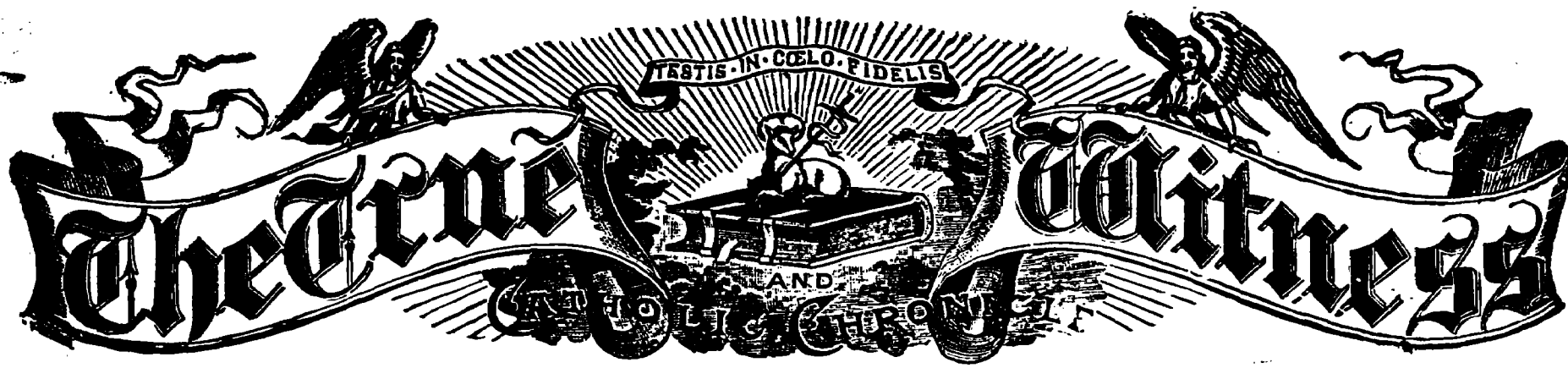


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HARBOR COMMISSIONERS AND ST. PATRICK'S LEAGUE.

Former Called Upon to Show Cause for the Dismissal of Sharkey and O'Brien, two Irish Catholics of Long Service.

Mr. J. J. Ryan, Spokesman for the League Committee, Tells the Harbor Administrators Something About the Organization He Represents.

Hon. Dr. Guerin Makes a Vigorous Speech. Wants to Know if it is the Intention of the Commissioners to Crucify their Friends.

Mr. M. J. F. Quinn, Q.C., M.P. Dwells Upon the Question of Equality to all Classes. Irish Catholic Claims Should Not be Ignored.

Hon. James McShane Asks for Justice, and Expresses Surprise at the Action of the Board.

President Mackay's Answer to the Deputation. He is Anxious for the Birth of a Canadian Nationality in Dealing With Patronage.

Mayor Prefontaine's Peculiar Remarks After the Deputation Had Retired.

NOTWITHSTANDING the almost continuous avowals of friendship which we hear, especially in the neighborhood of election times, there is no person of average intelligence who at all watches the trend of public affairs who does not see that this supposed friendship for Irish Catholics is very superficial indeed. Catholics have been accustomed to be made the victims, in a sense, of a species of mild duplicity, which on the face of it looks harmless enough, but which in reality, as time goes on, will have a very serious result. It would not be a bad idea if the Irish Catholics in Montreal borrowed a leaf from Mr. Chamberlain's book, and on it wrote, "What we have we'll hold."

For years there has been a tacit understanding, or rather an unwritten law, that public patronage should be divided as nearly as possible among the various elements which go to make up our population. While a full share has never yet been meted out to Irish Catholics, there was still a certain amount of respect paid to the traditions, and being easily satisfied, the clamor for a due recognition of their rights was not so outspoken on behalf of the Irish Catholic citizen as it might have been. It is perhaps this very good nature which has led others to think that they could filch with impunity what by right and custom belonged to the Irish Catholics. At first the lapses in this regard were of only minor character and passed practically unnoticed. They made up the entering wedge, however, which day by day is being driven further into the interests of our compatriots.

