

The True Witness.

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27.

NEWS OF THE WEEK

Louis Napoleon is the "Sir Oracle" of Europe, and till he "opes his lips" all the little dogs must refrain themselves from barking. Well! the great man has spoken at last, and the oracle, pregnant with the fate of Europe and the world, has been delivered. It is therefore now allowable to little men to speculate as to what the coming year is destined to bring forth.

With respect to the Polish question, the most pressing of all those great political questions which now agitate the Old World, the Emperor declares himself in favor of a great European Congress, to regulate the affairs of the Continent, and to readjust the "balance of power," which is sadly out of order. The Treaty of Vienna is, so he argues, virtually dead. Its provisions have, with the consent of the high contracting parties themselves, been set aside, with respect to Belgium, Holland, Italy, Greece, Turkey, and all the other States for which the Congress of Vienna undertook to legislate.—Russia by her arbitrary conduct towards Poland has forfeited all rights over the latter country to which in virtue of the Treaties of 1815 she could lay claim; and as it was only in virtue of the positive stipulations of those Treaties that Russia had any legal right whatever—according to the international law of European States—over her Polish Provinces, so, if the Treaty of Vienna be indeed null and void, she has forfeited, as before Europe, all rights which by that Treaty she had acquired. The Polish Question then stands to-day as it stood in 1814, when the Congress of Vienna met, and when the re-establishment of an independent Poland, the territorial Poland of 1772, was considered an open question by the contracting Powers; and was seriously recommended by the representatives of some of them, as the most honest, as well as the most politic mode of settling what even then was felt to be a question pregnant with danger to the future peace of Europe.

Louis Napoleon, therefore, proposes a new Congress, which must of course commence its task with the recognition of the fact that the Treaty of Vienna is a dead letter, and that it has the same right to criticism, and if necessary undo, the work of Catherine as had its predecessor, the Congress of 1814. That the latter deemed itself in possession of that right, is evident from the language of its several members. It did not believe itself bound to accept, either the earlier partition of Poland, or the later partitions, as legal acts, or to give to them the sanction of European international law. And it follows, therefore, that, in demanding a new Congress Louis Napoleon calls upon Europe to assert its ancient right to decide upon the future of Poland—a right to which it has succeeded in virtue of the demise of the Congress of Vienna. In a word, Russia holds all her legal rights over her Polish Provinces only from that Congress, which first ratified the partitions of the XVIII. century. All those rights Russia has forfeited by her systematic violation of the terms upon which her share of Poland was recognised by the then contracting parties; and the proposed Congress, if it ever meets, will have to deal with the Polish Question, as if the partition had but just occurred.

But that Russia will accept such a Congress, or that accepting it, she will agree to be bound by its decisions, can hardly be expected. She bases her title to Poland, not on the parchments of 1815, but upon her sword. Poland, so she esteems is her's, not by Treaty, but by the sword, and by the sword she will continue to hold it, until it be wrested from her by the same means. The plan, therefore, which the French Emperor has suggested may, if it be accepted, for a season postpone, but we see not how it can avert, the long expected war. A Congress which should undertake to decide as to the fate of Poland, and which should separate without having taken steps to give practical effects to its decisions, in case Russia should refuse to abide thereby, would be a mockery, a farce; which would but make the contracting Powers ridiculous, and aggravate the miseries of the Poles. It must therefore be supposed that, when Louis Napoleon proposes a European Congress, he means also an armed alliance of the Western Powers,

to impose by force, if necessary, its decisions upon Russia, who certainly will not now, any more than in 1815, submit to any curtailment of her fancied right over Poland without remonstrance. As a means therefore to gain time, and to encourage the Poles by holding out to them the prospects of armed intervention in the Spring, the proposal of a Congress may be a good stroke of policy; but as a scheme for averting the dangers of war, and of arriving at a peaceful solution of the Polish question, it certainly appears to be naught, and unworthy of the astute intellect of Louis Napoleon.

