

THE TRUE WITNESS

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOV. 20, 1857.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

ON our sixth page will be found the particulars, in so far as they have as yet reached us, of the storming of Delhi. This glorious achievement will long rank as one of the most extraordinary feats of military prowess recorded in history.—Indeed, that a small body of men, but scantily supplied with the requisite artillery, should bold besiege, and eventually drive from their stronghold, an army at least three times as numerous, covered by excellent fortifications, and abundantly furnished with guns, ammunition, and military stores of all kinds, seems almost incredible, and is, we venture to assert, without a precedent in the annals of war. Yet glorious as has been the result of the siege of Delhi, it must not be supposed that the Indian question is settled, or the conflict terminated. Large bodies of the mutineers are still in the field, and will no doubt flock to recruit the force besieging Lucknow; which place was not relieved, though by the last accounts, General Havelock was preparing to march to the succor of its gallant defenders.—The puppet King of Delhi has effected his escape in female disguise, and must no doubt be heartily glad to have got rid of the sham sovereignty forced upon him by the Sepoys, in whose hands he was a mere passive tool. His adoption of a female dress, in order to effect his escape, is a conclusive refutation of the calumny, that our troops in India imitate the atrocities of the Sepoys towards non-combatants; and is a most valuable, because involuntary, compliment to the gallantry of the British soldier. Certainly no European in India would assume a female disguise in order to escape from the fury of the Sepoys, for by so doing he would be certain to provoke outrage; and it is pleasant to have to record that the strictest injunctions were issued by the Commander-in-Chief before Delhi to the troops engaged in the assault, to spare the women and children; though of course strict military justice was awarded to all the mutineers who came within the reach of British bayonets.

From England we have tidings of bankruptcies and commercial distress. The attempt to launch the Great Eastern, or Leviathan steamer, had resulted in a failure, owing to some misconception of orders. It will, however, be renewed during the spring tides of next month; and it is said that Mr. Brunel the engineer is confident of ultimate success. The Bank of England had raised its rate of discount to 9 per cent. From the Continent there is nothing to report, except the death of General Cavagnac, who died suddenly whilst out shooting on the 28th ult.

The Courier du Canada publishes a letter from a Catholic Missionary Priest in India, the Rev. P. Barron, in which the writer gives his views respecting the origin of the outbreak amongst the Sepoys, and the objects of the mutineers. According to this writer, "the war is at once political and religious;" and the object of the mutineers "is to extirpate Christianity," and to subject the country to Mahometan rule.

From this it will be seen that the opinions of the reverend writer in India, respecting the object of the mutiny, and its effects, if successful, upon Christianity, are identical with those put forth by the TRUE WITNESS in Canada. The mutiny is not, as has been represented, the indignant uprising of an oppressed people against their oppressors; but rather an outbreak of anti-Christian fury, directed indiscriminately against all who confess Christ, whether Catholics or Protestants. Essentially, the revolt is anti-Christian; it is only accidentally anti-British, as is abundantly proved by the cruelties practised by the mutineers upon all Catholic ecclesiastics and religious, without reference to national origin, upon whom they have been able to lay their hands.

This will sufficiently explain the reasons which have compelled us, as Catholics, to withhold our sympathies from the Mahometan and idolatrous Sepoys, the rancorous enemies of our faith, and to pray for the success of British arms in the contest in which they are now engaged. The defeat of the latter would inevitably entail the slaughter of all the Christians in the Indian Peninsula, of whom the majority are Catholics; it would also infallibly entail the expulsion of the Christian missionary from Eastern Asia, and the total abandonment of many millions of our fellow-creatures to the most abject of superstitions. Unworthy as in many respects she may be of her glorious mission, Great Britain is still the representative of Christendom in Eastern Asia; and

we think that there are but few, who, after calm and impassioned reflection, will not allow that in the interests of Christianity, it is better that India should be under British, than Moslem, rule. The former has done; it is true, very little for the cause of religion in that country; the latter however would, if paramount, approve itself an active and most powerful enemy. Under the former, the Christian missionary, if not encouraged, has at least had easy access to the native Mahometan and Hindoo races; under the other, the country would be hermetically sealed against him. What China was for ages, that would India become, were the Mahometans to succeed in their designs against the religion and civilisation of the Western World.

