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THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JAN. 12, 1855.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

After much angry discussion, the Bill for enlisting foreigners for Her Majesty's Service has passed—thus virtually confessing that Great Britain cannot carry on an extensive war with the aid of only her own native-born subjects. Another Bill for enabling the Militia to enlist for foreign service, has also been carried, but without any serious opposition. These have been the principal subjects to which the attention of the Imperial Legislature has been directed. In the House of Lords, the Earl of Aberdeen, in reply to a question from Lord Clancarty, stated that the Report of the Maynooth Committee would be laid before Parliament during the first week in February. This will be the signal for another outburst of Protestant malevolence and misrepresentation.

The terms of the Austrian Treaty are now before the world. In substance they provide that Austria shall occupy in force the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, and defend them against any return of the Russians; and that in the meantime the Anglo-French and Ottoman troops shall have free movement in the said Principalities against the forces and territory of Russia. This, which is the substance of the second article, is tantamount to a declaration of war by Austria against Russia, though the latter may not so accept it.

The third article of the Treaty provides—that in case of hostilities between Austria and Russia—France and Great Britain guarantee their assistance to Austria, and mutually pledge themselves to an alliance offensive and defensive.

By the fourth article, the contracting parties engage themselves not to treat separately with Russia. The fifth article pledges the contracting parties—in case the re-establishment of a general peace should not be assured in the course of the present year—to take further steps for the attainment of their object. By the sixth article, Prussia is invited to become a party to the Treaty. This Treaty may mean a good deal, or nothing at all, according to the interpretation put upon it by Austria, and the spirit in which it is received at St. Petersburg. The Czar may accept it as a declaration of war on the part of Austria; and, commencing hostilities against the latter Power, may thus bring about the "offensive and defensive alliance," provided for by the third article.

Or if, finding that he has already as much on his hands as he can well manage, the Czar should for the present take no notice of the hostile language of the second article of the Treaty, and in consequence commence no hostilities against Austria, then the third article—providing for an alliance offensive and defensive betwixt Austria and the Western Powers—would remain a dead letter. It is thus still in the power of Russia to keep Austria detached from the other Allies.

It is confidently asserted that the Treaty contains a secret article guaranteeing to Austria the integrity of all her dominions, in case she should take up arms against Russia. This, if true, will have its weight with the Court of Vienna; and fear of Mazzini and his revolutionary projects in Italy, may thus compel the Emperor to take a decided position upon the great Eastern Question. Little reliance however is placed upon the Treaty in England; and, in spite of the thunders of the Times, Lord John Russell is now believed to have formed a correct estimate of its value.

From the Crimea we have nothing very cheering, yet nothing to make us despond. The situation of the Allies is precarious, but certainly not desperate; and though sickness and exposure to the weather, have much thinned their ranks—there is every reason to believe that the Russians are suffering from the same causes still more severely.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

"And when there was much disputing, Peter rising up said to them: Men, brethren, you know that in former days God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe."—Acts xv., 7.

In these simple words of Holy Writ is contained the Constitution of the Catholic Church. When there has been much disputing amongst the brethren, of Peter—of whom God in former days made choice—that the nations should hear the Gospel by his mouth, and, hearing, should believe—Peter rises up, and at his voice disputes are hushed, and controversy ceases to rage. "Roma locuta est, causa finita est."

So, was it amongst the assembled, Fathers of the Church at Jerusalem eighteen hundred years ago; so was it at Rome on the ever memorable 8th of De-

ember last, Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. For, on that day, and at the request of his brethren from all parts of the world, Peter, rising up, pronounced the decision so long expected, so long desired by the whole body of the Faithful. From the Chair of Peter, he to whom of old, God committed the charge of confirming his brethren in the faith, and of teaching the nations, defined as an article of Faith, as a portion of the truth revealed from the beginning, and delivered to the Church, that the Blessed Virgin was in her Conception, as in her life, Immaculate, free from all taint of sin.

