



# The True Witness

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE. MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MAY 1, 1874. VOL. XXIV. NO. 37.

**JUST PUBLISHED:**  
**FINE ENGRAVING OF FATHER MATHEW.**  
 We take great pleasure in announcing the publication of a beautiful portrait of the GREAT APOSTLE OF TEMPERANCE.  
 It represents him as he appears giving the TEMPERANCE PLACARD; and below the Engraving is a facsimile of his handwriting endorsing this likeness of himself as "A CORRECT ONE."  
 It has been gotten up at a very great expense and is, without doubt, the finest and most LIFE-LIKE portrait of Father Mathew that has ever been published.  
 It is printed on heavy plate paper, size 24x32 inches, and will frame 22x28 inches.  
 PRICE ONLY ONE DOLLAR.  
 Temperance Societies and congregations intending to order should do so immediately so as to procure PROOF COPIES.  
**THE ILLUSTRIOUS SONS OF IRELAND,**  
 A New and Beautiful Engraving, "The Illustrious Sons of Ireland," from a Painting by J. Donaghy. It embraces the following well-known portraits:— Brian Boron, Major-General Patrick Sarsfield, Oliver Plunkett, D. D., John Philpot Curran, Hugh O'Neil, Thomas Davis, Oliver Goldsmith, Thomas Moore, Archbishop MacHale, Father Mathew, Daniel O'Connell, Wolfe Tone, Edmund Burke, Robert Emmet, Richard Lalor Shiel, Henry Grattan, M. P., William Smith O'Brien, Gerald Griffin, John Mitchell, Rev. T. Burke, O. P., etc., etc.  
 Printed on heavy plate paper, 24x32 inches, and will frame 22x28 inches.  
 PRICE, ONLY ONE DOLLAR.  
 A liberal discount allowed when taken in quantities.  
 Sent free by mail, postage paid, on receipt of price.  
 Agents Wanted.—Address, D. & J. SALLER & CO., Montreal.  
 Every man who loves Ireland should possess one or both of those beautiful Engravings.

**ISABELLE DE VERNEUIL;**  
 OR,  
**THE CONVENT OF ST. MARY'S.**  
 BY MRS. CHARLES SNELL,  
 Author of "Helen and Florence, or a Month's Holiday at Rockfield Castle."

**CHAPTER I.**  
 "Here is a new companion for you, my dear children," said a nun, on opening the door of a large airy school-room, where were assembled five or six young girls, who were chatting merrily together. "Young ladies, allow me to introduce Mademoiselle Isabelle de Verneuil; a new pupil, and the step-daughter of an amiable and gentle lady, who was formerly a pupil here."  
 On hearing these words, and on recognizing the kind voice of the Sister Josephine, the head mistress of the school department of St. Mary's Convent, at D—, in Normandy, the young girls rose and eagerly advanced towards the nun, to welcome the stranger pupil; but the youthful Isabelle seemed in no mood to respond to their greeting; for, after examining the room and its occupants, apparently with no pleasurable feelings, her eyes flashed, and her whole face glowed with anger, as she said:  
 "I wish to return to my mother who is in the parlor."  
 "Madame de Verneuil is gone," said the nun.  
 "Gone!" cried Isabelle, her eyes filling with tears. "Do you mean to say that my mother is gone, and has left me here alone?"  
 "Not alone, my child," said the sympathizing Sister Josephine. "Are we not all here? And these young girls, are they not ready to be your friends and companions?"  
 "How can they be my friends when I have never seen them before?" And tears filled the large black eyes of the newcomer, and rolled rapidly down her cheeks. Sobs of bitter disappointment quickly succeeded each other, until at last her whole frame was quivering with emotion, and absorbed in grief. Not only the present, but the future, appeared under colors so gloomy and disheartening, that she thought herself the most unfortunate girl in the world, and no pen can describe the bitter anguish she felt, and the unutterable woe depicted on her countenance.  
 The young girls to whom the Sister Josephine had introduced the youthful Isabelle, were, at that time, the eldest pupils in the school, and scarcely one of them could count more than fourteen summers. Isabelle de Verneuil was eleven years old, and, up to the day when we present her to our readers, she had been the spoiled darling of her widowed father. Her mother had died in giving her birth, and during the ten years that had followed that sad event, he had not only steadfastly refused to give her a step-mother, but had resisted all attempts of his family, who wished, for the child's sake, to remove her to a home where better care and attention could be afforded her. She had just attained her tenth year, when, yielding at last to the repeated solicitations of his mother and sister, he at length made up his mind, and married the daughter of a very old friend. The birth of a son, instead of cooling his affection for his eldest child, seemed, on the contrary, to augment it, and even then he resolutely refused to