Of the agents by whom this great work of extirpating Christianity is to be accomplished—the Sepoys themselves, and their pretended grievances against the British Government—we have on more than one occasion plainly expressed our opinion; and it is with no small degree of satisfaction that we perceive that the Tablet, the most truly Catholic paper published in Ireland, and of whose lively sympathies with the people of that country no one can doubt, holds precisely the same views as we do, both as to the character of the mutineers, and the impolicy—to use no harsher word—of allowing it to be suspected even, by Protestants, that the Catholics of the British Empire, as a body, sympathise with the libidinous and blood-thirsty Sepoys—of whom our Dublin cotemporary thus speaks:—

"Our own troops have turned our own arms against ourselves. However unjustly we had acted to others, these men had been treated not only fairly, but with excessive favor. They have therefore, added ingratitude and treachery to the blackest crimes and the direst atrocities."—Tablet.

Having thus delivered itself of its opinion of the Sepoys, whom some have endeavored to represent as a band of patriots struggling for the independence of their native land, the Tablet proceeds to express its opinions upon the impolicy of allowing it to be believed that they possess the sympathies of the Catholics of the British Empire:—

"As to the general wishes of the Catholic body either in England or Ireland for the success or the repression of the mutiny, we do not see the advantage of a discussion between Catholics on the subject. We believe that scarcely anybody seriously thinks that the Sepoys have any chances of success, and we do not see the use of laboring to prove that the great majority of Catholics are ardently longing for what they are quite convinced won't happen. In the present position of Catholics, especially in Ireland, we can conceive nothing more useless and barren than sympathy with the Sepoys, or more injurious to Catholic interests than a belief in its existence. We do not see the use of persuading the twenty-one millions of Protestants in Great Britain and Ireland that a large portion of the seven millions of their Catholic fellow-subjects are longing that they may be visited with defeat and disaster. We should quite despair of persuading them that such a longing sprang from a disinterested love of liberty, or a pure and glowing zeal for justice. Rightly or wrongly, we are sure that they would ascribe it to a malignant hatred of themselves, springing from national or religious animosity. We don't think it wise for Catholics, while professing to seek their own just rights by constitutional and legal means, to try to force upon three-fourths of the empire the strongest conceivable motive for refusing what we want, and withdrawing what we have. We don't think it at all a flattering or creditable description to give of us Catholics, that while we are doing next to nothing to enforce our own just claims, by the means which are within our reach just as much as within the reach of others, and while we are the only class in the empire who refuse to help ourselves, the great majority of us are sitting with folded hands, framing empty wishes for the success of the Sepoys, which scarcely any one thinks probable or possible, and by which, whatever we may lose, it would be very hard to show that anything could be gained. We are sorry that any Irishman or any Catholic should wish to prove that the great majority desire the success of the Sepoys; for that we Catholics, though only one-fourth of the population, contribute one-half of the army which is employed in slaughtering the Sepoys, would in that case be rather discreditable both to the Irish people and to the Catholic body. To those, however, who still think that Catholics ought to desire the success of the Sepoys, and that the great majority do, we can only say that we differ in opinion, and that our reasons seem to us stronger than theirs. We can only speak for the present. Perhaps men's feelings will change, perhaps they will manifest their feelings more clearly than they have done. From very different quarters, by very different agents, from very dissimilar motives, inducements to sympathise with the insurgents are held out. The Times and Punch are doing their best to excite that feeling; a portion of the popular press in Ireland has devoted itself to that task; and at Carrick-on-Suir and other places, the people have been called upon by posters and placards not only to admire the Sepoys, but to follow their example. This last piece of advice seems to us intelligible and consistent. If any considerable portion of the Irish people are meditating an appeal to arms against the Government, we can understand why the Sepoys should be praised, and their success desired. We ourselves have no intention of taking up arms, and therefore shall neither advise nor excite anybody else to do so. If any do, those who have counselled the step will, no doubt, feel it to be their duty to take the field in person, and to brave danger in the foremost ranks."—Ibid.