It is all very well to make pretty speeches, telling us what a great element we are in the community, patting us on the back and extending the right hand of fellowship. Sweet words cost little; but they do not pay house rent for the people they are showered on. One by one offices which of right belong to Irish Catholics have either been left unfilled so long that their very existence seem almost forgotten, or when least expected the office is suddenly filled by a person of a different nationality or a different religion. There is a quiet chuckle, for the Irish have been caught napping again. It is too late to protest, and when this matter is brought to the attention of the powers that be, looks of well feigned surprise, expressions of deep regret and assurances of everlasting friendship are used with theatrical

effect. There is usually a promise to balance the matter in one way or another—a balance which is never struck, by the way. In other cases the matter is treated with the nonchalance that might be expected in the behavior of a superior being. You are assured that no injustice was intended, that religion or nationality in no way influenced the appointment. Possibly not; but the fact remains that whenever a change of this description occurs, it will always be found that it is an Irish Catholic who has been supplanted.

It is all very well to say that none but men fitted for positions get them. Granted; but will some one dare tell us that among our large Irish Catholic population there cannot be found men capable of filling creditably any office in the gift of the Government, whether Federal, Provincial or Municipal? Such an idea would be preposterous. It is not as if we were claiming any more than is our just right. We are not asking for fresh favors. We only demand that we be permitted to keep what is already ours. We do not ask that vacancies be created for us; we do not ask for appointments to positions previously held by men of other nationality or religion; we simply ask for fair play.

A striking instance of the gradual undermining of Irish Catholic influence was given this week when a deputation waited on the Harbor Commissioners and laid their grievances at the foot of that august tribunal.

A full report of the proceedings is printed below and a careful perusal will be self-explanatory. Whether it was the mere hazard of chance which put such difficulties in the way of gaining the ear of the Harbor Commissioners, it is difficult to say. One thing is very apparent and that is that there is apparently very little intention of remedying the evil complained of. Mayor Prefontaine's remarks were particularly ominous. There was no idea in his mind that there was any reason for complaint; and from the tone of his remarks it might be judged that instead of a reform in these matters the abuse was likely to assume larger proportions.

It is under such circumstances as these that it behooves a journal specially representative of the Irish Catholics of Montreal to give a word of advice. Eternal vigilance is the price we must pay for the continuance of our rights. We must be ever on the alert, and we make it distinctly understood that the

leverage of the franchise can be used to good purpose, and that glibness of tongue does not make up for an encroachment on privileges which are ours of right.

The St. Patrick's League, too, are to be congratulated on the spirited action taken, and it is to be hoped they will continue strenuously in the good work. To meet with any measure of success in the defence of the rights of Irish Catholics, it is not merely necessary to stand on guard; a little action of an aggressive character frequently bears excellent fruit.

AT THE MEETING.

The regular weekly meeting of the Harbor Commissioners was held on Tuesday afternoon. An influential deputation from St. Patrick's League, accompanied by the city Parliamentary representatives and other prominent gentlemen, waited upon the Board to urge upon them the claims of the Irish people to fair play and justice in so far as positions under the Commissioners are concerned.

Mr. Robert Mackay, president of the Harbor Commissioners, occupied the chair, and the other members in attendance were His Worship Mayor Prefontaine, Messrs. Andrew Allan, D. G. Thomson, W. Farrill, John Terrance, Robert Blockidge, Alvin Racine and Joseph Contant. The deputation consisted of Hon. Dr. Guerin, Mr. M. J. F. Quinn, Q.C., M.P., Hon. James McShane, Messrs. J. H. Semple, W. H. Conningham, and Messrs. John J. Ryan, Andrew Cullen, J. McMahon and James Carrey (representing St. Patrick's League). Ald. Gallery was unavoidably absent on account of a meeting of the City Council.

MR. RYAN SPEAKS.

The first member of the deputation to address the meeting was Mr. John J. Ryan, who said:—

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen,—We are here as the representatives of the Irish-Canadian people of Montreal. We are members of the St. Patrick's League, which is composed of three delegates from every English-speaking Catholic organization in this city; its object is the advancement of our people. We are accompanied by Hon. Dr. Guerin, Hon. James McShane, Mr. M. J. F. Quinn, Q.C., M.P., and Mr. J. H. Semple, who are as well known to you as to me, and who need no introduction. All questions relating to our race come before the League, and, in turn, its work is brought home to every society through its delegates, every individual member becoming aware of what transpires. You will therefore see our organization is far-reaching, as nearly all our people belong to some of our societies, either national, temperance, literary or benevolent. I am so explicit about this so as to fully impress upon you that everything that transpires here today will eventually reach all our people. Now, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, the object of our visit is to say to you that our people feel that we are being discriminated against. We come here not to ask any favors, but simply fair play. This may be unprecedented in the annals of the Board, but, Mr. Chairman, the occasion has never before arisen, as until recently we had representatives on this Board who always saw that our rights were accorded us. Our case, in a word, is that recently two of the prominent positions in the harbor held by our people have been made vacant, and totally lost to us by others being appointed; and while we do not question your right to discharge, for political reasons or otherwise, any employes you may decide upon, we do question your action when you do not replace such employes by people of the same nationality as those that previously held the position. Surely, it cannot be said we have none capable. It is a well-known fact that nearly all, or at least the great majority, of our Irish people are of the Liberal faith and supporters of the present Government; and most certainly two men could have been found amongst us that could have ably filled the two positions recently taken away from us. I can tell you, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, our people are terribly worked up over the matter, and unless we get fair play, the nine or ten thousand men our organization numbers will not soon forget it. We have only one aim and one object in view, and that is to stand up for equal rights.