That such an event, so solemn, so important in its consequences, and so illustrative of the vitality of that Power which, for the last three hundred years, has been pronounced to be in the last stage of decrepitude and dotage, should have been allowed to pass over without notice from the Non-Catholic world, is what we neither expected, nor desired.—We naturally expected that Protestantism would be moved to anger at the glorious spectacle of Catholic unity, given by the gathering together in the capital of the Christian world, of Prelates from all quarters of the globe, convened at the summons of one old man, without armies or fleets to enforce his commands—and strong only in this, that, "in former days God made choice" of Peter, to proclaim His truth unto the nations that "they might hear the word of the Gospel and believe." Such a striking testimony to the vitality of Popery, must indeed have greatly disgusted the good old women of Old Exeter Hall, according to whose calculations the Papacy gave up the ghost three centuries ago, or at least was to do so before the close of the present. Protestant history of the past, and Protestant predictions for the future, have both been most cruelly refuted by the late assembly of Catholic Bishops at Rome, who, to make matters worse—as some of the Protestant papers complain—have had the audacity to meet together without the consent of their respective sovereigns, without so much even as asking leave of the civil power! Gallicanism is aghast at the prodigy.

Objections then—to the meeting of the Bishops, and to the arrogant pretensions of the Sovereign Pontiff—misrepresentations also of the dogma by him defined—for these we were fully prepared. But—small as is our respect for Protestant theology—we did not anticipate such an extraordinary display of stupidity as has been given to the world by the Protestant press in its comments upon the events of last month. We knew that Protestants had but very confused notions about "Original Sin;" but we did not think that they were so utterly ignorant upon this doctrine, as the ravings of their journals prove them to be. To listen to them, one would fancy that to pronounce the Blessed Virgin, immaculate in her conception, is to declare her to be a Goddess, the equal in dignity of her Divine Son, whose conception also was immaculate. Little do these good folks dream that the Catholic Church, in asserting as an article of faith the Immaculate Conception of Mary, attributes to the Blessed Virgin nothing more than is claimed for every child of Adam—directly, by all Liberal Christians—by implication, by most of the evangelical sects of Protestants who deny Baptismal Regeneration—"ex opere operato."

The former, or Liberal Christian, explicitly denies the transmission of the sin of Adam to his descendants; he denies that all men, or that any men, are by nature "children of wrath"—Eph. 2, 3—slaves of the devil, and exiles from God's Kingdom; and therefore asserts that all are conceived immaculate. The latter, or evangelical, who scouts the sacramental efficacy of Baptism, who denies that the new-born babe is thereby, and without any act of its own, born again, and thus made a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven, must perform admit as the consequence of his own premises, one of two things—either that the babe needs no regeneration, and has therefore been conceived immaculate—or that, even after, and in spite of Baptism, the wretched babe, though perfectly guiltless of itself, and incapable of actual sin, still remains an object of God's abhorrence, and indignation. As few, except some old, rigid Calvinists—whose God is but the Devil under another name—would dare so to malign the God of Christians as to accept the second alternative, the evangelical Protestant must, in his heart at least, even if he does not do so with his lips, reject the doctrine of Original Sin; and, as the alternative least dishonoring to the goodness and justice of God, must, if he abjures "baptismal regeneration," deny its necessity, and must therefore, by implication, admit the immaculate conception of every child of Adam. Indeed how any man can profess to believe in the transmission of "Original Sin," whilst denying the regeneration of the baptised babe, by sacramental grace, or "ex opere operato"—and at the same time assert that the God Whom he worships, is a Being of infinite love, and infinite justice—is to us utterly incomprehensible. We can understand why such a Being should be feared; why men should strive to propitiate their Moloch with bloody sacrifices, and human victims. But to love such a Being—but to offer Him the adoration of our hearts or of our intellects!—No—it would be to libel humanity to suppose it capable of such worship!

And herein, perhaps, is the secret of Protestant hostility to the doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception" of the Blessed Virgin—in that, by implication, asserts the doctrine of "Original Sin," and the transmission of the taint thereby contracted, to every child of Adam—except the Blessed Virgin and her Divine Son—and, as a necessary consequence, the efficacy of Sacramental grace in the Sacrament of Baptism, whereby the babe, conceived in sin, and under a curse, is cleansed, is purified, and made a child of God and an inheritor of the everlasting Kingdom. Viewing it in this light, we may look upon the late decision of the Pope, as the reply of Catho-

licity to the finding of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in the Gorham case, which virtually erased the doctrine of baptismal regeneration—and therefore of the transmission of Original Sin—from the creed of the only Protestant sect, which still professed to cling to these rags of Popery.

