

THE TRUE WITNESS

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE

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WEDNESDAY.....FEBRUARY 15, 1893

OUR SCHOOL BOARD.

In another editorial we refer to Alderman Kennedy, M.P.P., and the course he has taken upon the "early closing" movement. We desire also to give that gentleman credit for the manner in which he has stood by the district he represents in keeping before the Government the question of night schools in St. Ann's parish. As long as we thought that there was any use in hammering away at the commissioners we kept constantly reminding them of the grave mistake committed in not even offering a night school to that thickly populated but unrepresented district. When it became obvious that nothing was to be gained for this year, we insisted upon due representation upon the Board. Hon. Secretary L. P. Pelletier stated last week in the Legislature that the Government was not responsible for the overlooking of the great Irish-Catholic district, but that the matter was wholly in the hands of the Montreal Commissioners. He, however, added that the Government intended appointing an Irish Catholic representative on the Board. This is at least one step in advance. We dedicated column after column this summer to the subject of representation upon that Board, we asked for a layman and a clergyman to voice the interests of our tax payers, or else to let us have a separate School Board. This promise of the Provincial Secretary is one point gained, and for which we have to thank the Government.

Few of our citizens are aware of the trouble we took in this matter. It may be naturally supposed that we confine our efforts to editorial articles and comments and public expositions of the situation, and to denunciations of the want of fairness in the present organization or composition of that body. But in reality that was only a small portion of what THE TRUE WITNESS undertook to do, and actually did do. While, for the benefit of our readers we were penning and publishing all those appeals, we were quietly working in another direction. We sent several private letters to influential members of the Provincial Cabinet, amongst others the Hon. Provincial Secretary, in which we made out the case to the best of our ability, and to which letters we received most satisfactory replies. Besides, we had interviews with members of the Government, when councils were held in Montreal, during which interviews we placed the matter as clearly as we knew how before the powers that be. It is, therefore, with a very reasonable degree of satisfaction that we learned the deter-

mination of the Government to take the matter into serious consideration and to act upon some of the suggestions made.

There is, however, a drop of bitterness in every cup, even the most sweet; there is always some one or other to fling a shadow upon the sunlit place, even though the shade be but a passing and unsubstantial one. We were pained to read the remarks of Mr. Dechene, M.P.P., on the occasion of Hon. Mr. Pelletier's reply to Mr. Kennedy in the matter of these schools. With that courtesy which is a natural attribute of his own, and which we marked on many an occasion in the years of our close intimacy with the Provincial Secretary, Hon. Mr. Pelletier replied in English. Mr. Dechene called upon him to speak French. The hon. gentleman replied that he spoke English for the benefit of the Irish representative who required the information. The other gentleman then thanked God that he had no Irish in his constituency. We would be long sorry to think that Mr. Dechene was the mouthpiece of even the smallest section of our French-Canadian fellow-citizens. Men of his caliber are unworthy of a seat in a legislature where the different elements of our cosmopolitan country are represented. It was not so Mr. Curran acted when in the House of Commons he defended French laws, language and institutions, and spoke in the tongue of those who were attacked. Let us reverse the medal: we will suppose a case in point, and one that might very possibly take place. Let us suppose that Mr. Evanturel or Mr. Alec. Robillard, who represent the constituencies of Ontario where the greatest number of French Canadians reside, were to ask a question of the Hon. Mr. Frazer, and that he should have the courtesy to reply in French; then that a member from some western county should demand that the hon. gentleman speak in English; and, on Mr. Frazer's reply that he spoke in French for information of the French member, the other were to cry out, "Thank God I have no French Canadians in my constituency." What would Mr. Dechene say when he would read those remarks in the press? Would he not be the very first to cry out against the "fanatics," the "bigots," "the intolerant English speaking majority of Ontario?" And yet he leaves himself, and all those who sympathize with him, open to the same accusation of fanaticism, bigotry and intolerance.

It is high time that here, as well as elsewhere in Canada, we should come to realize the fact that we can no longer exist as a divided nation, that race and creed differences must be submerged in the grand ideal of a Canadian nationality. While we cling to our Faith and defend its principles to the best of our ability, we recognize that we are destined by Divine Providence to live in common with others whose beliefs differ, and if we desire that they should respect our sacred institutions we must grant to them the concession of respecting their tenets—even though we know them to err. We must recognize that this Dominion is like unto a vast ocean into which many streams pour, commingle their waters and are lost in one identity; we have streams of population from the different countries of Europe, some more powerful than others according to the section of the country in which they meet, and they should all blend in the great ocean of a Canadian nationality. If the stream from old France has been broader and deeper than the others that have flowed into the Province of Quebec, the stream from the British Isles, that unites three grand tributaries in one river, has

been more extensive than the others as it rushed over to fertilize and civilize the other Provinces of the Dominion. There is so much good found in all the elements of our population, so many fine qualities that serve to counteract the less attractive characteristics of each other, that no man, no matter what his race or origin, can honestly thank God for the absence of any one of the component parts, any particular element in the composition of our people. It is as well, however, that persons so animated should express their views, it is better to know that such narrowness of mind exists than to go on giving credit to others for the same liberality that we possess, and to eventually find that we were mistaken.

