

The True Witness

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JULY 10, 1857.

NEWS OF THE WEEK

The Arabia brings dates up to the 27th ult. The Bill for so altering the Parliamentary Oaths, as to admit Jews to take their seats, had passed the House of Commons by a large majority. The Bill for legalising Bigamy had passed the House of Lords, and thus Polygamy will soon be a British institution.

The Queen assisted at, and personally distributed the decorations of the Victoria Cross to those who had distinguished themselves in the late war on the 26th ult. A painter of the name of Spollen and his son had been arrested by the Dublin Police, for the murder of Mr. Little the Railway cashier, whose mysterious death caused such sensation some months ago. The shipping of the submarine Atlantic telegraph was expected to commence on the 29th.

Harvest prospects were good, and Breadstuffs were reported dull.

The elections in France had gone off quietly, and in favor of the government. The London Times alludes however, to a plot of a serious nature, which had been discovered by the police. From China there is nothing of importance.

On Saturday last the 4th inst., the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence serious riots attended with loss of life, and which called for the interposition of the military, took place at New York.

THE LATE CATASTROPHE.—The Coroner's Jury at Quebec is still pursuing its investigation of the circumstances connected with the fearful loss of life by the burning of the steamer Montreal; and with that stolid perseverance for which Coroner's Juries, since first such things came into fashion, have ever been famous. "Crozier's Quest Law" has, since the days of Ophelia, been proverbial; and the Quebec jury seem in no wise inclined to depart from the time honored precedents left them by their predecessors.

Our readers will therefore naturally and justly conclude that nothing of any consequence, as bearing upon the subject under investigation, has been elicited during the past week.

Indeed since the calamity occurred, the public have been in full possession of all the important facts connected with it; and there can be no doubt as to the justice of the verdict which public opinion, both in Canada, and in the United States, has passed thereon. There never yet was what is vulgarly called an "accident," on steamboat or on railroad, but what by timely precaution might have been avoided; and which was not directly attributable either to the culpable negligence of officials, or the still more culpable parsimony and dishonesty of proprietors. There is, there can be, no shadow of an excuse for an "accident."

In the present instance, "the accident" is apparently attributable, in the first place, to the defective construction of the steamboat. Her boilers were in too close contact with the wood work; and the marvel is, not that she caught fire on her trip of the 26th ult., but that she ever made a voyage up or down the river in safety. For this radical defect, of course, her owners are directly morally responsible.

In the next place, there seem to have been on board, no engines of any capacity for extinguishing fire in case of an "accident;" for this infamous neglect, or rather culpable parsimony, the owners again are directly responsible. Had there been proper apparatus fitted to the steamer, she might have been half flooded, and the flames completely quenched within a few minutes of their first appearance.

Of the want of boats we say nothing; for every sailor knows the general uselessness of any number of boats to save a large ship's company, unless strict military discipline can be enforced, and a "rush" to the boats prevented. This of course, under the actual circumstances wherein the Captain and officers of the steamer Montreal found themselves when the fire broke out, was impossible; and the only chance of safety for the living freight, consisted in running her on shore at the very first favorable place that presented itself.

Now it certainly does not appear as yet, that, on the first alarm of fire being given, the Captain of the boat took any steps for securing the lives of his passengers. The boat—and on this point all the witnesses are agreed—was not headed immediately for land; though many excellent spots for running her on shore presented themselves; the pilot seems to have abandoned the wheel; and crew and captain seem to have been intent upon saving themselves, leaving their unfortunate passengers, women and children, to perish in the flames, or in the waters of the St. Lawrence. Indeed, it is asserted that the Captain possessed himself of the only "life-preserver" on board; and instead of sticking by the wreck to the last, which he would have done if he had had the pluck of a man about him; was one of the first to leave the burning vessel, and to consult his safety by what, in his case, was a cowardly and ignominious desertion of duty.

ardly, and ignominious desertion of duty. No such conduct no legal penalty can of course be attached; but men have, by common consent, always and everywhere treated it with well merited reprobation.

The points to which the attention of the Coroner's Jury ought chiefly to be directed, but upon which they will, of course, as becometh discreet jurymen, as much as possible avoid committing themselves—are these:—

1. Was the construction of the steamer Montreal radically defective?—were her boilers in too close proximity to her wood works?—and was it owing to these defects that she caught fire on the 26th ult.

