

The True Witness

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NEWS OF THE WEEK.

As an item of the news most interesting to Canada, and to Montreal in particular, we may mention the positive assurance from the highest authority, that a member of the Royal Family, probably the Prince of Wales, or Prince Alfred, will visit this country in the Spring, to inaugurate with due pomp the completion of the Victoria Bridge.

From the neighboring Republic louder and more shrill rise the accents of discord betwixt North and South. The well known psalm, beginning with the touching words—"John Brown that good old man is dead"—stirs the hearts of our American friends, as the "Marseillaise" at its first appearance, is said to have stirred up the hearts of the French.

In the Halls of Congress too, the nasal melody makes itself heard; and grave Senators, as the strain wherein the death and many virtues of the detested John Brown are set forth, meets their ears, are suddenly metamorphosed into brawling maniacs, who shake their fists in one another's faces, and frantically menace one another with bowie-knives, and revolvers; and as all the debates are more or less seasoned with John Brown, it may easily be supposed that the spectacle of the Congress of the U. States is not altogether edifying, or calculated to give a "high moral lesson" to the people of those less favored countries within the walls of whose Legislatures spittoons are not, and where honorable members neither expectorate, nor pitch into one another with their fists.

At last, steady, grave, but determined, Thaddeus Stevens passed his point of order, that but two motions were, or could be, in order—the motion to proceed to elect a Speaker, and the motion to adjourn. He said but little, but even this little was most shamefully interrupted by Crawford of Georgia, who approached him defiantly, swinging his fist in his face. A fight was imminent; and probably, with almost any other member in Stevens's place, would have occurred. Keige who was on the watch, now came up close by the side of Crawford, and placed his right hand on a revolver beneath his coat, ready, doubtless, for any emergency.

From the Continent of Europe we have nothing new to report. A hint from Louis Napoleon to the French press to abate somewhat of its acrimonious tone towards Great Britain, had produced the desired result; and is accepted by the Times as a proof of the efficacy of its thunder in clearing the political atmosphere, and in dissipating the storm of war with which the coasts of England were apparently menaced.

Capital Punishment.—A correspondent of our Quebec cotemporary, Le Canadien, accuses us of entertaining "a burning thirst—une soif ardente—for human blood little honorable to Christians of the nineteenth century, and well calculated to excite the indignation of men who see sincerely—qui voient sincerement—that the immolation of the murderer is neither agreeable to God, nor advantageous to the security of the life of the citizen, but the reverse."

We have before our eyes at this moment a work which we think our opponent, if a Catholic, will allow to have some weight. It is entitled "Prælectiones Theologicae Majoris in Seminario Sancti Sulpitii Habite," by the Rev. Jos. Carriere, a distinguished theologian, and certainly no mean authority upon the matter in dispute, which he treats in full.

We know too, that, of all punishments, capital punishment is that of which all criminals—that is all those who compose the criminal class proper—entertain the most profound terror. Few, very few crimes against person or property are the result of passion. The great majority of crimes are committed in cold blood; and after a long and careful calculation of the chances of detection, and consideration of the nature of the punishment to which they render their perpetrators subject.

fallible guide on all questions of faith or morals, teachers by the mouths of all their Doctors; that it is lawful for the civil magistrate, and that it is his duty, to punish the murderer with death; and the Catholic Church would not thus speak, as to the lawfulness of Capital Punishment if there were any, the slightest, doubts even upon such a question.

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For the theologian, and in reply to the philosophers, unhesitatingly asserts that malefactors may be condemned to death by the public authority; an assertion he adds "which all theologians admit, condemning as heretical the opinions of the Waldenses."—Tom. II. p. 374.

Thus fortified by the explicit teachings of the Church, we assume as incontestable that God has Himself ratified the right of the civil magistrate to punish the murderer with death. But an omniscient God would not sanction that which was prejudicial, or not profitable, to society: therefore we conclude, from the fact that God has sanctioned the infliction of death upon the murderer, to the fact that the infliction of Capital Punishment for the crime of murder is highly beneficial to society.

Having thus vindicated ourselves from the reproach of opposing ourselves to those whose business and whose right it is to teach us, we would say a few words in explanation of our views on capital punishment, by way of a reply to the charge of blood-thirstiness, urged against us by the correspondent of Le Canadien.

In the first place, we would remark that there is no more any necessary connexion betwixt a "blood-thirsty" disposition, and the advocacy of capital punishment for the crime of murder, than there is betwixt a humane disposition and the advocacy of the abolition of that punishment in all cases. Indeed the fact is, that the most zealous and notorious champions of the cause which the correspondent of Le Canadien espouses, have been infamously notorious for their brutality and disregard of human life, and human suffering.

In the second place, we advocate the death punishment upon the murderer—not because we thirst after his blood, but because of our aversion to bloodshed, and our regard for the lives of our fellow-citizens. In that God sanctions the punishment, in that the Church enjoins its infliction by the civil magistrate as an act of paramount duty—(see Catechism of the Council of Trent)—we know that it must be profitable to society; for God Who is infinitely wise and good, would not have sanctioned it unless it were what its advocates contend it is—a terror to evildoers, and therefore a protection to the innocent.

