

The True Witness.

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NEWS OF THE WEEK.

THE London Times calls the reply of the Russian Government to the Notes of the Western Powers remonstrating in the case of Poland, "a slap on the face," and its effect seems to have been stunning.

The European news by the last mails present little of interest. It was rumoured that Mr. Stephens the Vice President of the Confederate States was about to visit Paris, to arrange with Louis Napoleon for the immediate recognition of his government, with a proviso for the emancipation of the blacks.

Since our last no very important changes have occurred in the relative positions of the belligerents in the South. General Rosecrans is still at Chattanooga, where he is in a manner besieged by the Confederates under General Bragg.

The Africa from Liverpool 3rd inst. struck on Cape Race on the evening of the 13th during a dense fog. She was got off in about half an hour, and bore up for St. John's N F, making water fast.

By latest advices from the States it seems that General Lee is menacing Washington, that General Meade is retreating, and that the position of General Rosecrans at Chattanooga is very critical.

UNITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.—The sacred historians never weary of insisting upon the unity of the early Church, the accord, the one spirit of her pastors.

In vain, however, outside of the Catholic Church do we look any longer for that unity; no where save within her court: are our ears greeted with those tones in sweetest accord, which characterise the professors of the true faith, and which so strongly impressed both Jews and Gentiles in days of old.

when all the multitude gathered together in Jerusalem—Parthians and Medes, strangers of Rome and Arabians, heard, every man in his own tongue, the Apostles declaring to them the wonderful works of God.

Of this unity of doctrine and of speech, of this perfect accord, which everywhere throughout the world characterise the Pastors of the Catholic Church, and distinguish them from the preachers of error, we shall find a notable example in the Address lately published by the members of the Irish Hierarchy on the School Question—and of which Address we have given a report on another page.

"The bishops of Ireland, assembled in obedience to the instructions of the Sovereign Pontiff, and having their attention particularly directed, by his authority to the national system of education, reiterate their condemnation of the principle on which that system is based—namely, the principle of Mixed education—as intrinsically unsound and as unsafe in practice, as at variance with the interests of the Catholic religion and dangerous to the faith of their flocks.

Our Lord prayed, the night he was betrayed, that His Disciples might be one even as He and the Father were one; that so the world might believe that the Father had sent Him. Only in the Catholic Church can we find the fulfilment, or any approximation even to the fulfilment, of that prayer—any semblance of that unity which was to be to the world a proof of the divine origin of Christianity.

THE CATHOLIC CONGRESS, AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.—The British evangelical press is in a state of great nervous trepidation, on account of the alarming progress of Popery. The old ladies who frequent Exeter Hall are becoming decidedly hysterical; the reverend gentlemen, who for years have been announcing the downfall of the "Man of Sin," find all their prophecies falsified, and know not what to make of it;

"Those who are quick enough to discover the approach of every other danger to our Church and country, have been unobservant of the sure, though 'creeping' progress of the Church of Rome.

"We are beginning to talk of these things, a certain feeling of alarm is beginning to steal over us.—We feel that it is time to act; but the question as to what we ought to do is as yet unanswered."—London Record.

Again, in another of our evangelical contemporaries, we find the following lament over the spread of Popery even in Presbyterian Scotland:—

"ROMANISM IN SCOTLAND.—Devout hearts in Scotland are alarmed at the rapid growth of Romanism in that stronghold of Protestantism."

are enough; and afford matter, not only for congratulation over the past, and of cheering prospects for the future, but of serious meditation upon the existing relations between Church and State, and the tendencies of modern Liberalism.

In the first place we say that the triumphant progress of Catholicity in Great Britain, as recorded and mourned over by our evangelical contemporaries, furnishes a striking commentary upon the words of M. de Montalembert in his famous discourse upon Toleration and Religious Liberty, lately delivered before the Catholic Congress at Malines. The thesis which this justly celebrated Catholic publicist undertook to defend was in substance this. That the one thing needed by the Church was liberty; and that with this liberty conceded to her, and with equal liberty to her enemies and to the apostles of error, she could not but prosper, and obtain the victory over her adversaries.

And what say facts?—what testimony do they give? Does Catholicity thrive better in Italy, Spain, or in Portugal, than it does in England and Scotland? Is not the perfect freedom accorded by the State to her adversaries in the last named countries to propagate their errors, fully compensated, even by the partial freedom which the Church herself enjoys to preach the truth? How rare a thing in the British Islands, where no legal restraints upon the proselytising energies of the Protestant missionary or preacher exist, is a case of apostasy from the Catholic Church; but how constant, how frequently occurring are cases of conversion from Protestantism to Catholicity!