2. Was she provided with fitting apparatus to extinguish a fire in case of any "accident" proceeding from her radically defective construction.

3. When it was first ascertained that the boat was on fire, were steps immediately taken to save the lives of the passengers by running her towards the shore? Did the Captain, pilot, and crew stick by the wreck to the last moment, and do all that men could do to rescue the women and children from the fate that menaced them?—or did they, like a pack of cowardly hounds, desert their posts, seek safety in flight, and abandon the helpless beings whom they were bound to protect, to their fate? These are questions to which, for the honor of our common country, and in the interests of humanity, the Coroner's jury are bound to see that full, clear, and explicit answers be given.

For, as matters stand at present, the story of the burning of the Montreal, and the subsequent loss of life, is discreditable to us in the highest degree. Hardly will it be believed in other countries, that, on a fine day, on a tranquil river, and within a few hundred yards of the shore, some two to three hundred unfortunates, mostly women and children, were allowed to perish miserably—whilst Captain, officers, and crew contrived to reach a place of safety. Yet this is a fact; and a more disgraceful fact, or one more calculated to inspire contempt for the manhood and humanity of the people amongst whom it occurred is not on record.

THE ministers and laity of the Anglican sect, lately convened in Synod at Toronto, seem to entertain views upon the School Question not unlike those of Catholics upon the same subject. They assert the necessity of the religious element in education; they recognise that in a mixed community like ours, the admission of that element is incompatible with any modification of a Common school system; they must therefore, if they be sincere in their assertions of the paramount necessity of combining religious with secular instruction, be prepared to join with us in demanding the amelioration, and further extension of the "Separate" or "Denominational" school system; under which alone can religious instruction be imparted to the members of a mixed community, who have no religion in common.

The following are extracts from some of the speeches delivered by members of the Anglican Synod upon this all important subject:—

The Rev. Mr. Townley complained that the Common Schools were filling the land with a moral pestilence on every side. He spoke from experience.—Our lecture rooms are pervaded by an unruly youth. Our streets are defiled with their profane language, and when these facts are pointed out, he is told that the children ought to receive their religious education at home. He hoped that that was the case with all present—but to show the object of the system, he might mention what had been told him by a reverend brother from the other side of the line: five-sixths of the parents of children in the United States do not attend any place of worship at all. If that is the case, how is it possible that religious education should be given at home? And where did this system arise? In that place where human freedom is placed above the divine dictates of our divine religion. In the United States the people are beginning to feel the evil effects of this system, and it cannot be otherwise. We cannot help believing that children are born in sin, and that their thoughts and feelings are evil from their youth upward; and yet they are sent to the Common Schools, where the education they receive only fits them for carrying out more thoroughly the works of depravity. He knew that the teachers of Sunday Schools find that is the case among the unfortunately small proportion of the children sent there; and what can be the effect on those children who attend no Sunday Schools, and receive no religious instruction whatever?

The Rev. Mr. Darling seconded the resolution, and declared his opinion that the Common School system was an utter failure. The fact was triumphantly proved by the annual report of the General Superintendent of Education. From the first establishment of the system, there had been complaints continually from the Local Superintendents. These complaints related chiefly to the inefficiency of the teachers and the irregularity in the attendance of children. The result was that the public schools were in a worse condition now than they were before, while the expense was enormously increased. It appears that there were 3,235 Common Schools in Upper Canada, who looked to the Normal School for a supply of efficient teachers. The number of students admitted into this institution since its inauguration, had been 1,318. How many schools did they think had been supplied by these? Just 374—so that nearly 1000 of these students must have deserted their occupation. Again, between 800 and 900 had received certificates of qualification; and of these nearly 500 had deserted. By the last census, he saw that there were some 8,884 children of school age in this city, while only 1,570 were in attendance at the Common Schools. It was also a fact, that young men and women, totally illiterate, were received into the Normal School, and in ten months turned out again, with first class certificates, as competent to teach anything; and each of these cost some £72. He called the attention of his clerical brethren to the lamentable state of things as indicated by these statistics.