We know too, that, of all punishments, capital punishment is that of which all criminals—that is all those who compose the criminal class proper—entertain the most profound terror. Few, very few crimes against person or property are the result of passion. The great majority of crimes are committed in cold blood; and after a long and careful calculation of the chances of detection, and consideration of the nature of the punishment to which they render their perpetrators subject.

"straggling law," or merely a "loving law," which we have ourselves heard scores of times, from the lips of politicians; and there is no class of men—not even our enterprising merchants, or the Directors of an Insurance Company, that is more careful to calculate the peculiar "risks," of its profession, than is that which furnishes the "dangerous members" of society: Rarely, but "very rarely," crimes are committed in a moment of passion, or under severe external pressure; but as statistics shew, these are, when compared with the general crimes of the community, rare and exceptional cases.

The criminal we said is a most careful calculator. He weighs every conceivable chance, in favor of, or opposed to his escape; and when he sees, or thinks he sees, a certainty, or an approximation to a certainty, of conviction, and punishment—even though that punishment be not the extreme penalty of the law—he will be much more cautious, than when he sees that the chances of conviction are small, though the punishment awarded in case of conviction is the gallows.

Now when death was the legal penalty, allotted to a great many offences, it was difficult, almost impossible, no matter how conclusive the evidence, to get a verdict of guilty against the criminal. Juries, with that stolidity, and disregard of logic, for which intelligent British juries are still notorious, instead of confining their attention to the simple matter of fact "Guilty," or "Not Guilty," which alone they were impelled to decide, would persist in embarrassing themselves with questions of law with which they had no right to meddle; and with considerations as to the amount of punishment to which their verdict of "Guilty" would render the accused liable; and thus, in their thick-headed stupidity, they arrogated to themselves the functions of the judge, and made abnegation of their own legitimate and equally important functions.

They discussed the question whether the accused before them were worthy of death; and if that punishment seemed to them too severe, they brought in a verdict of "Not Guilty." Thus the rigor of the law defeated its object; because by making convictions most uncertain it gave another chance in favor of the criminal, and this chance of course became an important factor in his calculations. When however, by a mitigation of the imposed penalty the conviction of the criminal was rendered comparatively easy, he found that his "risks" had increased in proportion, and in consequence crime diminished. This shows, not the inefficiency of capital punishment to repress crime, but the skill with which the criminal classes make their calculations; and is, at the same time, a strong argument against the remission of the sentence of death pronounced on the convicted murderer; because the "chances" of a similar remission of sentence in his favor would be taken into calculation by some other criminal thirsting to imbue his hands in his brother's blood.

We entreat our opponent of Le Canadien to take these remarks in good part; for we assume that we do not class him either with heretics or the "Terrorists," and that we believe his only fault to be this, that he allows his feelings to overmaster his judgment.

The agrarian crimes of Ireland furnish a few of those cases. In the Montreal Herald of Monday last, we find the following paragraph, the substance of which is repeated in the Commercial Advertiser:—

THE UNPROTECTED POOR.—On Saturday morning we published a letter from a "City Incumbent," in which he complained of the manner in which the unprotected poor, are thrown upon individual charity. The case we are now about to publish will furnish even a stronger plea for the establishment of some institution like a House of Refuge.

turned adrift, washed about on the snow, till she was exhausted and sunk down. Most probably she would have perished from cold, as well as hunger had not some charitable person, a witness of her condition, caused her to be taken to the Police Station. Here she was well cared for, as far as possible. Yesterday morning the poor old woman was "delirious," and in this state was sent to prison. It may seem somewhat strange to those at a distance, that in a city like Montreal, where there are so many charitable institutions of all kinds, a case like this could occur. But cases though not so revolting as this one, do occur every day, and Mr. Coursol and the Recorder, in order to save applicants from starvation are obliged at their own request to send them to jail. The fact of an old woman naked, as well as bareheaded and barefooted, being forced to wander through our streets on a winter's day, is enough to cause the question—is not some better system of relief required than that which at presents exists?

ALL ABOUT LIE.—When Touchstone enumerated in order the various degrees of the Lie, there was one variety of Lie which he forgot; or perhaps which was unknown in the days when lions pursued their prey in the forest of Arden. We propose to rectify the important omission of your old friend Touchstone.

It is true that on Saturday last a poor old and insane woman was brought to the Grey Nunnery in a sleigh; the driver of which presented to one of the Sisters a letter from a gentleman at St. Andrew's, wherein the writer requested the Nuns to find some suitable asylum—"for a poor woman, fallen into a state of imbecility, and whom the Mayor of the parish sends to you, in order that you place her in a suitable asylum—dans la maison qui lui convient." The writer evidently knew, as did those who sent the poor insane woman to Montreal, that the Grey Nuns could not themselves furnish such an asylum, since their house is for the poor, for the physically infirm, and for destitute children, but is altogether wanting in accommodations for the insane.

