

A SURPRISING LETTER.

The Late Mgr. Bourget and Father Dowd.

Statements Without Foundation Reflecting Upon the Illustrious Prelate and Devoted Pastor—A Full Explanation and a Complete Refutation.

Last week, in an editorial note, we referred to the following letter which we had received for publication, and amongst other things we said that it seemed "to us calculated to raise a very unnecessary discussion, which might terminate in unpleasant results without achieving any corresponding good." Whether we were right or wrong our readers will judge for themselves. We had fully determined not to give the letter to our readers, but on Friday last we received another communication from "J. K.," in which he said: "I respectfully trust that you will insert my letter in your next issue, and save me the disagreeable necessity of having it published in a Protestant paper." We have every reason to believe that this course would be adopted by our correspondent, in the event of our refusal to publish his letter. It is true that the letter is self-refuting; but were it to appear in any of the secular newspapers, it would be read by thousands whom the TRUE WITNESS does not reach, and might leave false impressions upon people who would not have an opportunity of reading the true version of the case. Therefore, and upon sound advice, we have determined to furnish our readers with this contribution; but in so doing we beg of them to read carefully the statement of facts with which we follow it. Here is his letter:

MONTREAL, 16th October, 1893.

To the Editor of THE TRUE WITNESS:

SIR:—Your approval and zealous advocacy of the project inaugurated by the devoted priests of St. Patrick's Church, to establish a Catholic High School in this city, is, like all your writings, a veritable treat. Your invaluable services in the cause of education are scarcely appreciated and cannot be overrated, for you have illustrated the momentous subject, in all its phases, with persistent and surpassing ability. To you our co-religionists, especially the Irish Catholics, are under many obligations. Ever since your advent to the control of the TRUE WITNESS its readers have enjoyed the privilege of reading the best the most grateful and yet the most profound demonstrations of high literary merit. In offering you this feeble tribute, I claim at the same time, the right of dissenting from your extreme laudation of the late Father Dowd. I have known him since he first came to this city, and therefore I trust you will excuse me in saying that I know him better than you. I am with you, however, in paying a certain tribute to his memory, but cannot accompany you in your glowing and boundless praise.

Father Dowd was a painstaking Priest—zealous and devoted and unique as a disciplinarian, but he was never known as a popular Priest in the true sense, nor for high literary attainments. In policy and progress, there was a regular line of demarcation, in fact, antagonism, between him and the other Irish Priests—the late gifted Father O'Brien and the amiable Father O'Farrell—now Bishop of Trenton, N. J., and Fathers O'Connell and McCulloch. When the Irish Catholics had no church—they acquired St. Patrick's; but recently, and were the only class in the city who had none—being held in check by the ecclesiastical authorities of the city, the Irish Priests and People—smarting under what was deemed to a certain extent a servitude, they resolved to make an effort to be emancipated and build a church for themselves. In due course they applied to the Superior of the Seminary for the requisite permission, but to their appeal he gave a blunt refusal, on the plea that the Irish were too poor for such an undertaking. Then Fathers O'Brien, O'Farrell and McCulloch said: "Rev. Sir, give us only permission and we will prove to you what the Irish can do, when there is a question of building a Catholic Church." To this appeal the Superior yielded. At the end of the ensuing week the success of the Irish Priests was so great in obtaining subscriptions, that the Superior actually begged their pardon for the poor opinion which he had expressed towards the Irish—adding that he was deceived by representations made to him. In justice, it must be said here that, the Gentlemen of the Seminary, almost to a man, were in sympathy with the efforts of the Irish Priests, especially Rev. Father Toupin, who has endeared himself to the Irish by a lifetime of unflinching devotion in their service, which he still continues, as one of the exemplary Priesthood of St. Patrick's Church. After the consent of the Superior, however, there yet remained an obstacle to the complete freedom of action, and that was the reluctance of the late Bishop Bourget to give his consent to the project. Repeated deputations waited on His Lordship, imploring his sanction to the erection of the Church—but no he would not yield, and remained obstinate to the end. Why did Bishop Bourget, who was habitually so genial and so good, withhold his consent? The answer is—through the diplomacy of Father Dowd.

