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MONTRÉAL, FRIDAY, AUGUST 23, 1850.

WHO ARE THE MARONITES?

This question has been repeatedly asked, to our own knowledge, within the last few weeks, by certain of our people who, though well disposed to give their mite for their relief, yet knew nothing more of them than that they are Catholics, and in distress. All have seen Father Flavianus—assisted when he offered up the Holy Sacrifice in one or other of our churches—and all have, we trust, given more or less towards relieving the extreme wants of his distant flock. Yet still they ask—“Who are these Maronites? We answer in few words, they are a nation who have nothing in common with us, except humanity, and faith. They are the ancient and Apostolical Christians of Syria—the remnant of one of the churches founded by the Apostles. They are poor, and persecuted, and shut in from all the rest of Christendom, by mountains, and seas, and rivers, and, worse still, by the tyrant power of the infidel, yet have they preserved pure and unsullied the faith transmitted to them from the Apostles, and such being the case, they are our brethren in the faith—attached as we are to the Chair of Peter—having truly “the one faith,” than which there must be, can be none other. They are almost entirely unacquainted with human learning, but they are versed in the science of the Saints—little know they of the various nations of the earth, for they are not allowed either rest or means that might enable them to study. Few amongst them know any thing of these remote climes of ours, but they know—for faith teaches them—that the Church of which they are members, is spread over all the earth—one, great, and universal,—and so, in their distress—when the rod of the oppressor smites them most heavily—when their churches are pillaged and destroyed—their altars overthrown, and their sanctuaries defiled with all abomination—they raise their voice and cry aloud to their brethren in the faith,—beseeching the nations of the Catholic World that they put forth a hand to save them from the common enemy. And why should their cry be heard without emotion? What catholic heart does not beat, responsive to their piteous lamentations? True, they dwell—these Maronites—where flourished of old the cedars of Lebanon—true, they differ from us in language, in customs, in lineage—nay, in what do they agree with us as far as worldly things are concerned?—but still they are our brethren—our very dear, because persecuted brethren—they have their hopes anchored, like ours, with the fisherman’s bark—Pius the Ninth is their father, as he is ours. They, like us, offer up the daily sacrifice—the clean sacrifice of the New Law, although the ceremonies accompanying that august act of commemoration are with them somewhat different, and the service recited in a different language—but what of that?—the belief is still the same. They, too, have their faith nourished and strengthened by the bread that giveth life to the world! and we, therefore, may reasonably hope that with us they shall “rise on the last day.” They are, in short, members as we are of the one great society, of which Christ’s Vicar is the visible head—they, in their Syrian deserts, form part and parcel of the living body of the faithful, and are embraced within the vast circle—the earth-grasping circle of the Church Catholic and Apostolic. Let us, then, reach out the hand of succor to these suf-

fering members of Christ—they are truly in a militant condition, for with them the age of martyrdom is not yet past, though for ages they have been tortured, and persecuted for the faith—yet are they still under the arm of the tyrant, and the Ottoman government of to-day is pretty much to the Christians of Palestine—to these good and faithful Maronites, what the Roman emperors—the Diocletians, and the Neros, and the Trajans, were to the primitive faithful. They are in the hands of the enemy—we are free: they are poor and downtrodden—we have received wherewith to relieve them—let us then do it, remembering always St. Paul’s injunction, to provide, in the first place, for the wants of “the household of faith.”

What proud and triumphant thoughts filled our minds, and lifted them in thanksgiving to Heaven, as we assisted at the mass when offered up by this Syrian priest!—this messenger from the far-off east. Truly the occasion was and is one of great interest to our Catholic community, since it may remind us of the fidelity with which the promises have all been fulfilled for us—how our faith has been taught, as commanded, to “all nations,” and how the Gentiles have come in from the east and from the west, and sat down at the table of the Lord. How the Eucharistic Sacrifice is offered up daily—as the inspired Malachi foretold—even to the uttermost ends of the earth, and how Christ himself—the vital principle of the church—keeps the faith he planted alive in the minds and hearts of men throughout all the world, notwithstanding the united efforts of the world, the flesh, and the devil—heresy and infidelity—to destroy it. And then what a beautiful proof is the thorough orthodoxy of this Syrian Church, of the extreme antiquity—the Apostolic origin of our holy faith! Here they are, and have been—shut in amid the deserts of Palestine, from time immemorial—debarred from contact with their co-religionists to any considerable extent—reviled and persecuted for the faith, yet believing precisely the same now as we do—we, the dwellers in the frozen north—the children of “the isles of the sea.”

