

THE TRUE WITNESS

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOV. 6, 1857.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

Although two steamers have arrived from Europe since our last, we have nothing new from India to report. The European Continental news is barren of interest. The Governor General who came out by the *Indian*, reached town on Tuesday; it is rumored that he brings the decision of the Imperial authorities on the Seat of Government question; and many of the Upper Canada journals speak confidently of an approaching dissolution, and a reconstruction of the Ministry. On Thursday, the 5th, the Orangemen of the Upper Province turned out in force to commemorate Cecil's *bagun* powder plot; but up to the time of going to press we had not heard of any acts of violence committed by the vagabonds. No doubt we shall hear of plenty next week.

BROWNSON'S REVIEW—OCTOBER 1857.

The following are the contents of the number before us:—

- I. The Primacy of Peter.
- II. The Church and the Constitution.
- III. Aspirations of Nature.
- IV. C. J. Cannon's Works.
- V. Le Vert's *Souvenirs of Travel*.
- VI. British Preponderance.
- VII. Literary Notices and Criticisms.

Interesting as are all the articles of this *Review*, we naturally turn to the VI., that on "British Preponderance," as the views of such a man as Dr. Brownson upon the mutiny in India, and the probable results of the contest in which Great Britain now finds herself involved, are entitled to our respectful consideration at least, even if on one or two points we should happen to dissent from his conclusions.

As a citizen of the United States, it is not to be expected that the *Reviewer* should have any very ardent desire for the success of British arms in the present contest; and we have no doubt that he is quite correct in his assertion that "the real American sentiment"—meaning, we suppose, the sentiment of that portion of America which is known as the United States—"would not be pained to see England lose her Indian Empire, and reduced to a second rate power." But as a Catholic, and as giving the interests of Christianity the first place in his affections, we doubt not that the learned Doctor would be pained to see British rule in India—grossly abused as that rule has often been—overthrown by the agencies now at work against it. The success of the Sepoys might, and no doubt would, give a great impetus to cotton growing in the United States; but as the triumph of Paganism, it would operate most disastrously upon the Church in India, and upon our numerous flourishing Catholic missions, against which the fury of the mutineers is as strongly directed, as against the East India Company.

For it is a remarkable fact that, spite of her hostility to Catholicity, and her unceasing efforts against the Church, British rule has, by the overruling providence of God, been employed as a powerful means of upholding, and for propagating the principles of, the very religion that she hates and persecutes at home. Humanly speaking, it is to British rule that we owe the preservation of the Catholic people of Canada from the contamination of the first French revolution; and it is again in a great measure owing to British influence in Southern Asia, that the Catholic missionary has of late years been able to preach the Gospel unmolested throughout the Indian Peninsula. For this we ask no praise for the British Government, and give no thanks to her statesmen. It is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes; it is the work of Him Who maketh even the wrath of man to praise Him.

And for this reason, if for no other, we as Catholics should look upon the triumph of the Sepoys as an unmitigated disaster. Their openly avowed object is the extermination of, not British influence in particular, but of all European influence in India; and the cause, the only cause that they assign for their appeal to arms is their dread of Christianity. Their success therefore would be followed immediately by the expulsion of the Catholic missionaries, the persecution of the native Catholic population, and the relapse into Paganism of the thousands who have been already brought to the knowledge of the true God. Now there is no true Catholic who should be willing to pay such a price, even for the sake of reducing England to "a second rate power," and of securing to the United States the monopoly of the cotton market.