All the efforts of the Irish priests and people were thus frustrated, and their cherished project and aspirations fell to the ground! In their dismay they could not account for the conduct of the venerable Bishop or discover any clue to the cause of his mysterious refusal to their respectful and legitimate demands, and although Father Dowd refused to co-operate with them, they never dreamt that it

was by his dexterous manoeuvres they were checkmated, nor till this day have the Irish been undeceived. I claim to be the only Irish Catholic to whom the intrigue has been revealed. I discovered the fact without seeking it. Eighteen years ago—in seventy-five, while in conversation with a clerical friend of mine—Rev. Father Leclerc, of St. Vincent de Paul, the secret came to light incidentally, the Bishop himself—with whom Father Leclerc was on intimate terms, related the facts of the case to him in full, nor would I now reveal the secret had not the higher claims of the exemplary Priesthood of St. Patrick's Church been indirectly challenged.

As to the Rev. Father Dowd, I am with you to the full extent of what he may have been justly entitled to, but I insist that, to call the projected Catholic High School "The Dowd Memorial High School of Montreal" would be a grave misnomer!

I trust that my dissent may not bar the insertion of those few lines in THE TRUE WITNESS, which your gifted pen has made a necessary and welcome guest to its readers. J. K.

A Complete Refutation.

After reading the foregoing we do not think that any of our readers will be surprised if we hesitated in giving it space in our columns, and certainly were it not for the subsequent threat to have it published in the Protestant press, we could not have allowed it to appear. But perhaps it is as well in the end, for certainly if our correspondent "J. K." were to have calmly reflected, and to be devoid of any prejudice or spleen, he would have seen that as far as the statements regarding the late Mgr. Bourget and the late Father Dowd are concerned, there is not and could not possibly be any truth in them. He must have been greatly misled or else greatly mixed up in regard to these events. In order to set such a matter at rest, and to disabuse the minds of any who may have been laboring under similar false impressions, we purpose refuting, in as few and as clear words as possible, the whole fabrication.

We take the first important statement: "In policy and progress there was a regular line of demarcation, in fact, antagonism, between him (Fr. Dowd) and the other Irish priests, the late gifted Father O'Brien and the amiable Father O'Farrell, now Bishop of Trenton, N. J., and Fathers O'Connell and McCulloch." This is absolutely false. Each man, of course, has his own methods and his own ideas, but between the reverend gentlemen mentioned we have it upon the testimony of their intimate friends that no antagonism of any kind ever existed or was ever before suggested. But let us pass on! "When the Irish Catholics had no Church"—that was before they had St. Patrick's—which was in 1841 and previous to that period. Neither Father Dowd, nor Father O'Brien, nor Father O'Farrell, nor Father McCulloch, was in Canada. Anyone with the slightest knowledge of the history of St. Patrick's is aware that these assertions regarding Father Dowd are totally and absolutely unfounded in fact. They are, as we said, self-refuting.

The Rev. Father Phelan, who was ordained in 1825, was pastor of the Irish Catholic congregation at the Recollet church, until he was consecrated coadjutor Bishop of Kingston. In 1841 the first meetings of Irish Catholics were held, at which it was resolved to commence a movement in order to secure a church for that rapidly increasing section of the community. It was the Rev. J. J. Connolly, successor to Father Phelan, who headed the movement. That grand old Napoleonic soldier, and subsequent Superior of the Montreal Seminary, Rev. Abbe Quiblier, was the man approached. He did not hesitate; he did not say the Irish were too poor; he did not give any other reply than an immediate and hearty co-operation. So energetic was he and so persevering were the promoters of the project, that on the 20th May, 1843, the land was purchased; the Rocheblave property was secured for \$20,000. That summer the cross was planted and blessed that occupied the center of the site, and the ground was broken. On 26th September, that same year, 1843, the seven corner stones were blessed by Mgr. Bourget, and the first one was laid by himself. Mark the date—1843. There was then no hesitation on the part of the bishop; no secret or underhand work. He blessed, unhesitatingly, the enterprise. On the 17th March, 1847, the church was inaugurated and dedicated to St. Patrick. In 1846 Rev. M. Quiblier visited Ireland, and secured from the then Primate, Most Rev. Dr. Crolly, permission to have Fathers Dowd, O'Brien, McCulloch and others sent out to Canada. In the beginning of 1848 these Fathers came to Canada, and Father Connolly was chosen first parish priest of St. Patrick's in 1847.