Rev. Mr. Hilton would give the lay gentleman who had spoken some statements founded on his own experience as a Local Superintendent:—In one school in a township where he was Superintendent, there are not ten children beyond those of the Church of England, who can say the ten commandments. In another school the teacher is a Unitarian, and spends his time on Sunday in preaching in accordance with his views to the children. In another, not a child, except one of the Church of England, knew the commandments. He was once at a school tea-party where there were 100 children present, and on exami-

nation he found that not one of them had ever heard the commandments; and when he subsequently called the attention of the meeting to this fact, on being requested as a favor to address it, and urge on parents not to neglect this elementary part of religious education, he was called "a Puseyite;" and one man rose up and called him a Romanist.

Mr. Justice Hungary said that during his short experience of one year, and a half in the administration of justice, the most humiliating, sorrowful, and heart rending spectacle he had met with had been to see a child after child brought up for felony. (Hear.)—Can nothing be done to prevent such melancholy exhibitions? Can neither the State nor the Church make provision for them, and for the hundreds whose training may lead to similar results? In this city the inhabitants were paying £4 a head for school purposes, and yet both during and after school hours, the streets were filled with little children. In conclusion, he trusted the proposition to collect statistics in these matters, in order to their remedy, would meet the approval of the meeting.

Thus upon one point—viz., that Common Schools are hot-beds of vice and immorality, a disgrace to the civilisation of the XIX century, and an outrage upon the rights of the individual, whom the State has no right to tax for religious purposes to which he has conscientious objections—Protestants and Catholics are unanimous.—How comes it then—it will be asked—that such a system is allowed to fill the land with its moral pestilence? Because Protestants, for the most part, are more opposed to Catholicity than they are to infidelity or immorality; and because they well know that the tendency of the present system is well calculated to make the rising generation infidels and profligates, and, in so far, good sound Protestants. For it must be remembered that Protestantism is itself a phase, not of Christianity, but of infidelity.

And thus—notwithstanding the declarations of the members of the Anglican Synod—notwithstanding the aversion which the "Common" school system is looked upon by many others of our separated brethren, we do not believe that the friends of "Freedom of Education" for Catholics, have any, the slightest grounds for congratulating themselves upon any improvement in the state of public feeling upon the School Question, or upon their ultimate prospects of success. On the contrary, owing to our own servility and venality, to the treachery of our representatives and others in whom we have been silly enough to trust—a satisfactory settlement of that long vexed question seems, at the present moment, more remote than ever.

Nothing can be more self-evident than this—that, if in the struggle wherein we are engaged for our rights as citizens, and as Christian parents, we do not gain, we lose ground. It is impossible, in such a contest, for the two contending parties, to maintain precisely the same relative positions.

Now, certainly during the last session nothing has been gained for the cause of "Freedom of Education." Owing, as we said, to our own venality and want of common honesty, the fear of harassing the Ministry and of disturbing the slumbers of "Jack-in-Office," was allowed to prevail over every other consideration. The School question was an embarrassment to the Ministry; it was therefore their great object that that question should not be brought before the House; and, listening to the treacherous counsels of the needy "place-hunters," and the feeders upon official garbage, of whom we have too many alas! in our ranks, the Ministry were allowed to accomplish that object. Not a single petition, we believe, from the Catholics of Upper Canada, complaining of the injustice of the present school system, and praying for redress, was laid before the Provincial Parliament of Canada during its entire session. What has been the result of this extraordinary policy? itself the fruit of the machinations of a few sordid and mercenary hangers-on of our rulers.

This—that we have furnished our enemies, the friends of "State-Schoolism," with the best of arguments in support of their plea—that the agitation against the "Common" schools of Upper Canada proceeds entirely from the Catholic clergy; that the Catholic laity take no manner of interest therein, whatsoever; and that the grievances complained of are purely imaginary, the inventions of an intriguing priesthood with whom the great body of the people have no sympathy. "For"—our opponents may now argue, and we know not how to answer them—"how comes it that, if the Catholic laity of Upper Canada do really feel themselves aggrieved by the operation of the present system, not one complaint has been heard to proceed from their lips during the entire session of 1857? how comes it, that if the conduct of the Romish Bishop of Toronto towards the Catholic members of the Ministry, who, in the session of 1856, voted against Mr. Felton's motion, be approved of by the Catholic body generally, that approbation has not been manifested by an equally strong condemnation, upon their parts, of their representatives who then betrayed them? It is clear from these facts—they will conclude, and not without a show of reason—"that the Catholics of Upper Canada are very well content with the actually existing order of things; that they do not sympathise with their Bishops, and clergy; and that the outcry against "Common," and for "Separate" schools, is but a piece of ecclesiastical assumption in which the laity do not join, and which we will do well to despise." This has been said; is said; and will be incessantly re-