Another case strikingly in point is to be found in this Canada of ours. Here, thank God! in so far as the State is concerned, the Church enjoys perfect freedom; but here too, the missionaries and preachers of heresy enjoy equal privileges, and exercise those privileges to the utmost. And what is the result? Why this: That in no part of the world is the Church more flourishing, her prospects brighter, and defections less numerous than in this land of perfect religious liberty.

And yet efforts are being incessantly made to destroy our religion, and to undermine the faith of the simple habitants of our rural districts.—Societies, large and wealthy; organisations, with untold riches at their command, squander annually their thousands and tens of thousands of dollars in the vain hope of uprooting Popery.—The "Swaddler," the tract and bible pedlar, the missionaries and the agents of these Societies, here, in so far as the law is concerned, free access to every Romish ear; and are at liberty, without let or hindrance of any kind, to exercise all their powers of eloquence and persuasion upon their listeners, so as to induce them to renounce the Catholic faith.

course, in every community are to be found some bad characters—some two or three who are going to the devil any how, in spite of all that priest can say or do—some depraved, ignorant mercenary creatures ready to sell their own souls and the souls of their children for a mess of pottage; and of such of these, it may well happen, that the "Swaddlers" may have picked up about a score or two during the many years of their expensive administrations. But of these the numbers are so few, as to make not the slightest perceptible difference in the size of the congregation of the smallest rural church in the country; and had there been no such thing as the Society in existence, all of those who have gone over to the "Swaddlers" would nevertheless have been equally lost to the Church, because of their incorrigible immorality, their vicious habits, and the hopelessness of their reformation. One disorderly house, or one grogshop causes more defections from Catholicity in a month, than all that the "Swaddling" Societies can boast of having effected during the last ten years: one lewd or immoral pamphlet is more dangerous to Popery than all the Protestant bibles, and all the tracts of all the proselytising Societies in Canada. The only sentiments which these excite in the bosoms of Catholics are those—not of fear or alarm—but of scorn and derision. By their ill-success, no less than by their tactics, they have become the laughing stock and bye-word of the community; and so far from feeling inclined to invoke the interference of the State against them, we almost feel grateful to them, for that they serve as receptacles into which our moral filth can conveniently and expeditiously be discharged; and thus fulfil the useful if not honorable end of a drain or sewer through which we get rid, in the persons of their converts, of the noisome feculent matter, which if retained might seriously have impaired our health. Certainly the Church has lost nothing in Canada, because of the perfect freedom accorded to the Sects to propagate, and endeavor to make proselytes to, their erroneous doctrines.

Now in the actual condition of society the utmost that the Church can hope for from the State is freedom; and in fact, this is far more than she actually obtains from any Liberal Government, whether calling itself Catholic or Protestant. The State by its own act, by its own suicidal folly, has everywhere assumed an attitude of antagonism towards the Church; and much as it is to be regretted, still it is useless to deny that the days of friendly connection betwixt them are over, and perhaps for ever. It is this consideration no doubt, that prompted the language of M. de Montalembert; for, taken as an abstract proposition it certainly is not to be desired that the State should cease to be connected with the Church, for it is only through, or in virtue of that connection, that the State can be entitled to call itself Christian. But as a matter of fact, the State, as society is at present constituted, and though the prevalence of Liberal and revolutionary principles, will tolerate no connection with the Church except that which subsists betwixt master and slave; and the question which the discourse of M. de Montalembert raises is this. Is not perfect freedom for the Church preferable to such a connection?

What Liberals think of the problem when proposed to their solution we know from their acts, from the proceedings of the Liberals in Italy at the present day, as well as from the laws which the legislators for France of the last generation, enacted against the Church, and which they styled the "Civil Constitution of the Clergy." Freedom of Religion, and its necessary accompaniment, Freedom of Education, are impossible where Liberal principles prevail; and both Church and School are in fetters there where the modern Revolutionary ideas have been expressed in legislative action. The religious liberty, therefore, which M. de Montalembert contends for is not the liberty to reject the truth, or as against the Church; but, in his own words "as against the State, and only against the State"—for in the actual condition of society the principles of Liberalism are in the ascendant; and the principles of Liberalism are as hostile to the rights and freedom of the Church as they are to the rights and the freedom of the Individual and the Family.