Our object in giving insertion to the above extracts from a journal which is justly considered the exponent of the opinions of the most thoroughly Catholic portion of the population of the British Empire, is to redeem ourselves, to redeem our Clergy and Bishops, from the dishonoring imputation—of being hypocrites, when we and they profess to be loyal subjects, and dutiful citizens—and of sympathising in our hearts with Britain's enemies, whilst claiming the protection of the British Government. Our object is to disabuse the Protestant mind of the false impression—an impression however which it must be admitted that some Catholics have done their best to strengthen—that a loyal Catholic must needs be a disloyal subject, and that a Papist can only be true to the Church, upon condition of being false to the State.

Now this is the primary argument of Orange-

men. We—they say—because Protestants, are sure to be good and loyal subjects; our opponents, in that they are Papists, must needs be disloyal and disaffected at heart, no matter what their professions. And from these premises—if admitted—the conclusion is irresistible—That it is the policy and the duty of the Government to encourage Orangeism and to discountenance Popery. But the cry of Catholics at the present day, both in Ireland and in Canada, is, that it is the policy and the duty of the Government to discourage Orangeism, to withhold from it all official sanction, and to treat all its subjects—Catholics and Protestants—with strict impartiality. Why then should we be such fools as to encourage the notion that we are, and must needs be, disloyal and disaffected at heart, and thereby give our enemies an argument against us, which they, we may be sure, will not be slow to use?

Again—we claim protection from the Government against the insidious designs of the Orangemen, as British subjects. We profess to ask for our rights as members of the Empire, and to seek those rights only by peaceful and constitutional means. But our friends must remember that rights and duties are terms correlative; that amongst creatures, one cannot exist without the other; and that before we can expect successfully to assert our rights, we must show ourselves in all points willing to fulfil faithfully all our duties, as British subjects. It is monstrous, it is inconsistent—and inconsistency is the greatest sin against reason, of which a rational being can be guilty—to clamor with one breath for our rights, as British subjects, and in another, to shout with joy over the disasters of that very Government whose protection we implore. We can understand the position, and even respect the honesty of the man, who openly professing hostility to British rule, asks nothing from it, and refuses to it his allegiance; he also is an honest and consistent man, who, recognising the obligation of being a dutiful subject, insists firmly, but in a constitutional manner, upon all his rights as a subject; but we cannot respect the motives, nor can we avoid suspecting the honesty, of him who, whilst sympathising with the enemies of his Government, and the murderers of his fellow-countrymen and co-religionists, demands to be treated by that Government as if his loyalty were unimpeachable.

In a word—the stronghold of Orangeism is to be found in the assumption that Catholics are necessarily disaffected, and untrustworthy subjects, and that Protestants are eminently loyal and faithful. What then should be the policy of Catholics under such circumstances? Not surely by their words or actions to confirm the impression of their inherent and ineradicable disloyalty; but rather, as it strikes us, to give the lie, by their loyal and peaceful conduct, to the calumnies and the boastings of their enemies. They should show the world that the Catholic is, and must be, a good citizen, not in spite, but because of his religion, which always and everywhere preaches the duty of obedience to the legitimate civil ruler; they should, by their conduct, prove that the boasts of the Orangemen, as to their superior loyalty, are false; and thus neutralize any claims upon the countenance of the State, based upon the assumption that Protestants are in a peculiar manner trustworthy citizens; and whilst insisting temperately, but firmly, upon their rights, they should be careful to convince even their enemies, that they are always ready to perform their duties, as British subjects.

"A Friend of Religious Liberty" wishes to know upon what principle "Romanists object to open air preaching by Protestant Ministers of the gospel?"—and cites the example of Our Lord Himself, who was an "open air preacher" like Mr. Hanna of Belfast. "Why should not Protestant Ministers?" he asks, "be allowed to follow Our Lord's example?" We reply:—

Romanists "object to open air preaching," as usually conducted by "Protestant Ministers of the Gospel"—1st because it is unnecessary, seeing that the said Ministers have their meeting houses wherein to preach, and which can accommodate all who desire to listen to them. 2d, because such preaching is intended as an insult to, and as an assertion of "Protestant Ascendancy" over, Catholics—an assertion which the latter will not tolerate. 3d, because it is designed not only to insult Catholics, but by insulting them to provoke them to a breach of the peace. 4th, because the streets are public thoroughfares along which every man has the right to pass without being compelled to listen—no matter how erroneous his creed—to attacks upon his religion. And lastly, because no man, whether Catholic or Protestant, has any right to create directly or indirectly, an obstruction in the public thoroughfares, or to do that which experience has shown to be likely to lead to a breach of the public peace.