We now give an article on this subject, which recently appeared in the *Mélanges*, going somewhat into detail on the history and position of the Maronites. Be it also premised that our venerable Bishop has put forth an earnest appeal to his people on behalf of this suffering portion of the church. Let us all then give what we can—much or little as it may be—and let all join in prayer that God may look down with pity on these desolate Christians of Palestine. Let us invoke for them the Mother of Our Lord, She to whom “none ever sued in vain”—beseeching Her to assist them by Her powerful intercession, that their enemies may no longer triumph over them, and ask deridingly “Where is their God?”

We analyse a touching letter of the Bishop of Lida, an excellent speech of M. de Montalambert in the French Tribune, and several articles from various journals, which have sent forth to the astonished world, the piteous cry of an expiring nation, that of the Maronites. We must be forgiven if we give but a rapid sketch of a subject which ought to be given in detail. But our readers can, if they will, have recourse to the same sources whence we have drawn, and refer to the 9th vol. of the *Mélanges Religieuses*, page 49, 545, and 724. We have, however, to premise that our whole object is to prove that the Maronites are thrice worthy of compassion; because that their position, geographical, political, and religious, renders them trebly unhappy.

1st. *Their geographical position.* The Maronites inhabit Mount Lebanon. The hapless remains of the ancient Christians of Syria, and ever true to the faith, they sought in the rocks and precipices of that famous mountain, a shelter from the cruel oppression of the Saracens, against which they had long struggled with success. The Drusians, a barbarous and infidel nation, have gradually made their way into the Maronite country, so that Lebanon is now inhabited by two distinct races, and is divided into the Drusian district, the Maronite district, and the Mixed district. This mixture goes far to shew what the Maronites have to suffer on the part of the Drusians. What we are about to say of their political and religious position will make it still more evident.

2nd. *Their political and religious position.* The Maronites and the Drusians were independent till towards the end of the sixteenth century, when Amurad the Third, Emperor of Constantinople, reduced them under his domination. He at first gave them as governor a Musselman Prince; but, soon finding that it could not always restrain them in obedience, the Turkish government concluded that the wisest course was to give them rulers of their own nation, reserving over them the rights of sovereignty.

It may be easily imagined that the Turkish government, the sworn foe of the Christian religion, would give every advantage to the infidel Drusians over the Maronite Catholics, in making choice of the princes who were to govern both nations. This was actually the case; but through the intervention of France, the Drusians who ruled the little state of Libanus, were at length forced to choose Maronite ministers. Certain noble Mahometan families, established in the country, having embraced the Catholic faith, and

having subsequently attained power, the Maronites were so fortunate as to be governed, for about forty years, by princes of their own religion. The Emir Bechir having been dethroned by the fall of the Egyptian government, the two Christian princes who succeeded him were princes but in name, and were never able to recover the supreme authority.

The Turkish government not finding itself yet strong enough to make the Christians of Lebanon subject to the Drusians, sought in the meantime to carry out its designs in part. To that end they created in 1843, two princes, one Maronitish, and the other Drusian. Then, by a stroke of policy worthy of the Sublime Porte, it brought thirty thousand Maronites under the dominion of the Drusian prince, hoping thereby to enable him to crush the Christians. Such was the origin of the war which broke out between the rival nations, and the cause of the existing misery of the Maronite Christians.