comply with their wishes, and send her to school at the convent. In this family discussion the voice of the young wife was not once heard; her aim was to gain the love and affection of her little step-daughter, and, although one word from her would, have decided the question at once, she resolved in her own mind that the child, who had never left her father's side for a single day, should not have the power to say that she had been driven from home by a stranger.  
 Isabelle soon grew very fond of her step-mother, and when the birth of her little brother, so long and so impatiently expected, was announced to her, her joy knew no bounds. From that moment she spent almost all her time in Madame de Verneuil's apartments, nursing and rocking the new-born infant, bringing it not only all her playthings, but all the cakes and sugar-plums she could collect, and lavishing on the unconscious babe all the love and tenderness of her naturally good and affectionate heart. It was only during these protracted visits of Isabelle to her sick room that Madame de Verneuil first discovered the extent of the ignorance of her step-daughter.—Up to the period of her father's second marriage, her education had been so completely neglected that she scarcely knew how to read; writing and ciphering were unknown acquisitions to her; and, although she spoke a few words which served as prayer, morning and evening, it was easy to see that even the simplest notions of religion were still a mystery to the poor child.  
 "I received my first communion at eleven years old, and I was the first in the catechism class," said the young mother to herself one morning, when some fresh and glaring proof of Isabelle's terrible ignorance had forced itself upon her mind; "but then I had a good and loving mother to watch over me as long as she lived, while this unfortunate girl lost her's at her birth."  
 By the end of the month, Madame de Verneuil had entirely regained her usual health and strength. The baby's health was perfect, and, in resuming her usual daily avocations, Isabelle became her inseparable companion, and the sad state of ignorance of the poor child became more than ever painfully evident, and caused many a serious thought to arise in the bosom of the young and happy wife.  
 "I am only twenty, it is true," said she to herself on one occasion, "and the more I reflect on my position in this house the more puzzled I am how to act. In marrying the Baron, I most certainly became his daughter's mother, consequently it is my bounden duty to watch over her and to bring her up in the paths of religion and virtue. She will be eleven years old in a month or two, and what to do I cannot imagine. Her ignorance is fearful; only this morning she asked me where the Blessed Lord lives, and whether the most Holy Virgin ever came to G—. Poor child! how much I pity her."  
 That same day, Madame de Verneuil had a long and serious conversation with her husband, which ended in her obtaining, although not without considerable difficulty, his permission for Isabelle to become a pupil at St. Mary's convent, the same where she herself had received her education. But this amiable young creature, not wishing the extreme ignorance of her step-daughter to become a matter of amusement to her school-fellows, postponed her departure for three months, during which time she herself undertook the religious instruction of the young girl. The unvarying kindness and the pious teaching of Madame de Verneuil conquered at last the extreme repugnance that Isabelle had at first manifested towards a school life. But when she was told that unless she paid great attention to her studies for the next few months she would be placed in a class with children three or four years her juniors, shame took possession of her bosom, and she begged and entreated Madame de Verneuil to continue her instructions, and to teach her as much as she could before the time came for her leaving home. Spoiled child though she was, she had not, however, a bad disposition; her heart was in the right place, and the ardent affection she had always manifested towards her step-mother and little brother proved it. But the poor child was much to be pitied. A kind and tender mother would, most certainly, have bestowed on her daughter those cares enjoyed by most children during the lifetime of their maternal parent; but Isabelle had, up to the age of ten years, been brought up by a father who, notwithstanding his passionate love for his daughter, had entirely forgotten that months and years were rolling on, and that her education was completely neglected.  
 Madame de Verneuil's confessor was a venerable priest, who served a little chapel built on the edge of the cliff overlooking the sea.—He had known her from childhood, and had himself trained her in the path of virtue. The benefits of a Christian education were too pre-