Others again who see nothing very extraordinary in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, object to its definition as an article of faith, because they cannot see the necessity or utility of it. This objection, as the former, proceeds from that unfortunate dullness of vision to which all Protestants are subject, and which prevents them from seeing the indissoluble connection that exists betwixt all parts of the Catholic system. No one Catholic dogma stands alone; it is always related to, and in logical connection with, some other doctrine of the Church. Thus, by proclaiming the "Immaculate Conception" of the Blessed Virgin, the Church expressly teaches that hers was an exceptional case—therefore that none others of women born, were so conceived—therefore that every child of Adam is conceived subject to the divine sentence pronounced against Adam and his descendants, and so remains until cleansed in the life-giving waters of Baptism. The doctrine of the "Immaculate Conception" may thus be said to contain the whole doctrine of the Church on "Original Sin" from which again flows her doctrine of "Justification"—the intimate connection of which with the whole of the Catholic system, as defined by the Council of Trent we need not here stop to examine. So far then from the definition of the Immaculate Conception of the B. Virgin being an isolated and unimportant fact in the Church's history, it may with truth be said that by means of it alone, she refutes and condemns some of the subtlest and most pernicious heresies of the age—just as 1423 years ago, the Council of Ephesus, by the one word—"theotokos," or Mother of God—silenced those heretics who sought to dissolve the ONE Christ, by distinguishing in Him two Persons, one human, the other Divine. Here, too, we may catch a glimpse of the Church's meaning when she says of the Blessed Virgin—that she alone has destroyed all heresies; and here too we may perceive the cause of the hatred which all heretics entertain towards Mary—a hatred so intense, that, whilst they would cheerfully admit the immaculate conception of every other child of Adam, they would still persist in making an exception in her case alone.

Another objection to the definition of the "Immaculate Conception," just pronounced by the successor of St. Peter, is, that it introduces a "new dogma into the Church, not believed heretofore, and not contained in the original depositum." This is in substance the objection raised by all heretics whenever the Church, for the edification of her children, and the confutation of heresies—contra errores nascentes—has seen fit to define her doctrines. Thus the Arians complained bitterly against the Fathers of Nice for introducing a "new dogma," unknown before the IV century, and enforcing a novel faith upon the Church. The answer to those heretics was—"True, the dogma had not been authoritatively defined before the Council, but that the Son was Consubstantial to the Father, has ever been believed by the Church. The definition is new, but not so the belief." So also the Nestorians raised a great outcry against the introduction of another "new dogma" by the Council of Ephesus. "No"—replied the Fathers of Ephesus—"we have introduced no new dogma, we have only defined the old." Again, when the more recent addition of the "Filioque" was made to the Nicene Creed—an addition which some Protestant sects accept, and which has obtained the sanction of the British Parliament—the same complaints were uttered against the bringing in of strange doctrines, unknown to the early Church; but still the reply was the same. "The definition indeed is new, but the thing believed is as old as Christianity." So with the "Immaculate Conception" of the Blessed Virgin. The belief in her sinless conception has prevailed in the Church from the earliest ages—but, just as the Consobstantiality of the Son to the Father was not authoritatively defined before the IV century, so the belief in the "Immaculate Conception" of the Mother was not defined until some centuries later; and just as it would be false to say that the Council of Nice introduced any "new dogma," so also is it equally false to assert that Pius IX has, by his late definition, given any new faith to the Church. With the unanimous assent of the Catholic Church, he has merely declared that that doctrine has always been believed, and forms part of the original depositum committed to the Church. The definition of the doctrine dates indeed only from the 8th of December 1854; the doctrine itself, from the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended upon Peter and the other Apostles.

Having thus briefly noticed some of the leading objections against the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, we will in a few words state what the doctrine of the Church, as authoritatively defined, really is.

"That the Blessed Mother of God, by the special and peculiar grace of her Creator, and through the merits of the Redeemer of the entire human race, was conceived Immaculate, and free from all taint of Original Sin." In other words, that she—whom the Angel found "full of grace," who bore in her virginal womb, and nursed on her bosom, the Lord of Hosts, whose eyes are too pure to behold iniquity—was never, no, not for a moment, subject to the power of the devil; that Satan never had any dominion over the mother of Our Lord; and that no unclean spirit ever possessed that tabernacle wherein lay the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, when He, in great humility, and for our salvation took flesh of the Virgin Mother. When He came to deliver man, He did not abhor the Virgin's womb.—Must we not then reject as monstrous, the proposition

that that Virgin whom he chose for His Mother, was ever, even for one moment, the servant of His enemy, the prey of that old serpent whose head—as of old it had been proclaimed to the Fathers—was to be crushed by the heel of the woman? Shall we not then, with joy and confidence implore her powerful intercession; calling upon her, as the Church now addresses her, with a thousand voices, but with one heart, "Ave Maria, sine labe concepta, Ora pro nobis."