Consequently, Father Dowd came to Canada seven years after the project of

securing a church for the Irish Catholics commenced; five years after Mgr. Bourget had blessed the corner-stones; and consequently could not possibly have had any "dexterous manoeuvrings" or have done any "checkmating," especially with a Bishop who had never hesitated one second regarding the "aspirations" of the Irish Catholics in this particular. Moreover, Fathers O'Brien, O'Farrell and McCulloch, never approached the Superior of the Seminary—Rev. M. Quiblier—nor did he ever give a "blunt" or any other kind of "refusal" to them; and for the very good reason that they were in Ireland and did not reach Canada until years after the date in question. In the next place, Rev. Mr. Leclair, of St. Vincent de Paul, could never have been told any such thing, by Mgr. Bourget, as that Father Dowd was the cause of his refusal to sanction the project of building an Irish Catholic Church. We repeat, when the Irish Catholics wanted to build a church in 1841 the Superior of the Seminary was with them heart and soul from the start, Mgr. Bourget never hesitated a moment, and Father Dowd did not come to Canada until seven years after the project was started, and for more than a year after the church was blessed and dedicated.

We cannot conceive what could impel any Irish Catholic to seek, at this late date, to rake up dead issues in order to cast a shade upon the memory of such a man as the late pastor of St. Patrick's. Were it not that we have been forced to publish this letter we would be glad to leave our readers in ignorance of the fact that any man could carry personal feelings to such an extent. We have now given the letter; we have answered it, in all charity, for if we only chose we could make revelations that would not affect the dead, but might seriously concern the living. Our readers will excuse us for the length of the reply; but it is an exceptional case—one to be met with in a hundred years—and this must plead justification for us. The TRUE WITNESS is not a vehicle for personal animosities, and our mission is not to create ill-feeling and turmoil. The Protestant press is welcome to any further correspondence on this or kindred subjects.—EDITOR TRUE WITNESS.

THE FREE LIBRARY.

Annual Afternoon Tea and Concert.

The annual "afternoon tea," in aid of the Free Library, will take place at Hall & Scott's rooms, 2269 St. Catherine street, Saturday, November 4th, 4.30 to 7 o'clock. It is unnecessary to say anything here of this entertainment itself, so simple and attractive in form, where all may meet and enjoy themselves in the easiest and most informal manner, with little or no expense. The admission ticket entitles the holder to tea, coffee and other refreshments. Music of an excellent quality is provided. Artists, such as Miss Hollinshead, Miss Teresa Macdonald and Mr. Sullivan, banjoist, have already promised their services for this occasion.

The "afternoon tea" has indeed become an institution, and a decidedly pleasant one.

The object for which it is given is, by this time no less widely known and no less popular. The free library is in the basement hall of the Gesu, where space has been kindly donated by the Jesuit Fathers and l'Union Catholique. It has sent out over 9,000 volumes, in a period of eight months. Books can be procured without restrictions of creed or race and without parochial limitations. They penetrate into every part of the city, carrying sunshine into countless homes, as well as the best moral and spiritual results. Many consoling testimonies as to effects produced by books from this library have come to the notice of the directors. Necessarily limited from want of means, for the library has subsisted on the liberality of a few individuals and the proceeds of this annual tea, it has, nevertheless, proved the demand which exists for reading and the necessity of providing good reading. This is, indeed, one of the best means of carrying on the crusade, so essential now, more than ever, against the combined forces forever working against the Church.

By means of the last "Tea," together with one or two donations of money, \$84

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new books were placed upon the library shelves. But so great is the demand that the supply is always insufficient. The work, then, is a noble one, deserving of public support. All can assist it in an efficacious manner, and at the same time spend an enjoyable afternoon by the purchase of a fifty cent ticket for the "Tea." Children are admitted for ten cents.

The Judicial District of Pontiac.

A proclamation has been issued dividing the judicial district of Ottawa and creating the district of Pontiac, in which, after the 1st of January, 1894, court terms will be held as follows:—

The Court of Queen's Bench, in the exercise of its original criminal jurisdiction, shall be held at Bryson, on the 20th day of each of the months of May and October.

The Circuit court, in and for the district of Pontiac, at Bryson, shall be held from the 23rd to the 25th days of February, May and October.

The Superior court, for the district of Pontiac, shall be held at Bryson from the 26th of February to the 2nd of March, and from the 26th to the 30th days of the months of May and October.

The Circuit court shall also sit at Portage du Fort from the 2nd to the 7th of March, from the 1st to the 5th of June, and from the 2nd to the 6th of November.

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Nature is Unrobing

Herself with a quick hand. Even "the serene and yellow leaf" has become a vanishing quantity. There is a biting suggestion of the wolf's tooth in the air; the beneficent face of old Sol has grown less cheery, and something more than the light of his countenance is requisite to make life bearable. That something, of course, is "solid comfort."

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