At the same time, no Catholic, whether a

British subject or a citizen of the United States, will attempt to conceal, or palliate, the evils of British rule in India; nor do we feel inclined to question the substantial accuracy of the *Reviewer's* assertion that "India was wealthier, the land better cultivated, and the people less oppressed under Mahometan than they have been under British rule." The *Reviewer* does not indeed cite his authorities, nor is there much reliance to be placed on the glowing accounts of the historians of the Mogul Empire; but making every allowance for the exaggeration of the latter, there seem to be no reasons to doubt that, since the commencement of the XVII. century, the condition of the people of India, and the productiveness of its soil have very much deteriorated. Indeed, looking at the history of India since the death of Aurungzebe, we see not how it could have been otherwise. For the last hundred and fifty years, India has been one vast battle field; whereon, at first, the Afghans and the Mahrattas in the North, the French and English in the South, contended for mastery.—It has been invaded and ravaged by hostile armies; Nadir Shah alone, is said to have carried off, and from the plunder of Delhi alone, a sum exceeding in value thirty-two millions of our money. During the long anarchy consequent upon the breaking up of the Mogul Empire, and when every chieftain who could rally around his standard a gang of Pindarees, or robbers, proclaimed himself an independent sovereign and waged incessant war upon his weaker neighbors, commerce and agriculture must unavoidably have suffered, as they did in Europe upon the breaking up of the Roman Empire; and under the English, who, taking advantage of that anarchy, extended their dominion over the country, bringing one by one the petty sovereigns amongst whom it had been parcelled out, into precarious subjection, the same causes have been in operation, and, no doubt, with the like results. Even if we had no statistics, no history of India under the Mogul dynasty, we should from these facts conclude that the soil of India was better cultivated, and its people wealthier in the days of Akbar, Shah Jehan, and Aurungzebe, than in those of their effete successors of the XVII. century, or under the rule of a Company of merchants who made war their trade. When we remember however the cruel persecutions to which the Hindoos were subjected by the great Aurungzebe, who in his Moslem zeal for the extirpation of idolatry, destroyed and polluted the most splendid of the pagodas of the conquered race, thereby sowing the seeds of that hostility to the Mogul rule which his successors reaped, we can scarcely admit that "the people were less oppressed under Mahometan than under British rule," bad and oppressive as the latter has undoubtedly often been. The only difference that we can perceive betwixt the effects of Moslem and British rule upon the people of India is this—that the former persecuted the religion, but respected the pockets of its subjects; whilst the other emptied the pockets, but respected the religion of the idolatrous Hindoos. Indeed it would be unjust towards the British Government to refuse to it the credit—such as it is—of having always and everywhere been tolerant of religious error, of heresy, and of all false doctrine. Thus even whilst its statute book was stained with vile edicts prohibiting the worship of the true God, and inflicting cruel penalties upon the Catholic priest who at home should presume to celebrate the sacred mysteries, it was in India extending its powerful protection over the licentious rites of Oriental idolatry. To such an extent was this favor to idolatry carried, that the law against obscene paintings and carvings was expressly relaxed in so far as related to those beastly and licentious objects which the Hindoos employ in their filthy rites; and thus the very Government which, at home, could not endure a representation of Christ on the Cross, or an image of the Blessed Virgin, smiled complacently upon the Lingham and Yoni of its Hindoo subjects.

We think however that the *Reviewer* is in error in attributing the Sepoy outbreak in Bengal, to the extortions practised by the native tax gatherers upon the ryots of the Madras Presidency. We think so, because the men who form the strength of the Bengal army are not drawn from the class that has chiefly suffered by those extortions; and because betwixt the high caste Brahman Sepoy, and the miserable ryot, there is far less sympathy than there is betwixt an ordinary European and the lowest class of animals. The Brahman looks down upon those of an inferior caste as upon beings of another order, whom to touch would be pollution, and to whom it would be almost a crime to give a drink of water.—What does the Brahman care for the sufferings of the low caste men, the victims of a barbarous treatment which has existed in India from time immemorial? Besides, in the manifesto put forth by the Sepoys, wherein they enumerate all their grievances, this charge of the cruel treatment of the ryots by the native tax gatherers is not alluded to. The *Reviewer* forgets that, revolting as the use of torture is to the Christian and European, the Hindoo accepts it as a matter of course; and that consequently it does

not excite in the latter the same feelings of horror and indignation as those which every honest man born in a Christian country must experience when he hears of it as practised upon his fellow-creatures. This by no means diminishes the guilt of the British Government in sanctioning, directly or indirectly, the brutal practice; but it is a good reason for believing that the mutiny of the soldiers of the Bengal army, who have suffered no oppression from that Government, is not the result of the barbarous and revolting cruelties inflicted upon another class of the community, with whom they have no sympathy whatsoever.