The Transcript professes to marvel at the sympathy generally expressed by the Yankees with the Russian Czar, in his contest with the Western Powers. "Were the Russian Czar, or the Russian government, or the Russian people, in any one respect similar to their own"—says our cotemporary—"tho' we might regret it, we would not be so much surprised at this state of feeling." But he asks—"Is such the case?"

Most assuredly it is; and it is in the striking analogy between the characters, habits, and feelings, of the Russian and American peoples—and in the fact that these common characteristics are the results of their respective forms of government—that we find the solution of the enigma which so sorely puzzles our friend of the Transcript. It is because monarchical despotism, and democratic, or polyarchical despotism, have so much in common, that the sympathies of democratic America are so decidedly and unmistakably Russian.

The names indeed of things are different in the two countries; but the things themselves are substantially the same; for in both the people are the subjects of the most crushing and absolute despotism. In one case they are subject to the will of a Czar—in the other, to the will of a bruté majority; but a man is as much a slave, if controlled by the will of a million, as if by the will of one. Perhaps of the two forms of despotism, the former is, if anything, the more degrading and ruinous in its influences; and certainly the condition of a Russian serf is at least as enviable as that of the poor miserable abject wretch in the United States, trembling lest he should offend "popular opinion," and hardly daring to call his soul his own, without the permission of a brawling rabble. Let us not be understood as undervaluing the authority of "public opinion." "Public opinion" is always to be respected, always to be obeyed, when it is in the right, and when it is in accordance with the Divine Law; not however when it cries out—"Crucify Him; Crucify Him!"

"Just as if a man had any personal rights"—is the formula of democratic despotism—and wherein does this formula differ from that in which a Nicholas of Russia would enunciate the principles of his government? The fundamental principle of all despotisms—monarchical or polyarchical—is, that the "individual has no rights." Now this principle is asserted as broadly and as distinctly by a Mayor of Portland, as by an Emperor of all the Russias; and wherever this principle is recognised and acted upon—there there is despotism with all its odious concomitants—there there is slavery, with all its loathsomeness and degradation—slavery the more loathsome, in that it exerts its blighting influences over the souls as well as over the bodies of its victims, thus rendering them as unworthy, as incapable of freedom.

Far then from being surprised at the manifestation of American sympathy for the cause of Russia, we look upon it as the most natural thing in the world. Besides, Russia is the great Anti-Catholic power in the East, as the United States are in the West.—Russia is the representative of monarchical, as the United States are of democratic, Absolutism; both claim the sanction of God for their despotisms—one by upholding the blasphemous doctrine of the "divine right of kings"—the other, in asserting the equally blasphemous dogma of the "divine right of peoples;" and the "impious declaration" of the Czar, which elicits the indignation of the Transcript—"that there are but two powers in existence, God in Heaven, and the Emperor upon earth"—is paralleled by, but is surely not more objectionable than, the maxims of modern democracy, which, altogether ignoring "God in Heaven" recognise as the only legitimate source of power—"the peoples upon earth."

Whilst then in every important feature there is such a striking family resemblance betwixt Czarism, and democratic despotism, it must at all events be admitted that what differences there are, are altogether in favor of the former. There is no hypocrisy, no cant about liberty in Moscow; and the stranger arriving in St. Petersburg, is not greeted with the ridiculous lie—"This is a free country." In other respects, we see little to choose betwixt Russia and the Model Republic. In one, our Nuns are fogged, by order of the Czar-despot; in the other, Catholic priests are tarred and feathered by the "Sovereign People"—despot—"Arcades ambo."

THE COAL QUESTION.—The controversy as to whether there be coal in the Quebec Mountain still continues to rage at Quebec; though it seems to us that those of our cotemporaries who maintain the affirmative are somewhat inclined to blink the real question at issue. They point to a certain "black bituminous and inflammable" substance found in small quantities in the "fissures of the rock," and thence triumphantly conclude to the existence of coal; as if every black, bituminous and inflammable substance was necessarily coal. No geologist ever doubted, and Mr. Logan long ago pointed out, the existence of a black bituminous and inflammable substance in the mountain at Quebec, but he denied that the said substance was coal; and until his opponents shall have proved it to be coal, Mr. Logan's authority as one of the first geologists of the day remains unimpaired; nay—if anything, still further confirmed by the wonderful mare's nest lately discovered at Quebec, ex-