For of course if any one Minister has the right, irrespective of his doctrines, to set up his tub in the highways, and therefrom to denounce as idolatrous the religion of his fellow-citizens, so has every other Minister—the Catholic priest

as well as the parson, the Mormon, as well as the Methodist. If therefore one be allowed to preach in public, the State, unless it undertakes to define what doctrines are true and what false,—a task for which it is not qualified—must allow every man who has got a good pair of lungs, a brazen face, and a tub of his own, to set up in business as a "street-preacher." But as, if every one were to do this, the streets would soon be impassable, and as it would be unjust to prevent any from indulging in the practice unless all were prohibited, the State, as a matter of necessity, is bound to put down all "open-air preaching" in the public streets; and in this respect to apply to all its subjects, whether Catholic or Protestant, one uniform rule. Now we put it to our querist—would a Romanist controversial sermon be allowed in the Strand, or Hyde Park, or in any of the London thoroughfares? Of course it would not; of course the sermon would be quickly silenced by the authorities, and a stern order to "move on" from the Police would disperse the congregation. Of this we do not complain; but we demand that the same measure that would be meted out to a Catholic priest, were he to attempt open air preaching in Pall Mall or the Strand, be applied also to the Protestant open-air preacher in Belfast, and every other city of the Empire.

It is true unquestionably, that Our Lord was an "open air preacher;" but our querist must remember that Our Lord had a divine commission for what He did—and that His example therefore can furnish no precedent, except to those who, in like manner with Christ, are the holders of a divine commission. Any man therefore who can prove before a magistrate that he has received from God Himself a commission to preach the Gospel—in the same sense that Our Lord was so commissioned—should be not only allowed to preach where and when he pleased, but should be protected in so doing by the civil power. Our Lord always recognised the soundness of this principle; for He always first proved His divine commission, by working miracles, by healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, making the lame walk, and by raising the dead. These things did Our Lord, in proof of His divine commission: and if Mr. Hanna will do any one of these things, or if by any other simple means he will only prove to any intelligent person, that he holds a divine commission to preach, then, but not till then, will we admit his right to preach as Our Lord preached; and not only will we recognise his right to preach where he will, but we will ourselves attend his ministrations, and enroll ourselves amongst the most humble and obedient of his disciples.

It will not do however for Mr. Hanna, or any Protestant minister, to refer us to his feelings in proof of his divine commission. We care nothing for—indeed we should only laugh at—the ordinary cant of these gentry about an "inward call." The evidence that we demand in proof of a divine commission must be outward and visible; of the same order as that which Our Lord Himself produced when challenged by the Jews, as an impostor. For the preacher's subjective impressions, we care not one straw; and should treat with contempt any attempt to bring these into court as competent witnesses in the case.—We know that where the Lord has given a commission to preach, there also He has given simple and infallible means of verifying the fact of that commission. No man, who cannot prove—by his power of working miracles, as did Our Lord, that he holds such a commission immediately from God Himself—or from authentic documents, that he holds it mediately, as having been transmitted to him from and through others who were themselves immediately commissioned to preach—can have any claims on our respect, or any right to expect that we should waste our valuable time in listening to him. To every pretender to a divine commission to preach, we would say—produce your testimonials, show your credentials, and show that they were given to you, and not to another; then, but not before, will we admit your right to block up our thoroughfares; then too will we hasten to submit ourselves to your teaching, and, acknowledging your divine authority, recognise your right to plead the example of Jesus Christ Himself as a precedent for your "open air preaching." In the mean time, we contend that it is the duty of the civil authorities to put a stop to every thing which experience has shown to be an incentive to rioting—and to prevent any person upon any pretence from blocking up, or causing any obstructions in, the public thoroughfares.

It is both amusing and edifying to observe the manner in which the Montreal Witness, and a French Protestant paper, known only to a few as L'Avenir—a low pot-house organ of the Franco-Canadian Yankees—mutually endorse one another's slanders upon the Catholic clergy. Both are intensely Protestant; the one from a hatred of Popery in particular, the other from a horror of Christianity in general; alike regardless of the obligations of truth and decency, the one attacks the Church, as a rabid fanatic of the "Praise God Bearebones" school—the other, as a low demagogue, whose brains, if the poor creature has any, have been turned by a too assiduous study of the platitudes and niaiseries of the infidel writers of the XVII century. In a word, the

one is the disciple of Titus Oates, the other of Jean Jacques; and if the former holds Luther in veneration as a "Man of God," the other evidently still clings to the equally singular delusion, that Voltaire was a great philosopher, and a profound thinker.