And it is now also certain that the ryot population—the immediate victims of the tax-gatherers' barbarities—do not entertain any very strong or general feelings of hostility towards the British. On the contrary, they have hitherto manifested a wonderful sympathy with the latter, and in many instances have protected them from the fury of the Sepoys. Numbers of the fugitives from Delhi, and other places, have been secreted and aided in their flight by the ryots, although great rewards were offered by the mutineers for the heads of Europeans, and sanguinary threats held out against any of the native population who should harbour or assist them. These are facts, which cannot be denied, but which, it must be confessed, are not easily reconcilable with the theory that the mutiny is the result of the cruelties practised upon the ryots. The Sepoys who have not suffered from those cruelties, murder all the Europeans they can lay their hands on; the oppressed ryots risk life and property to rescue their oppressors from the hands of the Sepoys. We trust that, should British arms be victorious in India, this fact so honourable to the ryots may be remembered in the hour of victory, and that the lesson of indiscriminate revenge preached by the *Times* may be scouted with abhorrence and disgust by the British soldier.

The *Reviewer* will not suspect us of any design to palliate the cruelties which undoubtedly have been perpetrated upon the ryots by the native officials, or to relieve the East India Company of its share of the infamy which justly attaches to all who wink at such inhuman practices. It was the duty of the Company to put a stop to the use of torture; and though no doubt this would have been a most difficult task—more difficult perhaps than to prevent Hindoo widows from burning themselves—it was its duty to attempt it. Until lately no vigorous efforts seem to have been employed by the British authorities for this purpose; and upon the principle that every one is responsible for the acts of his agent, we hold that they are deserving of all blame for their culpable indifference to the sufferings of the ryot whom it was their duty to protect. It may perhaps be argued that the use of torture, both for police and fiscal purposes, is a national custom of immemorial antiquity, and that the Company did not find itself strong enough to abolish it. This may be true, but in that case it is clear that the government of India should be entrusted to stronger hands.

But we would remind the *Reviewer* that, if all accounts be true, India is not the only country in which torture is employed; and that there is no moral difference betwixt inflicting physical pain upon a ryot because he will not pay his taxes, and flogging a negro because he will not perform a prescribed amount of work. Now the latter mode of torture is, if we are not grossly misinformed, constantly practised by citizens of the United States upon negroes—both male and female—with the sanction of the laws of the land; and should be looked upon by the Christian and the freeman with as much abhorrence as the not more cruel tortures inflicted upon Hindoo ryots by the native tax gatherers. Of course two wrongs do not make a right; but it hardly becomes a citizen of a country which expressly recognises the use of torture as legal, to criticise very severely the negligence and short comings of the British Government, or rather of the East India Company. Torture inflicted upon a negro is as revolting as torture inflicted upon a ryot; to flog a mulatto woman with a cowhide is as brutal and unmanly an act, as is any revealed by the "Madras Torture Commission" as having been inflicted upon females in India, and the Christian freeman should be as prompt to condemn in the one case as in the other. The day must come sooner or later, when the negro races of this Continent will rise up against the whites, and renew in the United States, the horrors of Cawnpore and Delhi. God forbid that any man should anticipate such an uprising with satisfaction; but when it does come, the impartial historian will be compelled to acknowledge that the negroes had far better cause of complaint against their masters, than had the Sepoys of the Bengal army against their officers.

Some other remarks which we had to offer, we must postpone till next week.

Mr. L. Doran, Henderson's Corners, Emily Post Office, is informed that his paper has been regularly posted in the Montreal office, and that its non-arrival is attributable to neglect, bad management, or dishonesty, at some of the intermediate Post Offices.

REPORT ON EDUCATION IN UPPER CANADA FOR THE YEAR 1856.—By the Rev. Mr. Ryerson, Chief Superintendent of Education.