OLD PATRONAGE DISAPPEARING.

Hon. Dr. Guerin, who was the next speaker, said: Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, I don't intend to delay you with any lengthy remarks. I think that the very admirable speech of my friend, Mr. Ryan, has put the whole matter in a nutshell. We have not come here to follow any jingo policy, to use any threats or anything of that kind. We simply feel aggrieved; and as one of the representatives of the English-speaking Catholics, I feel more or less flattered that my friends should have called upon me to echo their sentiments in regard to this matter. It is quite notorious that we had certain patronage in the past, which Mr. Ryan has said, we don't question the rights of the Harbor Commissioners to dismiss anybody if he is incompetent; nor do we think that we would be justified in finding any fault with the Commissioners discriminating against anybody for political reasons; but we insist that we are entitled—our numbers en-

title us—to a certain amount of representation which, unfortunately, is being overlooked. There are many of us who have devoted our time, in fact our lives, to the advancement of Liberal principles in Montreal. If the Harbor Commissioners intend to crucify their friends, I think they are taking the best means to do it, by ostracizing those of our religion and our race. We feel that all we are called upon to do is to bring the matter clearly and distinctly to your attention. I have no doubt but the spirit of justice and fair play that should actuate gentlemen of this Board to make reparation if they are of the same opinion [which I have no doubt they are] as we are when we come here today, if they are of the opinion that we have been discriminated against. I think the spirit of fair play that should actuate them will prompt them to make them reparation for what we have said.

NOT A POLITICAL QUESTION.

In introducing Mr. M. J. F. Quinn, Q.C., M.P., Mr. Ryan said: To show you, gentlemen, that there are no politics in this, but that it is simply a matter in the interests of our people, I will ask Mr. Quinn to address you.

Mr. Quinn remarked:—Well, Mr. Chairman, I am very glad to say that as far as I am concerned there are no politics at all. I don't take that view, and I would be very sorry to think that either political party would take a stand against our people in any way. I am here, therefore, in my capacity as representative in Parliament of the Irish people in the district of Montreal, and being a Conservative member, it gives me much pleasure to say I don't think it possible, because you happen to be a majority of Liberals, that you want to do anything against our people or refuse to recognize their worth. But I think it is well in all cases to draw the attention of our friends to the fact that a point is overlooked in this community, where we are composed of three nationalities, it is said—French, English (including the English Protestants) and Irish Catholics. It is well to draw the attention of our friends to the fact that the tacit understanding which has existed for so many years between us with regard to race and religion should be preserved as long as possible. It is by preserving this up to the present time that we have got on so harmoniously. If that one people and the city have prospered in the way they have, it would be a very unfortunate thing for the English-speaking Catholics and the English-speaking Protestants, and even for the French-Canadians, who are more numerous than the both of us put together, that anything should arise to disturb the harmony which has hitherto existed. Unfortunately, two cases that have occurred within the last few months have drawn attention, more particularly to our people, to the position they occupy, especially as regards the Harbor Board. For some reason or another, which we don't question at all, because we believe you have the right to be sole judges in these matters, the only two men who occupied to a certain extent important positions have been dismissed. If

MEN OF THEIR OWN NATIONALITY.