vious in the eyes of the young baroness for her not to wish the child she now looked upon as her own to participate in the same advantages she had herself received. By the advice of the good priest, she paid a visit to the convent and prepared the abbess to receive her new pupil. The holy Mother, St. Euphrasie, the Superioress of St. Mary's, was renowned throughout the country for her extreme goodness, as well as for her fervent zeal and true piety. She promised Madame de Verneuil to watch over the young Isabelle with the solicitude of a parent, and to impress upon her the value of a religious education, and to dispose her to a serious and lasting consideration of her own responsibilities and powers. That the young girl was possessed of an excellent capacity, Madame de Verneuil had early discovered, to which we may add a very good memory; and although her previous life had given her a distaste for all study and close application, yet the influence of her young step-mother seemed to have worked a change for good in her hitherto unteachable character.  
 "Let us hope for the best, dear daughter," said the amiable Superioress, on taking leave of her former pupil. "A few months residence with us will work wonders, and your Isabelle will soon learn to appreciate the happiness we all feel in loving God, and will then, I trust, serve Him faithfully, and resign herself completely to His most blessed guidance. At her age, with great attention and real good will, it will be easy to make up for lost time, and let us hope that ere many weeks have passed away she will have discovered that there is no true happiness on earth but that which is found in religion and in the accomplishment of those duties which God has set before us."  
 Isabelle de Verneuil thus became a pupil in St. Mary's convent, and, as we have already said, was introduced to her new school-fellows; but her grief was so intense that, for some time, she could take little if any notice of what was passing around her. Soon, however, she was surrounded by the little girls, who vied with each other in offering her the consolation of which she seemed so much in need. The little hand of one slipped itself into hers, the arm of another wound itself round her neck, and ere long she felt the soft breath and the gentle kisses of all who thus, by their innocent caresses, welcomed the stranger pupil to the convent of St. Mary's.  
 "All goes well," said the Sister Josephine to herself as she was leaving the room; and had she turned her head a moment later, she would have seen Isabelle seated in the centre of the little group, drying her eyes, and trying to answer all the various enquiries of the young girls, whose affectionate reception had already won her heart. Their childish sympathy was balm to her feelings, and the sight of their joyous, beaming countenances encouraged her to hope that after all she might be very happy at the convent.  
**CHAPTER II.**  
 The entrance of Isabelle de Verneuil into the convent had taken place on the Wednesday, and, the following day, as is often the case in schools, was kept as a holiday in honor of the new arrival. Unfortunately, however, it rained all day. The cold being intense, the young girls of the first class had agreed to meet immediately after breakfast in the school-room, where they were then busily chatting together. The entrance of the Sister Josephine, accompanied by two or three nuns, interrupted the conversation, and then, from all sides, arose a perfect chorus of murmuring and complaints against the bad weather, and grumblings against the bright, clear frost, which had already lasted some weeks, had been succeeded by a dreary period of storms of wind and rain.  
 "My children, my children!" said the Sister Therese, one of the nuns who had followed the Sister Josephine into the room. "How can you allow yourselves to murmur thus against the weather, whatever it may be? Do you not remember who it is that sends the fine weather as well as the rain?"  
 Not one of the young girls ventured a reply, for they all well knew that these impatient murmurs offended the Almighty.  
 "But I wished so much to have shown the garden to Isabelle," said, at length, a pretty fair girl, whom we shall call Cecile Blanchard.  
 "So did I," cried another, "and particularly the great tree struck by lightning last year. Also the arbor we sit in the summer;" added the speaker, whose name was Claire Bertrand.  
 "And I wished to show her our reverend mother's snowdrops," cried a third, the shy and retiring Eugenie de Grandville.  
 "Enough, young girls; murmur not against the decrees of heaven; for rain and sunshine have both their respective duties to fulfil, as I have so often told you," added the Sister.—"Come, no more grumbling; but let us reflect on how we are going to spend this nice long day. The evening we shall pass in our re-