Then there is the Italian Question; and this too is a matter upon which a European Congress would be called upon to adjudicate. The Neapolitans, though branded as "brigands," are fighting in the same cause, that of national independence, as are the insurgent Poles, and are entitled to the same tender sympathies from the Great Powers of Europe as are the latter. Nor can it be pretended with any show of reason, that the invasion, and annexation of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, by the Piedmontese, was one whit less a crime than was the invasion and annexation of Poland, by the Russians in the last century. But upon the Italian Question there are the most serious, and irreconcilable differences of opinion amongst the Western Powers themselves—so that though the latter might adopt some common course of action towards Poland, it would be impossible for them to agree upon any common policy as towards Italy, and the Provinces so lately subjugated by the King of Sardinia. The representatives, at the proposed Congress, of Great Britain and the other Powers which have sanctioned the aggressions of Victor Emmanuel upon his neighbors, and the conquest of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies by the Piedmontese, would be obliged, either to sanction the pretensions of the Czar upon Poland, or to lay down for the basis of a new European settlement, two different and contradictory principles, or rules of right and wrong; and if jealousy of Russia should force them to assert the right of the Poles to national independence, and a separate government, their hatred of the Pope and of the Catholic Church would force them to deny the autonomy of the Neapolitans, and the right of the latter to national existence, distinct and independent of their Piedmontese conquerors. Austria, Spain, and the other Catholic Powers, on the other hand, would be inclined to apply to Italy the same principles as those which Great Britain would apply to Poland alone; and thus unity of action amongst the Great Powers on the Italian Question would be impossible; whilst Russia would be able to retort with a *tu quoque*, and with irresistible logic upon those who condemned her for her aggressions upon Polish nationality, and still upheld the equally iniquitous aggression of Piedmont upon Neapolitan nationality. This threatens a serious obstacle to the proposed Congress; for of the parties thereunto few could come into Court with clean hands, or not obnoxious to the reproach of having applauded in the case of Piedmont, that which in the case of Russia they condemned.

To those, however, who take pleasure in the spectacle of swift retributive justice, the financial condition of the so-called Italian Kingdom is most gratifying, and promises a speedy break up or collapse of the tyranny of Victor Emmanuel. The expenses of the intrusive government exceed its receipts by about one-third; the former being about 97½ millions of francs—the latter only 623 millions—and this although within the last three years the cruel taxes imposed by the Piedmontese upon their new subjects have had the effect of doubling the revenue. Thus the financial state of Victor Emmanuel's government is summed up by the *London Times* in the following pithy sentence:—

"Italy has spent some 1,200 to 1,500 millions of francs during that time over her income."

In other words, there is an annual deficit between three and four hundred millions, and at this rate the end cannot be far off. There appeared a paragraph in the *Witness* the other day, to the effect that Victor Emmanuel, the patron of the Reformation, and the father of an evangelised Italy, was laid up with *delirium tremens*. This, though very probable, for the man is addicted to every excess, and beastly vice that can degrade poor fallen human nature, is not confirmed by our latest files.

The other European news is of little interest. The acceptance of the Imperial Crown of Mexico by Maximilian is now said to be beyond a doubt. The great increase of emigration from Ireland, threatens the depopulation of that country, and inspires great uneasiness even amongst those who but lately sneered at more Irish sufferings, and seemed to look upon the Celtic Exodus as an exceedingly good thing, for which God was to be thanked. The tone of the British press has greatly changed. The *Times* deplores the depopulation of Ireland, as an Imperial calamity, and insists that it forms a legitimate subject for the investigation of Parliament. A new trial has been granted in the case of the *Alexandra*, detained by the Government upon suspicion of being destined for the Confederate Navy, but of which charge not sufficient evi-

dence to convince a jury, was adduced on the first trial.

The news from the Seat of War on this Continent may be summed up in a few words.—General Meade has commenced a forward movement across the Rapidan, which, it is said, will compel General Lee either to fight or retreat. The position of the latter is represented as being strongly fortified, and a serious engagement is therefore looked for every moment.—Nothing has been done at Charleston; the enemy throw shells occasionally into the city, and pound away at the ruined sea-face of Fort Sumter. During the week the premium on gold has been steadily rising, from whence it may be concluded that in the opinion of the money world, the prospects of Federal success have not improved.

Particulars as to the means employed during the late elections to assure the success of the Jacobin ticket at the polls, are now being made public by the American press. The soldiery took forcible possession of the polls, and allowed no man opposed, or suspected of being opposed, to Abe Lincoln's tyranny, to cast a vote. By this simple and summary process a great Union victory was obtained.