peated until, throwing off your lethargy, and endeavoring for once to act like honest men, and faithful children of the Church, we give our representatives in Parliament, and our rulers in the Ministry, plainly to understand, that unless they immediately, and in every particular, concede the demands of the Catholic body upon the School Question, the entire political influence of that body will be cast against them. Alas! the means of bribery and corruption which the Ministry have at their command—in the shape of Government advertisements for needy journalists, "Crown Land's Agencies," berths in the Custom House, &c., &c., for needy place-hunters—and the venality of too many of our own members, are such that we fear that the day is far distant, when such a policy—the only one however that has the remotest chance of success—will be generally adopted.

For these reasons, the proceedings of the Anglican Synod, unanimous almost as its members were upon the results of "State-Schoolism," can inspire us with but little hopes, until we see symptoms of a reviving honesty, and of independence of all Ministerial control, amongst our own people. Protestants of all denominations will admit the immoral tendencies of religion without education; they will admit that no other than a purely secular education can be given in our "Common" schools; and having admitted all this, they will thence conclude to the propriety of retaining such schools—because whatever tends to promote vice, immorality, irreligion and infidelity must be a most formidable antagonist to Popery, and therefore, an ally of Protestantism; and because with Protestants in general, the hatred of Catholicity is far stronger than the love of Christianity.

THE "MONTREAL WITNESS" AND THE "FETE DIEU."—Our cotemporary was quite correct in his anticipations that the TRUE WITNESS would not "attempt to apologize for a practice" of which the Catholic Church approves, and which the law of the land sanctions—even though to a few prejudiced Calvinists it may appear "offensive and unjustifiable." We never have, and please God, never will, offer any the slightest apology for any doctrine or practice of the Catholic Church; for every apology is an admission of error.

At the same time, we are always ready and able to defend those doctrines and practices against the imputations of our enemies; and will therefore, on the present occasion, reply briefly, and finally, to the strictures of our cotemporary upon our remarks of the 26th ult.

We said that the public procession in honor of the Blessed Sacrament was not "illegal." Because:—

- 1. There is no law prohibiting it?
2. It is one of those rights guaranteed to the Catholic population of Canada by the treaty wherein this Province was ceded by France to Great Britain.
And 3. Because its legality has been formally recognised, on many occasions, by the British Government.

There is no law prohibiting the procession of the Fete Dieu; for if there were, the Montreal Witness would cite it, instead of merely asserting the illegality of the said procession. But that which is not prohibited by law is not "illegal."

The custom of walking in public procession on the Fete Dieu formed part of the exercise of the Catholic religion in Canada, previous to its cession to Great Britain. Now by the treaty wherein this Province was ceded to the last named Power, it is expressly provided that the Catholic inhabitants thereof shall be protected in the free exercise of their religion; from which it follows, that—except where expressly specified to the contrary—that treaty guarantees to the Catholics of Canada the full enjoyment of every religious privilege or custom, which they enjoyed or exercised whilst under the dominion of France; and guarantees to them therefore the right of walking in procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi; because it is a right which they enjoyed as French subjects, and which is not excepted in the treaty which guarantees to them the full and free exercise of their religion, when they became subject to the British Crown.

Its legality has been formally recognised by the British Government; which, until within a few years, furnished, in the persons of its soldiers, a Guard of Honor for the procession. This was the act, not as the Montreal Witness would insinuate, merely of the commanding officer for the time being, of the garrison—but of the Horse Guards, who were aware, and approved of the practice. We may here however be permitted to add that we question the propriety of, in any instance, compelling Protestant soldiers to take part in a procession to which they may have conscientious objections. That full and perfect religious liberty which we claim for ourselves, we would claim for all our fellow-citizens of every denomination.