THE ELECTIVE AND THE HEREDITARY SYSTEMS.—Some men are born great, we are told; others achieve greatness; others have greatness thrust upon them. In the last category—that of those who have greatness thrust upon them—we must class poor Abe Lincoln, if notoriety be greatness, and to be much spoken of, an enviable thing. Certainly, whether for good or evil, the name of Abe Lincoln will be handed down to posterity, as connected with the great American Civil war, and the breaking up of the Union. A melancholy fame enough, in all conscience; that of a Yankee Erostrates, whose impious hand destroyed the fair political temple, the delight and wonder of the universe, to which from all quarters of the globe pilgrims came to worship. If we consider it, it will appear very strange that the name of an Abe Lincoln should be immortal even as is that of a Washington—yet

no doubt so will it be. The latter achieved greatness by his virtues; the former has had greatness thrust upon him, by the operation of the elective principle, and democratic institutions.

Unhappy man that he is! What had he done that he should be thus doomed to an unenviable immortality! Why did his fellow-countrymen, in an evil hour for themselves, and for him, go and make a President of him! But for their folly, and his ambition, he might have been so contented, so happy! As a rail splitter, as a country attorney, even as a devisor and compounder of strange drinks, and still stranger oaths, he might have enjoyed the esteem, and excited the admiration of his contemporaries; whilst as the author of the "Obscene Jester," and compiler of "The Smutty Story Book," he might have passed, even in his own country where such talents are admired, and such works eagerly sought after, for a prophet; and so have gone to his long rest with the reputation of being an honest jovial old soul, cunning in the mixing up of gin-slings, and mint-juleps, and without a rival in the art of cracking dirty jokes. So might Abe have lived and died, but for the injudicious vote which consigned him to the unenviable notoriety of a Presidency, beneath which the great work of the founders of the American Republic has been undone, shivered to pieces, and the fragments scattered to the four quarters of the heavens.

A strange commentary upon the value of the elective principle, as applied to the Chief Executive of the State, does this vote afford. The hereditary principle makes mistakes sometimes no doubt; gives us a Louis Quinze, or a George the Fourth; but never did it raise to power or notoriety a more grotesque object than this poor jesting Abe Lincoln; whose very absurdity won for him a kind of popularity, and who is only not hateful because he is so irresistibly ludicrous that it is impossible to refrain from laughter when one looks at him. Such is the man whom, in a most critical epoch, the voice of the people raised to sovereign power. If he be indeed their first and best man, their supremely able man, their man of consummate ability, their representative man—what must we think of the people of whom such a one as Abe Lincoln is the best, the wisest, the most able, and the fitting representative? If he be not all these things; if there be amongst the people of the Northern States men more wise, and more able, as clarity bids us believe that there are men more comely, and with more of the manners of the gentlemen about them, than poor Abe Lincoln—what must we think of the value of the elective system and democratic institutions. It is not because a disruption betwixt North and South has occurred, that men, calmly reviewing the events now transpiring on this Continent, pronounce democracy a failure; but because democracy as carried out into practice in the United States, places such men as Abe Lincoln at the head of the State in the most critical period of its existence. Viewed in the light of facts, the elective principle as applied to the Executive branch of Government, appears as a cunningly devised machinery for securing an elevation to supreme power to the most unworthy.

This should teach us, subjects of Queen Victoria, to be contented with, any profoundly thankful to God for, our lot, and reconcile us to those little imperfections from which no political system is, or can be, entirely free. If democracy in the United States may be said to be on its trial, we in Canada, may well sit as jurymen and deliver our verdict. The result will be, we think, to make us more attached to our own system of Government, and more unwilling than ever to adopt those democratic changes which the Liberals and Clear-Grits are so earnestly endeavoring to force upon us.

We have alluded elsewhere to the wonderful, and to Protestants, the alarming progress of Popery in Scotland. The subjoined statistics, for which we are indebted to the Liverpool Northern Press, will show wherein that progress consists, and its extent, during the last five and thirty years:—

Table with 4 columns: Year, Bishops, Priests, Churches, Colleges, Convents. Rows for 1828, 1863, and Increase.

And this marvellous progress has been accomplished in one generation, and in spite of the most adverse circumstances. What then may we not hope, and confidently expect, will be accomplished before another quarter of a century shall have passed away? It is not merely by the great increase in the numbers of Bishops and Clergy that we may estimate the great increase of the numbers of Catholics in Scotland; but above all, by the greater number of churches and chapels now required for their accommodation. When even now not very old were young, twenty chapels and churches fully sufficed for the Catholics of Scotland; to-day, nearly ten times that number can hardly furnish the necessary accommodation—and it must be remembered that the Catholic churches erected in Scotland of late years, exceed as