With so many points of resemblance, betwixt them, it is to be expected that these two Protestant champions should act in concert against the common foe. Thus if a slander against the Bishop of Montreal is published in the Avenir, the Montreal Witness reproduces it in English; and vouching for its truth, adds thereunto a few notes and comments of his own, more remarkable for their malignity indeed, than for their ingenuity, but which nevertheless impose upon us the unwelcome task in which we are now engaged. Unwelcome we say, because as gentlemen, we cannot, without a feeling of humiliation, condescend to a controversy with the Avenir; and because it is painful to the Catholic to have to notice the calumnies vented by the Montreal Witness against our beloved and venerated Prelate. Yet as our silence might be construed into a tacit admission of the truth of the charges adduced in the columns of the Montreal Witness and the Avenir, we must address ourselves to the task, unwelcome though it be.

The gist of the accusation which the Montreal Witness copies from the Avenir, may be thus stated. A former priest of the parish of Varennes left, at his decease, a farm near the church to the Bishop of Montreal. This farm some two years ago was purchased by the Fabrique for the sum of £3,000; of which sum they, the said Fabrique, were to pay the annual interest in the form of a "constituted rent" to the Bishop, who on his part was not to exact payment of the capital sum. Now it is asserted by the Avenir and his worthy colleague the Montreal Witness, that this bargain is null and void, because it was made surreptitiously, without the authorisation of the people of the parish; because there is an enormous imposition in the price, the farm sold for £3,000 not being worth more than £1,000; because the object of the meeting at which the said bargain was concluded had been kept a secret from the people; and because it is a fraud practised by the bishop and priest against the parish. To these various allegations we reply.

1. That it appears from the affidavits of M. M. Lussier, De Martigny, Archambault, Morgan, and others of the most influential parishioners of Varennes, that the object of the meeting at which the purchase of the farm was decided upon by the almost unanimous consent of the persons present, had been long previously well known to, and fully discussed by the parishioners—that a lengthy correspondence on the subject had passed betwixt the latter, and His Lordship the Bishop of Cydonia—that the meeting was publicly announced from the pulpit of the parish church in the usual manner—and that M. A. Girard—and not the Cure of Varennes—as mendaciously asserted by the Avenir and Montreal Witness, "acted as secretary of the meeting."

2. With regard to the price at which the farm in question was disposed of, it may be sufficient to remark that the names of several persons who offered for it, on their own account, the sum of £3,000, can, and when the proper occasion arrives will, be given—that for the village lots of F. Lussier, Esq., who owns the adjoining land, the price of £300 per arpent has been asked—and that the land acquired by the Fabrique, which is as well situated, to say the least, as that of the above named gentleman, and on which there are two houses, barns and other farm offices, consists of 115 arpents. From these data it would appear that the price at which the farm was disposed of to the Fabrique was by no means exorbitant.

But it would appear that one of the Churchwardens—now that the bargain has been concluded, and possession of the land obtained by the Fabrique of which he is a member—thinks it very hard that the parish should be called upon to pay the stipulated price. Hence the present outcry; and as, according to the principles of jurisprudence, recognised by the Avenir and the Montreal Witness, a Catholic Bishop must always be in the wrong, and is not like other citizens entitled to a fair and dispassionate hearing before having sentence passed upon him, our Protestant cotemporaries above named have not hesitated to give their verdict against His Lordship of Montreal, without allowing him the opportunity of saying one word in his own defence. This is Protestant morality and Protestant justice, but it is not ours. We therefore, for the present, content ourselves with a simple statement of the facts of the case, as put forward by the party in the suit, which sides with the Bishop, and the priest of Varennes—for, even the Avenir admits that "the parish is divided in two parts, the one uphold the Bishop and the priest, and the other the churchwardens." Now since it is evident that there are two parties amongst the parishioners, one of which supports the Bishop—and as it is also evident that the parishioners are peculiarly interested in supporting the cause of the Churchwardens against His Lordship—it must,