The *Montreal Witness* has given no reply whatever to our request, made some two weeks ago, that he would state the particular truth or truths of the Gospel, essential to salvation, which all Romanists, in that they hold all that their Church believes and teaches, deny, reject, or are destitute of, but with which the French Canadian Missionary Society proposes to furnish them. Considering that, in his own columns, the *Witness* had brought forward the serious charge against Catholics, that they rejected or denied some or all of the saving truths of the Gospel; and that it was in answer to this charge that we made our request to the *Witness*, to define or state in plain concise terms the particular truth or truths of the Gospel, which all Romanists repudiated, in that they followed implicitly the teachings of their Church—we are entitled to conclude from this silence of our contemporary, that he is unable (not unwilling) to answer the question propounded—to comply with the simple request preferred to him by the *True Witness*. In other words, we have the right to interpret the silence of our evangelical friend, as a confession that he cannot indicate any positive truth, or truths, essential to salvation, which through her creeds, or other formularies the Catholic Church does not teach and enjoin upon all her children; and that therefore the appeals of the Missionary Societies for pecuniary aid to enable them to carry the saving truths of the Gospel to French Canadian Romanists, perishing for lack of these truths, is but an attempt to obtain money under false pretences. This may be a harsh judgment to form of evangelical men, but it is one to which the silence of the *Witness* compels us. No alternative presents itself; if he could indicate any one truth of the Gospel which Catholics necessarily denied, and the possession of which by Protestants necessitated and therefore justified their missions to perishing Romanists, he would of course do so; and as in his columns he has positively asserted that Catholics are destitute of, do deny or reject some one at least, of the saving truths of the Gospel, he is bound not only by Christian charity, but by courtesy and by honor (we know not if the *Witness* can understand the meaning of these last two terms, but we refer him to the Dictionary) either to make good his assertion, or else publicly to retract it. He does neither.

Assuming therefore that he is unable to justify Protestant Missions to Catholics, who do profess and sincerely hold all the saving truths of the Gospel, we would take the liberty of pointing out to him upon his own principles, to whom amongst his own fellow Protestants, his friends the Missionaries, might very profitably be sent; and of indicating to him a field of labor very vast, one where there is abundant room for missionary services, and where the superabundance of the apostolic zeal of the colporteurs might find salutary vent, without any annoyance to their neighbors.

We will credit the *Witness* and the Missionary Societies with the very best of intentions.—We will suppose that they are inspired by a pure love for immortal souls, in their opinion perishing, or in danger of perishing, through lack of some one, or more, of the saving truths of the Gospel of which they believe themselves to be in possession, but in which they sincerely desire to make all their neighbors participate. We will also credit them with so much of Christian Faith as is contained in the doctrines, of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement, and will attribute to them the opinion that these are some of the saving truths of the Gospel, belief in which is indispensably necessary to salvation. Now this premised, we would take the liberty of reminding our evangelical friends that here, in this City, at their very doors, are numbers of their fellow-Protestants who call themselves Unitarians, and who deny all of the above essential, or saving truths of the Gospel. Why then not make an effort to carry "the Gospel" to these?

—why then do not our friends of the F. C. M. Society try their "prentice hands" at conversion upon those of their own blood—their fellow Protestants, for whom, if they have any bowels of compassion, they must mourn as indeed "destitute of the Gospel."

And if the spiritual destitution of their next door neighbors move them not, why do not the zealous Societies above indicated direct their efforts towards the salvation of the unfortunate Protestant heathen of the Eastern Townships? whose "spiritual destitution" is so graphically, and pathetically described in a late number of the *Montreal Witness* by one who signs himself a "Pedestrian Missionary." Are there then "Equestrian Missionaries amongst the saints?" Missionaries who ride on live horses, who drive gigs, and are therefore respectable amongst their fellows? From the peculiar title assumed by the writer in the *Witness*, it would appear as if such were the case, and as if there were a recognised aristocracy, a division into orders, "Equestrian" and "Pedestrian," even in the conventicle.