had been put in their places, I don't think this deputation would have anything to say; it would be a question between the Harbor Board and the individuals whether they had been properly or improperly dismissed. As it stands now, they have been dismissed; they were the only English-speaking Catholics under the Board in important positions, and they have not been replaced by English-speaking Catholics. I don't wish to draw your attention to this fact any more than is absolutely necessary, because questions of religion and nationality are unfortunate matters to discuss. Certain privileges have been accorded to our people and the English-speaking Protestants which have obviated the necessity of mentioning such questions as religion and nationality. In the constitution of your Board this is proven. You have representatives of the English-speaking Protestant people, representatives of the French-Canadian people, and representatives of the English-speaking Catholic people. I don't make this question a question of politics at all; but was very glad to hear Hon. Dr. Guerin speak to his political friends as strongly as he did, and if any of mine are here, I would like to say to them that I don't think they have acted properly in not replacing these men by English-speaking Catholics. I think it is to Dr. Guerin's credit to speak in the way he has done, and without wishing to make any political capital out of it, but simply desiring to see justice done. I would like to add to the words that have already been spoken, and ask the gentlemen of the Board to see if it would not be just, right and proper that the men who have been dismissed should be replaced by English-speaking Catholics.

WHY WERE THEY DISMISSED?

HON. JAMES MCSHANE then addressed the Commissioners. He said: Mr. Chairman, some time ago, when this new Board was formed, I did my best to keep in the employ of the Commissioners Mr. O'Brien and Mr. Sharkey. They were kept on for a year, when, for some reason or other—whether for incompetence or not acting as they should have done, I don't know—they were dismissed. As the gentlemen who have spoken said, it is a very hard thing to speak about nationality; and I hope the day will come when men will be chosen for positions on account of their ability alone. But the recognition of nationality exists in our city; and it has caused a very

deep feeling of regret among the English-speaking Catholics of Montreal that at this Board there was not some man, whether representing the Irish nationality or otherwise, who did not get up and move an amendment to the motion for dismissing these men. In conversation with me, a gentleman of the Harbor Board said that if these men were displaced chairs of the same nationality would fill their positions. I know your feelings at that time were good in that direction, but somehow or other when the vote was taken, there was not a man to stand up and move an amendment that if these men were discharged, chairs of the same nationality would fill their places. Many in the city of Montreal would have been glad to have got such positions through your kindness. I have not come here to reproach you, but I felt it to be my duty, if it were possible, or even possible in a short time, that men of the same race and religion as those discharged be given some of the important positions. It is a sad thing to bring up the question, but everybody knows for it and they are dead, and it is not, I don't think that any word that has fallen from my mouth here would do me any good to ask you to do your feelings; we only ask for justice.

IN A SPIRIT OF FAIR PLAY.

Mr. J. H. Semple was the next to speak, saying: It is hardly necessary, Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, that I should add anything to what has been said by Mr. Ryan; he is the representative of a large number of our people in this city, and as a Liberal, he should be taken into consideration by every man. He speaks to some of our people, and two of them have been dismissed by your Board for reasons that are good reasons. But our feeling is that an injustice has been done to our people. I am sure, if you are anything but a spirit of fair play in each and every case, you will get it so that when this matter is taken up, you will consider what you will do that justice is done. We don't want to wage war against any nationality; we want to go on in peace and goodwill with all of us; but we have so few people in important positions that we cannot afford to lose any of those that are there. We should like those that are in positions to be kept there, if they are to be dismissed, that they should be replaced by people of our own nationality. Mr. Sharkey's case is an exceedingly strong one. A for thirty years' service, it has pleased the Board to dismiss him. You, of course, know more about the matter than we do; we are only speaking from the outside, but we maintain that it was an injustice to dismiss the man without an enquiry. We represent, in a sense, the Irish people, and all we ask is a fair distribution of positions, decency and fair play.

Mr. Ryan—in conclusion, there is nothing to be said, only that you know that the great majority of our people have always been of the Liberal faith. The majority of them are supporters of the present Government, and it would be very strange if you could not find two men among all our people capable of filling these positions, without going outside. We thank you heartily for your attention.

THE PRESIDENT'S REMARKS.

The President (Mr. Robert Mackay) —The other day a deputation came here, a small deputation, I understand, but I was not aware at the time, and I don't think any of the Commissioners were aware, that there was a deputation waiting outside. I had to rush to the Board of Trade in connection with the harbor improvements, and as I had to be there by three o'clock, I had to hurry from the meeting here. That was the reason the deputation did not obtain an interview. I don't know who the gentlemen were who came here on that occasion; but to-day it was only when we were going on with our regular meeting that I was told a deputation was waiting to interview us. Therefore, I may tell you that those complaints are new to me, and I don't know that I can, on such short notice, say very much. In regard to Mr. Sharkey, there were three dredges in use last summer; they were to be put out of service, as they were not doing economical work on account of the deepness of the harbor. The dredge Sharkey was on was to be loaned to the Government to do some work on the canal. In connection with Mr. Sharkey's dismissal