THE LENTEN SEASON.

Once more in the revolutions of time the Lenten season has come, a period often misunderstood by non-Catholics, and too often not sufficiently appreciated by members of our Faith. All of our readers know that the forty days from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday represent the forty days of fasting that Our Lord put in away in the wilderness. It is also a time of penance in preparation for that greatest of all events, or rather series of events comprising the passion of Christ and the glorious Resurrection. During those forty days the Church ordains certain fastings and other penances in reparation for the sins that we have committed and in consequence of which the Son of God was obliged to come down and undergo the tortures of the most terrible of all deaths. But it is neither our intention to dwell upon the importance of the Lenten season, nor the necessity of obeying the rules and regulations of the Church. We will have occasion during the first weeks of the season to refer to these phases of the subject. For this week we will merely draw our readers' attention to the significance of to-day's ceremonies.

Ash Wednesday is so called on account of the placing of ashes upon the foreheads of the people, to remind them of the certainty of death and the dust to which all things mortal must eventually be reduced. In performing that imposing ceremony, and in making the sign of the cross the priest makes use of the words, "*memento homo quia pulvis es et in pulverem reverteris*"; "remember, man, that dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." Wonderfully significant are these words, and if properly understood they should serve as a perpetual sermon, an unending appeal to man's better and nobler feelings, and a talisman against sin, a coat of armor to shield us in the hour of the greatest temptation. Let us analyze these words of admonition.

"Remember, man"; do not for one moment allow your mind to stray from the contemplation of the fact before you, recall it under all circumstances the truth that should ever stare you in the face, beware that you never forget the solemn and undeniably true words "that dust thou art." You are composed of clay, of the most perishable of material, and it is fashioned by the Hand of God into the most beautiful of earthly forms. It is the spirit that animates that dust which gives it the light, the power, the beauty that it possesses, and the moment that spirit departs, just as surely as from dust you came, so certainly "unto dust thou shalt return." The light is extinguished and the lamp is shattered; the spirit has gone back to the eternal source whence it originally came, and the casement that held it is now merely the clay from which it was originally made. You may be buried in the sands of the desert and your remains be

scorched into nothingness, you may be cast into the depths of the ocean, and your body become the prey of the fishes, you may be interred in some rock formation where the chemical process of petrification will take place; it matters not where, or how, or when, but one thing is certain, those remains shall eventually become pulverized, they shall finally be reduced to mere dust. This is not a matter of Faith, it is not a truth that religion calls upon us to accept as a dogma, without any tangible evidence of its reality; it is demonstrated by the experience of all times. Do you seek the proof of the fact that you shall return to dust?

Come to yonder cemetery and you cannot find one, in all that vast city of the dead, that has not been reduced to ashes. Go into the vaults of the great cathedrals, descend into the winding labyrinth of the catacombs, at every step you are confronted with evidences of the great and undeniable truth that "unto dust thou shalt return." It is a condemnation that sweeps the whole human race; rich or poor, great or small, king or beggar, all, without exception, have had to undergo the same process of decomposition, of reduction to dust. Penetrate the inner chambers of the great Egyptian monuments, and there in the sarcophagi, are to be found the mummies that have continued to exist, in their embalmed state, for three, and even four thousand years. Unwrap one of the bands, expose the form to the air and light, and immediately it crumbles into dust. Vainly has the inventive faculty of man ransacked the secrets of science in order to counteract that universal return to dust, but the genius of man has fallen down impotent in presence of the supreme law, while science has been confounded by the perpetual recurrence of the same results.

A sad prospect, indeed, for poor, frail humanity! To be born in pains, to struggle for a few years in misery, to die, at last, in sufferings, and to be reduced to dust. The Atheist, the Materialist, the Freethinker must certainly shudder when he reflects—if ever he does reflect—upon this inglorious termination of so promising a career. It is painfully true and we cannot bear to realize that it must eventually come to us all. To have lived a short space, to have attempted much and accomplished nothing and to go down into the earth without any prospect beyond mouldering in the dust. Perchance a few may not go down!

"Unwept, unhonored and unsung," but even the tears are short-lived, they cannot last beyond the life of the sorrowing one, the honors are useless, and the song cannot be heard by the ear that is reduced to ashes. What a dreary, miserable prospect for the unfortunate, unbelieving Atheist, the man who has no soul, or thinks he has none, who believes in no God, or attempts to deny Him.

But for the Catholic, the one with a pure and honest Faith, a sincere Hope and a fervent Charity, what a glorious prospect even in this reduction to the dust! The sun of life may go down into the great gulf of the tomb, but it immediately appears upon the horizon of an unending day beyond. That dust is gathered by the hands of angels, in the fulness of time, and at the sound of the last trumpet the bodies of the millions shall arise, not as they went down, but glorified in all the perfection of spirituality. Time shall be lost in Eternity, Mortality shall be merged in Immortality, the Corporal shall become as the Spiritual, and each particular grain of that dust shall be a prism upon which the rays of God's glory shall play, thereby lending to the body the infinite splendor of countless inconceivable beauties all