Be that as it may, the following are the terms in which the said "Pedestrian Missionary" describes the religious condition of the Protestant or non-Catholic settlers in the Eastern Townships, in an article published by the *Witness* on the 14th instant:—

"The cause of Christ in the Townships is in a very depressed condition. I have now travelled somewhere about 300 miles, through eight of the townships, visited about six or seven hundred dwellings, and conversed with at least 2000 persons upon the subject of religion, and everywhere I receive the same general impressions. Were I asked to describe the state of religion in three words, these words would be, apathy, apathy, apathy. Nothing can exceed their kindness and hospitality, except their neglect of heart religion! Wherever I go,—and I have eaten and drunk in upwards of a hundred and twenty houses,—I am treated with the most marked deference and respect. The Prince of Wales could not be received with greater kindness than the poor missionary; but when I inquire into the state of religion, the answer is, "very low," occasionally varied by the quaint phraseology, "There are not many Christians in these diggings." In the days of Noah men bought and sold, planted and builded, married and gave in marriage,—that is, they were immersed in worldly matters, but gave no thought to God. Such, also, is the state of matters in the Eastern Townships. In almost every district there are some Christians, but the great mass are living without God, and as if there was no death, no judgment, no eternity.

"Whatever may be the case in other places, I assert from personal knowledge and other most diligent and painstaking inquiry, that in the Eastern Townships Christianity is retrograding, not progressing. My conviction is that not five per cent of the population are diligently seeking after the salvation of their immortal souls."

Here then, if a tender love for perishing souls be the animating principle of the F. C. M. Society, is a state of affairs that calls loudly for their active interference; here certainly, where there is a large Protestant population, "living without God, and as if there was no death, no judgment, no eternity," may it be said that "the Gospel" is unknown or repudiated. Why then are not the Missionaries sent to those perishing souls, to those practical heathens, really "destitute of the Gospel," rather than to French Canadian Catholics, who, by the tacit admission of the *Witness*, are recognised as possessing already all the essential saving truths of Christianity?

The causes assigned by our friend the "Pedestrian Missionary" for the practical heathenism of the Protestant populations of the Eastern Townships, are also worthy of note. He attributes it to two principal causes—one inherent in Protestantism, and the other its boast and crown of glory. The one is the great diversity of religious opinion, which flows necessarily from the principle of "private judgment;" the other is materialism, or the excessive devotion to material progress, which all Protestant writers cite as the proof of heaven's approbation of the principles of the Reformation. On this cause of the heathenism of the Protestants of the Eastern Townships, our informant moralises in the following strain:—

"I am far from admitting that this melancholy state of matters is peculiar to the Eastern Townships; on the contrary, I believe that it many other places were polled, they would yield a similar result, for I am no believer in the boasted progress of the present day, and it therefore becomes an important question, what are the causes of this sad declension? One of them, and the most prominent one too, is the intense spirit of worldliness, so characteristic of the present time. As a people we have ceased to feel our obligations to God, and are becoming blind to the fact that ere long we must appear at His judgment seat. We are become so accustomed to think of the material progress of the age and to vaunt our inventions, that with the language of orthodoxy ever on our lips, we have degenerated into a race of practical atheists. We have so given ourselves over to the idea that to be wealthy is to be happy, that we have lost sight of the fact that happiness has its seat, not in the purse, but in the heart. We have so thoroughly shut our eyes to the verities of an unseen world that, while indulging in much sage talk about the uncertainty of life, we are living as if this world was our home. The people of the Eastern Townships are engrossed with their farms. Are the folks in Montreal quite sure that they are not equally engrossed with their stores, their counting-rooms and their concerns?"

The higher farming, and the better bred cattle of the Protestant settlers of the Eastern Townships afford therefore as little argument in favor of their purer Christianity, as do the poorer farming, and interior cows of the Catholic habitants in support of the hypothesis that the latter are "destitute of the Gospel." Worldly prosperity is certainly no infallible sign of acceptance with God. Of the other cause of the sad religious destitution that obtains amongst the Protestants of the Eastern Townships, the