But, argues the Montreal Witness, "the guard of honor and the regimental band have for many years been withdrawn from any participation in the Fete Dieu; and if it be the military sanction that made the procession legal, the lat-

ten, has ceased to be legal from the time this pretended sanction was withdrawn.

Yes, no doubt, if it was that sanction that made the procession legal. But as the legality of the procession never did derive from the attendance of the regular troops, but from that clause of the treaty of cession which guaranteed to the Catholics of Canada the same full and free exercise of their religion as British, which they enjoyed as French subjects, it follows that the withdrawal of the said troops can in no wise affect its legality. The attendance of the troops did not make the procession legal—for it was legal without them; legal before they ever arrived in Canada; and legal in every country parish wherein there was no garrison, no regular troops. We appeal to that attendance as a proof merely that the British Government, which for a long series of years sanctioned the attendance of its troops at the procession, did thereby formally recognise its legality; and because that which was formally recognised as legal thirty or forty years ago, and which has not subsequently been prohibited by law, cannot be "illegal" to day.

Finally the Montreal Witness calls upon "the priests and their organ"—to supply the people with the sacred writings, in order that they may be able to judge, from the "words of Jesus Christ as reported by His Apostles in the New Testament," whether the Montreal Witness—who says that in the Sacrament of the Eucharist the Body and Blood of Our Lord are not present—or Our Lord Himself, Who in instituting that Sacrament positively said that it "was His Body"—is the more worthy of credit. To this we reply:—

1. That very excellent translations of the New Testament—both in French and English, as well as in the original tongue—are for sale at all the Catholic booksellers' stores in this city; that any one who desires to procure a copy can have the same by paying cash for it; and that it is not the duty of the Clergy, or their organs, to buy books for other people.

2. That, unfortunately for the argument of the Montreal Witness, the New Testament alone can throw very little light on the subject; because we can not find therein the very words of Our Lord Himself, who spoke in Syriac, and not in Greek, Latin, French or English; and because in the second place, the New Testament does not contain any account of the institution of the Lord's Supper which can be proved, without the authority of the Church, to be from an Apostle or an eye witness. Of the Gospel called of St. Matthew, all that the Montreal Witness can positively assert is that, in its present form as we have it, it is not the work of him whose name it bears. Neither St. Mark nor St. Luke were Apostles, or present at the Lord's Last Supper; St. John says nothing about the institution of the Sacrament; and St. Paul who describes it, was not present, and is not therefore, according to all the rules of evidence, a competent witness; unless it can be proved that he derived his information from one who was actually present and an eye witness of what transpired. He tells us indeed 1. Cor. xi., 23, that he received his information from the Lord Himself, thus asserting the miraculous source of his information; but as the competency of the witness is the question at issue, and as no witness whose competency is in question can be a competent witness to his own competency—especially when the facts testified to are in the supernatural order, requiring therefore a witness credible in the same order also—this assertion of St. Paul, unless confirmed by some infallible authority, competent to establish St. Paul's inspiration, and credibility in the supernatural order, would be deemed of but little value in a Court of Law. The Montreal Witness' appeal therefore to the New Testament is quite irrelevant.

A CANDID ADMISSION.—The Toronto Leader in noticing the action taken by the late Anglican Synod on the "Common School" system of Upper Canada, admits that:—

"We cannot deny that it is an anomaly to find such a system in existence in a community where Voluntaryism is recognised as the doctrine of the State. But in our present infant condition, we cannot look for the establishment of perfect theories in any department of the public administration."

An anomaly it certainly is for a community is one breath to cry out "No State-Churchism," and in the next to hurrah for "State-Schoolism;" but we see not how this ridiculous inconsistency can be justly attributed to "our present infant condition." We should feel inclined to look for its cause in the inherent inconsistency of Protestantism, and in the natural disregard of the Protestant mind for logic, truth, and justice.

For wherever there is inconsistency, there is a lie, and the worst form of a lie. All other sins, save that of inconsistency, may be forgiven unto a man; but inconsistency infallibly indicates the total want of all honest and manly sentiment.—The inconsistent man, or he who still professing one set of principles, refuses to follow them out to their extreme consequences, no matter whether they may lead him, is morally and intellectually the most contemptible wretch that crawls upon the face of the earth.

The Leader adds:—