verend mother's room as usual, to celebrate the arrival of a new pupil."  
 "As for me," said Cecile, "I have plenty to do, and shall be busy until dinner time; for, as we shall not be able to go out, I shall prepare all my lessons for to-morrow, as well as my English and Italian exercises. I shall then be quite at liberty and able to work all the afternoon."  
 "We will do so, too," cried Eugenie de Grandville and Claire Bertrand.  
 "And so will I," said a fourth, "but if Sister Josephine will allow me, I will first open this parcel which has just been brought me from home."  
 The last speaker, Clemence Lamorriere, was the daughter of an eminent Paris banker. Of a feeble and delicate constitution, she had barely attained the age of six years, when her parents, who had already lost several children, formed the resolution of sending this, their only child, to D—, there to receive her education, and to benefit as much by the Mother St. Euphrasie's tender care and watchfulness, as by the delicious sea breezes which came fresh and pure across the gardens and lawn. When our story opens, she was nearly twelve years of age, and was preparing as well as Cecile and Eugenie, to take her first communion. The parcel in question contained a quantity of material destined for the clothing of a poor child, who was also to participate in the Holy Feast; and accordingly to the rule of the house, each pupil was obliged not only to furnish, but to make all the articles worn by her poorer companion at the sacred ceremony. It was to this work that Cecile and Eugenie wished to devote their afternoon. Claire Bertrand was a year older than the two others, and had presented herself the year before at the Lord's Table; but, being very good-natured, she was always ready to help with her needle either of her school-fellows who needed her assistance.  
 The morning passed away quietly and happily. The pupils dined at one o'clock, and at two o'clock they all re-assembled in a snug little parlor adjoining the usual school-room, and where a large wood fire was blazing merrily on the hearth. Cecile Blanchard was busily employed in making a white petticoat; Eugenie a flannel one, and Sister Therese having carefully cut out a chemise from the piece of linen found in Madame Lamorriere's parcel, Clemence also seated herself near her two friends and commenced her work of charity. Several other young ladies gradually joined the working party, and the gentle-faced nun, seated at the head of the table, watched them with a thoughtful and observant air, although imposing no restraint on their joyous spirits, for being a holiday, conversation was allowed, and the kind Sister would occasionally join theirs, or set them right when any unusual discussion arose which seemed to demand her interference. There were about fifty pupils in the convent at the period of which we speak, and although the eldest among them had barely attained her fourteenth year, the room over which presided the Sister Josephine, was known as, and generally called the first class.  
 Isabelle de Verneuil was seated by the side of Cecile Blanchard, but as she knew nothing of needle-work, she could not join in the occupation of those around. During the long morning, she had wandered to and fro in the house, asked a thousand questions of the different nuns she had met in her voyage of discovery, and had at last sat down, heartily tired and wearied to death. The bell announcing the mid-day meal was a welcome sound to the desolate girl; not however that she was hungry, but she hoped and expected to find some one to talk to about her father, mother, and little brother; and more amusement than she had found in her wanderings down the old corridors, where no other sound was heard but that of her own footsteps, re-echoing through the long passages. She was, however, mistaken, for the meal passed in silence; a nun presided at the pupils table to keep order, and conversation of any kind was strictly forbidden. After a short interval of recreation, the young girls re-assembled, as we have already said, in the little work-room, where they were speedily joined by the Sister Therese. Isabelle had followed them thither, but feeling sorrowful and dull amidst her new friends, she sat silent, thoughtful, and unemployed, all the afternoon.  
 The rain ceased not all that day, and the weather, instead of moderating, grew rapidly worse. The heavens, ere the night shut in, were covered with dark and ragged clouds; gust of wind swept along and soon settled into one long continuous blast. The venerable abode rocked and trembled to its base, and more than once, the children let fall their work, to listen to the heavy roar of the sea, as it broke against the cliffs, and to the furious wind as it swept round the lonely dwelling, as if trying to force an entrance. The Sister Therese, who was exceedingly efficient in all kinds of needle-work, and who was the superintendent of that particular department, was