"Pedestrian Missionary" discourses as follows:—

"Another cause is the great diversity of religious sentiment so prevalent in the present day. I mean that sentiment which passes by the name of religious but which often contains a truly homoeopathic admixture of religion. A Baptist minister speaking to me upon the subject, enumerated fifteen distinct *isms* in the Eastern Townships, to which I venture to add an additional twain, viz.:—Anythingism and Nothingism, and as every one sticks to his own particular 'ism' with the tenacity of a limpet to its rock, it follows that united action is impossible. Hence, jealousies and heart-burnings; hence, fightings and wars; hence, in some places, a lamentable scarcity of religious ordinances; hence, a prevalent impression in the minds of the ungodly, that it is impossible to discover truth; and hence, alas! alas! a conviction in the minds of not a few, that they are, therefore, not under any obligation to discover it at all,—under which fearful delusion they live and die like the beasts that perish. How little do the inhabitants of large towns, when they look upon their large and well-filled churches, realise the innumerable evils of religious divisions. The magnitude of their congregations enables each sect to support the ministrations of the Gospel with ease, however much the community as a whole may be divided; and when the anniversary meetings came round, it is very pretty to see ministers of various denominations meet on the same platform, and sing, "Sweet is the tie that binds"

"Our hearts in Christian love."
These things serve to hide the sore,—to cover the rent,—to conceal the evil,—to putty up the crack; but when we come to investigate into the state of matters in thrifty-peopled districts, then the wrong done to the cause of the Redeemer is seen in all its native deformity."

But this "deformity," this "wrong done to the cause of the Redeemer," is the legitimate issue or work of Protestantism, or the setting up of the "private judgment" of the individual against the authority of Church; and no Protestant certainly has the right to complain of it, or to reproach his brother Protestants there with. Were he wise and honest, he would content himself with warning his fellow Protestants against attempting to introduce their principles amongst Catholics; and thereby extending those inevitable religious dissensions, which spring up in every community that has renounced the authority of a living teacher of "the Gospel." It is true that at Anniversary Meetings, ministers of many rival denominations do meet on one platform, and in apparent concord, to celebrate the triumphs of the past year over the faith of the Catholics of Lower Canada. But as the "Pedestrian Missionary" well observes: this apparent concord, or harmony, this ostensible union of sects is but a sham: "These things serve to hide the sore" which is festering beneath, but really deceive no one as to the true state of the case. Against the Church of Christ the sectaries may for the nonce make common cause; but when comes the question of dividing the spoils, or of appropriating the converts, then the inappreciable jealousies and mutual hatreds of the rival sects declare themselves as strongly as ever; more strongly perhaps because of the restraints to which for a time they had submitted through their common hatred of Catholicity—the only sentiment which they really have in common.

Hare then is a case for the proselytising Societies. Were they really animated by a Christian object, they would not attempt to introduce amongst Catholics those religious dissensions, those "jealousies and heart-burnings" which characterise Protestantism; and they would rather seek to bring back to Christianity, to a knowledge of God, to a recognition of "death, judgment, and eternity," their perishing brother Protestants of the Eastern Townships, than endeavor to subvert the faith of the Canadian habitants.

The "Pedestrian Missionary" gives also some heartrending details of the practical effects of Eastern Township heathenism upon the salaries of Protestant ministers in that section of the Colony. This is no doubt the tenderest point of all in the Missionary conscience; and when we consider that the converted Papist is not likely to be a bit more liberal towards his evangelical pastor, than are the Protestants of the Eastern Townships towards their ministers—we shall see good reasons for expecting a considerable relaxation in the efforts of the Missionaries to bring the habitants of Lower Canada to a knowledge of "the Gospel." Now the fact is, as stated by the "Pedestrian Missionary," that Protestant ministers are shamefully treated, in the matter of their salaries, by their respective congregations. Our informant cites many instances. The claims of the minister for payment are postponed to those of the grocer; for tea and sugar, tobacco and whiskey are more highly esteemed than sermons and than "the Gospel" itself. The people promise, and do not pay: daunting them is of no use; and our informant mentions the case of a "lady and gentleman who devoted an entire day to raise their minister's salary; and the net result of their labor was one dollar." Upon this evidence of the ungodliness of the people of the Eastern Townships, the "Pedestrian Missionary" dilates with much pathos. Not only do they often keep back, and sometimes often entirely refuse to pay, the minister's salary, but even when they do pay, the poor minister profits but little:—

"Some insist upon paying in produce, whether the minister wants the articles or not; and what is still more reprehensible, they sometimes charge more than the market-prices. The stories I have heard of the shabby manner in which they treat their pastors in this way are innumerable. If I could only remember them, they would fill pages. One man brought a quantity of wheat to his minister. As he did not happen to stand in need of this commodity,