The Reverend Mr. Ryerson, is bound to indict annually upon the Canadian public his apology for the system of "State-Schoolism" of which he is the main support, and which system in return, supports him. It is his interest, as it is his official duty, to sing the praises of "State-Schoolism," and to decry "Freedom of Education;" and we have therefore no right to expect that he should prefer truth to office, or the claims of justice to his quarterly salary. "There is nothing like leather," argues the dealer in that useful commodity; and upon the same principle your salaried Chief Superintendent of Education maintains that "there is nothing like 'State-Schoolism.'" Every man stands up for his own trade.

But less prudent than the leather-merchant, the Rev. Mr. Ryerson is not content with a bare assertion of the superiority of the commodity in which he deals, but very unwisely attempts to support the claims of "State-Schoolism" by what he calls arguments, but by what to us seems nothing better than vulgar clap-trap. As for instance, in the following exposition of the working of the Upper Canada School Laws:—

"The school system recognises no power in the Legislature to levy a sixpence tax upon the people for school purposes, nor any power in the Government to erect or furnish a single school house, or employ a single teacher, but a simple power in the freeholders and householders of each municipality and school division to provide for the school education of their children in their own way, and to any extent they please."—p. p. 5, 6.

Now, were this true, no one would have the slightest cause for dissatisfaction with the existing school system of Upper Canada. That every one should have the power, and has the natural right, to provide for the school education of his own children in his own way, requires surely no proof; and if the action of the State was limited to the simple recognition of that power and that right, the only objection that could be urged would be, that the State had taken a deal of unnecessary trouble, to recognise that which no sane person ever dreamt of calling in question. If the Upper Canada school system merely recognised a "simple power in A, B, and C, to provide for the education of their own children in their own way, and to any extent they pleased," no Catholic would have a word to say against it.

But our complaint is, that by that system, the State confers upon the aforesaid A, B, and C, the power to tax D and E for the education of the children of the former; and that thereby the State has diminished the power of the latter—D and E—"to provide for the education of their children in their own way," and has therefore defrauded them of their natural rights as parents. It is to this unnatural and iniquitous arrangement, which compels D to pay for a school to which he is conscientiously opposed, and to which in the exercise of his inalienable rights as a parent, he does not see fit to send his children, that we object; it is of the wrong perpetrated upon E, whose means of providing for the education of his own children are diminished in consequence of his being by an unjust and tyrannical law compelled to provide for the education of the children of A, B, and C, that we, as freemen, complain; and no amount of sophistical quibbling by a Chief Superintendent of Education will ever reconcile us to this iniquitous and tyrannical outrage upon our rights as citizens, and our duties as parents, or induce us to cease agitating for the repeal of the arbitrary statutes to which this unnatural and oppressive arrangement owes its being.

And again, we contend that the Chief Superintendent of Education is guilty of something worse than sophistry when he asserts—p. 17—"that the school law places the education of the children in the hands of the people themselves." This is false, for no law is necessary to place the education of the children there where God Himself has placed it—where it was before any school laws were enacted—and where it still would be were all the school laws repealed to-morrow.—What the school law has done is this—It has placed, or endeavored to place, the education of the children in the hands of one portion only of the people—those of the majority—without reference to the wishes, feelings, and conscientious objections of the other portion of the people—i.e., the minority. It has taken the education of the children of D and E out of the hands of D and E, to place it in the hands of A, B, and C; and has thereby robbed the former of their natural, inalienable right—a right which they hold immediately from God Himself, and to Whom alone they are responsible for its exercise.

It is false also to state, as does the Rev. Mr. Ryerson on the same page, "that it"—the school law—"invests the inhabitants of each municipality with powers to provide for the education of all their children." It does no such thing; for, as we have shown above, by compelling D and E, parents of limited means, to provide for the education of the children of A, B, and C, it deprives the former, to the same extent, of the power of providing for the education of their own children. The law therefore

takes the education of the child out of the hands of him to whom it has been committed by God Himself, and limits the power of the parent to provide for the education of his own children "in his own way, and to the extent he pleases." These are the objections which the friend of "Freedom of Education" urges against "State-Schoolism;" and these objections the Rev. Mr. Ryerson has never yet so much as attempted to meet.