When the letter alluded to above was presented to the Sisters, they were much surprised at the very unceremonious manner in which the good people of St. Andrew's forced their poor upon them; and they told the driver that it was absolutely impossible for them to comply with the request of which he was the bearer, for two reasons. First, that they had no room in their Asylum for a single additional inmate, every hole and corner thereof being crammed already so as to menace the health of the inmates. Second, that it was against the rules of their establishment to receive insane persons therein, as the latter could not be placed in the same apartment with the other poor, and as there were no separate apartments for the reception of lunatics.

Under these circumstances the Sisters were obliged, and were in duty bound for the sake of the health of their Asylum, to act as they did in the case of the woman Labelle. Blame of course there is attributable somewhere; but it is to the Mayor of St. Andrew's, in taking upon himself to thrust his paupers upon us of Montreal. We have enough, quite enough, to do to take care of our own poor; and it is monstrous that we should be expected to take charge of, and support those of all the rural parishes in Canada. We therefore take this opportunity of telling the Mayor of St. Andrew's that by acting as he has done in the case of Therese Labelle, he has given a great scandal to religion, and exposed the reputation of our religious communities to very painful comments from Protestants, ignorant of the real merits of the case.

We speak not of our Catholic institutions alone; for though we claim for these an organization better and more extensive than that of which our Protestant fellow-citizens can boast, God forbid that we should arrogate to ourselves any superiority on the score of compassion for the poor, or for our liberality towards them. No! it is but an act of bare justice towards our separated brethren to acknowledge their generous efforts, and their warm sympathies with the poor of all origins, and without distinction of creed; and we would only ask of them this:—That, when they hear or see some story which at first seems to cast discredit upon the management of our religious institutions, they would take the pains to make themselves acquainted with the full particulars, and suspend their judgment until the entire truth be before them.

These gentry want to convey to their readers, and to impress upon their minds, that the "Romish" Church, does not teach such and such a doctrine, or that she does teach some other doctrine, most repulsive to natural and revealed religion. They, of course, do not desire to commit themselves too openly, and they know that that which they wish to impress upon their readers' mind is false; they have resource, therefore, to the "Lie by implication," to which as almost exclusively the property of evangelical writers we give the name of the "Lie Evangelical."

THE LIE EVANGELICAL, OR THE LIE BY IMPLICATION.—Many, said a speaker at a prayer meeting, think it no use to invite the children of Roman Catholic parents to go into a Protestant Sunday school. There never was a greater mistake. They are not only willing, but glad to have them go. And often their going is an unspeakable good to their parents. Let me give one illustration.

So the father went up to her chamber, where she was fast asleep, and took her up from her bed in his arms, and bore her down stairs, and putting her gently down, he said to her, with great earnestness: "Mary, can you pray?" "O yes, father, I can pray!" "Will you kneel down and pray for your poor father?" "Yes, I will pray for you."

She began at the third chapter of the gospel according to St. John. She read along till she came to the verse— "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." "Oh, Mary, said he, is that there?" "Yes, father, it is here. Jesus Christ said so."

Under these circumstances the Sisters were obliged, and were in duty bound for the sake of the health of their Asylum, to act as they did in the case of the woman Labelle. Blame of course there is attributable somewhere; but it is to the Mayor of St. Andrew's, in taking upon himself to thrust his paupers upon us of Montreal.

THE OBJECT OF THIS STORY, AND THE IMPRESSION THEREBY INTENDED TO BE LEFT ON THE MIND OF THE PROTESTANT READER, ARE OBVIOUS, AND CLEARLY INDICATED BY THE PASSAGES WE HAVE VENTURED TO ITALICIZE. THE STORY IS INTENDED TO CONVEY THE IDEA—that Romanists, in general, are not accustomed to pray; that private and family prayer is not a duty imposed upon them by their religion; that even of the "Lord's Prayer" Romanists are commonly ignorant; and that the doctrine of the Atonement, through the life, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is altogether unknown to them.

And the lie thus insinuated, finds ready acceptance amongst Protestants. They have been taught to believe that, somehow or other, Romanists do not pray for themselves, but leave the priest to do their praying for them; that Romanists place their hopes of salvation, not on Christ, but on the priest, and rely rather upon the due performance of certain quasi-mechanical religious acts, than upon a holy life; and that the doctrines that it is by the blood of Christ that their sins are washed away, and that without the application to them of that all cleansing stream, no acts of their own can avail to the remission of their sins—are doctrines altogether strange to the Romish system, untaught to its votaries, and are the special characteristics of evangelical Protestantism. This, we say, is the belief prevalent amongst the great mass of Protestants; these the notions respecting Popery that are assiduously inculcated at "Anniversaries" and "Evangelical Tea Parties" by sleek-faced ministers—as they style themselves—of the Gospel of Christ!