable gentleman himself, is popularly said to be. This however was enough for the Protestant press, which forthwith commenced a howl—taken up and prolonged by the *Montreal Witness* on this side of the Atlantic—against the wickedness of Romanists in general, and the ingratitude of Irish Romanists in particular; who, by our contemporaries, were represented as if not the sole, at all events as the most prominent actors in the affray, and as its instigators.

Whilst these organs of evangelical Protestantism are attributing the unhappy riots to Popery and Irish Romanism, it is amusing to note the very different tone to which the affair is spoken of by others—not open to any suspicion of a prejudice in favor of either Catholicity or of Irishmen. The *London Times* in an editorial upon the subject suggests many hypotheses to account for the outbreak of the riots, not one of which however attributes them in any degree to "*Irish Romanists*," but one of which does most directly assign to them instigators of a very different order. "Others," says the *Times*, "think that the outrageous speeches of a few firebrands among the Dissenting Clergy are at the bottom of it all;" and though we are not in a position to prove or disprove the truth of this hypothesis suggested in the *London Times*, we may be permitted to cite it, as a pretty conclusive refutation of the slanders against "*Irish Romanists*" started by the Edinburgh *Witness*, and retailed by the *Montreal Witness*, which under a similar name pursues the same trade of falsehood and calumny as does the Scotch evangelical organ.