No; he contents himself with bragging about what he has done in altogether another line of business, and one which has nothing to do with the main question at issue betwixt the advocate of "Freedom of Education," and the servile supporter of "State-Schoolism." He boasts that he has shown that the claims of the "supporters of separate schools" are:—

"Inconsistent with what is granted to supporters of dissenting schools in Lower Canada, an infringement of the rights and powers guaranteed to municipalities by successive Acts of Parliament, and inconsistent with any national system of public instruction."—p. 26.

Now admitting, for the sake of argument, that the Rev. Mr. Ryerson has done all this—what then? It does not thence follow that the demands of the opponents of "State-Schoolism" are unjust, unless he can also show—that it would be inconsistent with justice to depart from the precedents of the Lower Canada School law—a law for which we have never professed any admiration; that the "rights and powers guaranteed to municipalities by successive Acts of Parliament" are not themselves repugnant to the natural rights of the parent, to whom, and not to the "municipalities," God has entrusted the education of his children; and lastly, that a "system of national" education is, in a mixed community like ours, reconcilable with that respect which is due from the State to the conscientious scruples of the humblest of its citizens. With those who recognise the right and duty of the State to found a system of national education, the arguments of the Rev. Mr. Ryerson may have a certain weight; but to us to all the friends of "Freedom of Education," to all who believe that it is no more the business of the State to establish a "system of national education" than it is to establish a "system of national religion," the reverend gentleman's logic must appear supremely ludicrous.

We must deal with men and things as they are, and not as if they were what we wish them to be. Without therefore discussing the question of the abstract desirableness of a "system of national education," we content ourselves with recognising the impossibility of any such system in a community like ours. This too is now the opinion of the wisest statesmen of the British Empire; of men who have grown grey in the discussion of questions involving the material and intellectual progress of the age; and at this conclusion must every intelligent man, who loves justice, and asserts the equality of all denominations as before the State, ultimately arrive. Lord John Russell now confesses that his views upon the Education question have been much modified; and that he now sees that the religious differences of the people of Great Britain oppose an insurmountable barrier to any system of national education. "This fact," adds the *Times*, "has indeed been clear long enough to a great majority of the thinking men of the country;" and we hope that in time, even the addle-pated old women who do our legislation in Canada, will be able to distinguish it. In the meantime it is the duty of all friends of "Freedom of Education," but of Catholics in particular, to strain every nerve in their opposition to "State-Schoolism," and the insidious attempts of a Methodist Minister, and a handful of bigoted fanatics, to impose upon us a "system of national education." Such a system is utterly incompatible with individual liberty, with the rights of the parent, and freedom of conscience; and we do trust that the people of Canada will never be so vile, so lost to every sentiment of manly independence, as to submit to such an infliction.

With these remarks we dismiss our Chief Superintendent of Education, feeling that we almost owe an apology to our readers for having given so much of our space to the discussion of his platitudes, and the exposure of his miserable artifices. One remark only would we make—and that is, for the purpose of reminding the Rev. Mr. Ryerson that he is a public servant, and has therefore no right to be insolent towards his masters and his betters—to those who pay him, feed and clothe him and his family. It is, we know, the nature of a "Jack-in-office" to be impertinent, and for that reason it is well that "Jack" should be snubbed occasionally, and put in mind of his proper position. There is no creature one feels so strongly tempted to kick as your pampered menial who, presuming upon his gorgeous plush inexpressibles, and embroidered coat, gives himself airs before his superiors.

We therefore tell the Rev. Mr. Ryerson that his comments at p. 28 upon the motives which have induced the Prelates of the Catholic Church to condemn the existing school system of Upper Canada, are as false, as they are unworthy of a gentleman, and unbecoming a Government official, and public servant; and though the objects of his malice are far beyond his reach,