THE QUESTION OF RACE OR CREED.

never entered into the consideration of the Conservatives. Every one around this board knows that there is no one more in favor of an all-round Canadian sentiment than I am, and I hope to see the day when the best man will win, no matter to what race he belongs. I am certain that there was no intention, as far as I can judge this Board, of slighting any race. I don't think that was at all the intention, and I don't think there was any injustice intended. If there was any injustice, I am sure this Board would only be too happy to enquire into the circumstances; if anything has been done harshly or without good reasons it will be remedied. Regarding Mr. Sharkey, I may say that an enquiry was not necessary, as there was no vacancy created. I had several interviews with him, and I tried to do all I could to overcome the difficulties he seemed to be complaining of; but I was not successful. I could not see, if a dredge was not to be in the service of the Commission, how he could very well be employed. There is one thing I may tell you, and that is that since I came on this Board

THE BRITISH PRISON SYSTEM.

Striking Picture of the Inhumanity of Its Administration

Presented During a Recent Debate in the House of Commons By Three Leading Irish Parliamentarians. The Discipline in Force Calculated to Brutalize, Degrade and Destroy the Minds of Prisoners.

The Prisons Bill now before the British House of Commons gave three leading Irish parliamentarians an opportunity of exposing the iniquity of the system of prison administration in vogue in Great Britain and Ireland.

Mr. John Dillon, who was the first speaker, delivered a spirited speech, during the course of which he said: In his judgment, one of the greatest advances in modern civilization had been the discovery, due to the great humanitarian reformers of the early part of this century, that the average of the punishment was not a deterrent to crime, and that in direct proportion to the degree in which the criminal law of this country had been mitigated in vindictiveness and savagery so had crime gradually decreased. (Cheers.) Judged by that criterion, the proposals of the present bill should be condemned. It was stated that it was not intended to have any revolutionary change. He thought there ought to be a revolutionary change, and that that revolutionary change ought to amount to the admission that the whole prison system of this country had been based upon a false and mischievous idea (cheers). They ought to aim at giving the prisoner an opportunity of reforming his character. The present system gave him no such opportunity. It was calculated to brutalize, degrade, and destroy the mind of the prisoner, and as to the man who had any previous education or habits of intellectual occupation it was calculated to drive him mad. In the cases of prisoners convicted of crimes against property or of small minor offences every effort ought to be made, consistent with reasonable discipline and their loss of liberty, to occupy their minds and subject them to an unending discipline, which might have the effect of not sending them lower. Lot of lifting them upwards and of opening a new career for them (cheers). He had been in the prison of Elmira, in the State of New York, the Governor of which had informed him that the vast majority who passed from that prison were placed by him in distant parts of the States. They were helped to get employment in districts where they were unknown, and a large percentage of them were shown to have to have become respectable and decent citizens (cheers). Some of them were men who had been convicted of crime which in this country would have subjected them to life sentences. Continuing, the speaker said he had considerable

EXPERIENCE OF THE ORDINARY IRISH PRISONERS.

and he had some personal experience of sending children to them. Fifteen years ago he spent one year in the prison of Kilmalbin. One day he was walking up and down the yard when he heard a child, the widow of whose cell was on a level with the yard, crying incessantly. "Mother, mother, mother, where are you?" He heard the door of the cell open and a warden evidently enter who smothered the cries of the child and beat him severely. He (Mr. Dillon) complained to the governor. The governor said the matter would be investigated, and the following day he informed him that the matter had been investigated and had no foundation. The governor told him he could investigate the matter himself. The child was brought to him accompanied by the warden, in whose presence naturally the child was afraid to tell what had occurred. That was all the satisfaction he (Mr. Dillon) could get, though he had no doubt whatever that the child had been beaten. But under any circumstances he contended that it was an outrage to imprison a child of fifteen or sixteen or even under eighteen years of age (cheers). He trusted the Home Secretary would have power to make regulations in the future which would prevent children under a certain age from being imprisoned with adults (hear, hear). Turning to another subject, the treatment of political offenders, it was a disgrace to this country that the attempt was kept up to degrade, insult and trample upon political offenders. He did not believe that there was another country in Europe or the world where the Government attempted to treat its political offenders as the Government of this country habitually did. Prior to 1848 the Government sometimes hanged political offenders, but they did not treat them as pickpockets and thieves. He and other Irish members signed the petition asking that Dr. Jameson and his fellow prisoners should not be treated as ordinary felons, because he was opposed to treating any man for a political offense as if he were a common felon.

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