seated at a table, on which was placed Madame Lamorriere's parcel, and was employing herself in cutting out and arranging various articles of clothing, destined for the use of the child chosen by Clemence from among the poor orphans who were, as well as herself, to approach the Holy Table; and notwithstanding the holiday always given to celebrate the arrival of a new comer, the young girls worked assiduously, and not only seemed, but really took pleasure in their work. Their conversation, in which the good nuns frequently took a part, ran on various subjects, but more particularly on the solemn rite in which they were preparing themselves to join, and about which they had so many questions to ask, and replies to hear; and as soon as the Sister had finished her cutting out, she took a book and read aloud to the assembled group an interesting story, chosen with a view to instruct, as well as amuse her young auditory. The pupils of that old convent were very, very happy, all the nuns were very amiable and kind, and as they perfectly understood and felt the importance of the onerous task they had undertaken, they seemed to have concentrated all the resources and energy they had at their command on the faithful accomplishment of this one great object.  
 The reader had scarcely closed her book, when the Sister Josephine entered the room, and her arrival was hailed by many demonstrations of affection from the young people; for, the indulgent Sister, who, for many years had been more like a parent than an instructress to the children committed to her charge, had made herself beloved instead of feared by them; and, although exacting an implicit obedience during the hours of study from her pupils, she fully understood, the school hours once over, the gracious art of relaxing the reins of her authority on holidays, and of mixing freely with her pupils, encouraging and promoting conversation, which, under some agreeable form, was always sure to inculcate some fresh and important lesson. After having carefully examined the different pieces of work, she looked round the room for the new pupil, and, not seeing her, turned to the Sister Therese, and asked where she was.  
 "Here she is," cried Cecile, and, on moving gently round, she exposed to view the recumbent figure of Isabelle, who had fallen asleep on her chair.  
 Ennui and weariness had apparently cast a shade of sorrow over the child's pretty features, for, as we have said before, she had sat with her hands before her all the afternoon.—Not daring to interrupt the Sister Therese by talking to Cecile, she had at last fallen asleep, tired out by doing nothing. The Mother, St. Euphrasie, had strictly enjoined the nuns to take no notice of her, and not to propose any occupation or reading during the first three or four days, so as to bring her to feel the terrible weariness of body and spirit caused by idleness. More than one of the pupils at St. Mary's had passed through this ordeal, and had gone at last, of their own accord, to ask either the mistress of the studies or of needlework to allow them to join the classes and to do as the others did; and it had always been remarked in the convent that those who had experienced the terrible weariness of those two or three long, dull days became, in the end, the most attentive and most studious.  
 "Let her sleep, let her sleep," said the kind-hearted nun. "Poor child, this first separation from all home ties is a bitter and a difficult trial to bear."  
 "Indeed it is," said Cecile, "and it is one which I should not like to have to pass over again. O, the weariness of those first three days was dreadful! I remember it well, for I was so wretched, and how I rejoiced when I dreamed that the Blessed Virgin came to my bedside and ordered me to go and ask you for some lessons to learn and some needlework to do."  
 The sound of the bell announcing the five o'clock refecton awoke Isabelle. She appeared to have been dreaming, for a torrent of tears coursed down her cheeks, and she called in mournful tones, "Papa! mamma!" And for a long time the violence of her emotion resisted all the kind consolations of the two nuns, and all the coaxing and caresses of her young companions.  
 At seven o'clock the pupils of the first class adjourned to the parlor of the Superior. According to an old established rule, the new pupil was seated next to that amiable lady, but she sat the whole evening doing nothing, as she had done in the afternoon. The storm was then at its height. It was a fearful night everywhere, and the Mother, St. Euphrasie, drawing the attention of her children to the loud voice of the hurricane, and to the roar power, and majesty of the tempest, contrasted their position with those of hundreds of unfortunate beings who had not where to lay their heads, and who were even then exposed to the biting cold and to the pitiless inclemency of