But the Turkish government went still further with its oppressive intervention. They marched their troops through the country, suffering them as they went to perpetrate such cruelties as had not yet marked the civil war. So far, therefore, from restoring order, their progress did but loment and increase the existing anarchy. Yet even this was not enough to satisfy the gloomy hatred of the Turks for these Christians of Lebanon. Under pretence of seeking to reconcile the two races who were waging deadly war against each other, the government sent an agent to the belligerent parties, invested with high authority. Chekil Effendi, as this perfidious diplomatist was called, had no sooner arrived in Syria, than he ordered a general disarmament.

He commenced operations on the 16th of October, 1843, by disarming the Maronites, giving warning at the same time to the Christian Cheiks, and he proceeded in this way. The census had been taken in 1840, previous to the breaking out of the civil war, which had of course grievously thinned the population. They calculated in this manner—each village had then 150 guns. Now in 1843, the inhabitants of course said: “We have not now more than fifty or sixty warriors, and how can you require of us 150 muskets?” The answer was: “Give us 150 muskets! if you have not so many, you must go and buy them; otherwise, you shall be beaten and tortured, every one of you—priests, women, old men, and children!” But what aggravated very considerably this odious extortion, was the fact that the Maronites had been already disarmed. The worst of all was, however, that the Drusians were only disarmed in a sham way, notwithstanding that they, being the aggressors, should have been first deprived of their arms. It was a strange sight, surely, to see the Maronites going to purchase arms of the Drusians to give up to the Turkish government; and be it remarked that it was their own arms they were thus buying back from their enemies.

As, notwithstanding all that, the number fixed by the Ottoman ministry had not been obtained, the authorities, under pretence of recovering concealed arms, poured in on this unhappy people bodies of regular troops, who, with the assistance of the Drusians, carried fire and sword to the very heart of their country. Horrors probably unknown in the most barbarous ages were then unscrupulously perpetrated. Women were violated, and put to the torture, priests were scourged, and hung with their heads downward, the Bishops were bastinadoed, and the holy Sacrament dragged through the mire. At Balda, the infidels amused themselves with whipping the monks, and compelling them to dance the dervish. These torments were repeated even to the tenth time.

These distressing details are confirmed by the English, French, and German journals, and even by the Franco-Turkish, published at Smyrna. Let it suffice to quote here the testimony of the famous Napier, who was, as every one knows, the principal actor in the expulsion of Mehemet Ali from Syria, and who figured most prominently in the bombardment of Beyrout in 1840. Here is what he said in Edinburgh, when they gave him there the freedom of the city:

“The government sent us into Syria to deliver that province from Mehemet Ali; but I regret having to declare that its inhabitants have fallen under a despotism ten thousand times worse. The most painful recollection of my life is my having assisted in expelling the Paeha of Egypt from Syria, and aiding the Turks to establish amongst the Christians of Lebanon,—that last and truly noble remnant of Asiatic Christianity—the most inimious government which has ever existed.”

The diplomatist, Chekil Effendi, who is said to have been of Lord Palmerston’s school, has joined to the most grievous wrong, insult and outrage the most revolting. For, having gathered together the remains of the Maronite nation, he assured them, in fine official slang, that the Grand Signor, who was “as wise as Solomon and as valiant as Alexander,” would grant them a general pardon, because “he would not that his subjects should have aught to suffer.”

Now it is easy to conclude what is the situation both political and religious, of the Maronite Christians. On the one side, they have to live among the Drusians, who have no other religion than a remnant of paganism; and on the other, they are under the Ottoman yoke. They are besides open to the great schism of Russia, who, as all the world knows, exercises her colossal power in the East for the purpose of snatching from the bosom of Catholic unity any nation that she can seduce. But this is not all: the Biblical Missionaries are there, like elsewhere, laboring with their tracts to destroy Catholicity. The Drusians pay their court to them, accepting their books, in which they have no belief, and receiving in return all sorts of caresses. This is, no doubt, a grievous temptation for the poor suffering Maronites, for it may be easily understood that they are ex-

tremely ignorant, especially now that they have been so long the victims of cruelty and oppression the most unheard of. Persecution, misery, and ignorance weigh, therefore, with fearful weight, on the unhappy Christians of the Levant. They stand in need of assistance, and to whom shall they call if not to their brethren, the Christians of the West? We shall now leave the Bishop of Lida to paint their wretched condition, in a letter which he addressed to a Maronite priest, then in Paris:

“It is impossible to form any just idea of the losses we have sustained, since our enemies have a second time ravaged our country—are we not entirely in the power of these cruel foes, the spoilers of our little wealth? They have, a second time, burned the buildings of the Episcopal residence, and also our school, which you and I had rebuilt on the original plan. They have once more robbed us of everything, and also of what belonged to the school. The value of the different articles which they have carried off, may amount to \$150,000, exclude of the chalices reserved for the use of the Episcopacy. All—all—is now in possession of the unfeeling Drusians. We find ourselves alone amongst our enemies, deprived of all things, excepting only the garment which we wear. *May the name of the Lord be blessed!*”

We can add nothing to these words, which rend the very heart, and inundate the soul with the bitterness of grief. Our only solace is that we have it in our power, by our generous contributions, to give some relief to these our suffering brethren. Give them, then, let us conclude with our Bishop, and God himself will restore what you give—you, even an hundred fold!

LAYS (?) OF THE COLPORTEURS.

Aut.—“Here’s one to a very doleful tune: How a usurer’s wife was brought to bed of twenty money bags at a burden; and how she longed to eat adder’s heads and toads carabadoed.”
Mor.—“Is it true, think you?”
Aut.—“Very true; and but a month old.”—*Winter’s Tale.*

Now Autolychus was a Colporteur: altho’ he is irreverently put down as a rogue amongst the *Dramatis Personæ*: however, *l’un n’empêche pas l’autre*. More lucky than his brethren in Canada, inasmuch as he found no difficulty in disposing of his trumpery, whilst the poor Canadian Colporteur is hardly able to get rid of the contents of his pack, even when offered as a gift. Evidently the Bohemians were more easily gulled than are the French Canadians: at least, such was the impression made upon us by the perusal of the *French Canadian Missionary Society’s Record* for the month of July, 1850.

But what is this same F. C. M. Society? may be asked by some of our Catholic readers.

The F. C. M. Society is a society which professes, funny enough, to be formed upon a Catholic basis:—its object, the converting of us poor Papists to some undefined phase of Protestantism:—its weapons, the dissemination of Tracts and Scriptures amongst the Catholic laity, and the periodical publication of calumnies against the Catholic Clergy of Canada. Pretty little Autolychian ballads these latter, whose “delicate burden” consists of anathema of Pope and Priest, with cruelly sarcastic allusions to the Scarlet Woman of Babylon.

The Society numbers amongst its members gentlemen of whom we have no intention to speak with disrespect—gentlemen who, we are sure, would not, knowingly, lend the sanction of their names to the silly falsehoods; a few of which we intend to lay before our readers. We are pretty certain that the majority of those whose names appear as office-bearers and committee-men of the F. C. M. Society, were ignorant of the contents of the *Record*, until it was delivered at their doors, and that they never gave themselves the trouble to enquire into the truth or falsity of its contents. No, we do not tax these gentlemen with the intention to deceive. We believe rather, that they are themselves deceived; that they are what our old friend, Tony Weller, calls, “Victims of Gammon;”—deceived by their Agents, and, perhaps, a little blinded by the ridiculous aversion they bear towards Catholicity, and to all that is called Priest.

But from the Society itself, let us turn to the *Record* of its transactions.

However great the expectations, the performance has been meagre enough. With little cause for exultation over the past, there is—as, of course, there always is—a lively hope for the future. As far as we can judge from the *Record* now before us, it seems that about sixty persons have given evidence of conversion, that twenty have left the Church, and that seventy-six children of both sexes are actually undergoing the process of a Protestant education in the Schools connected with the Mission, of whom five have given evidence of a change of heart, and have been admitted members of the little Church at the Institute; whilst at the School at Belle Rivière a few little girls are taught reading, writing, arithmetic, needlework, and the way of salvation.

By means of the Colporteurs, or Bible Pedlars, within the last seven months and a half, 4 Bibles, 73