

The True Witness

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J. GILLIES,
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We beg to remind our Correspondents that no letters will be taken out of the Post-Office, unless prepaid.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12.

REGULATIONS FOR LENT IN THE DIOCESE OF MONTREAL.

All days in Lent, with the exception of Sundays, are Fast Days of obligation.

By a special indulgence the use of flesh meat is allowed on every Sunday in Lent, with the exception of Palm Sunday; as well as once a day on the Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, of the first five weeks in Lent; but its use is forbidden on Palm Sunday, and the six other days of Holy Week, as well as on Ash Wednesday and the three following days. On those week days when flesh meat is allowed, no fish is allowed at the same time.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

If the Schleswig-Holstein question is a bore to diplomatists, it is so to editors especially, who find it difficult to catch and represent its ever varying phases. At one moment it is just about to be satisfactorily and amicably settled; anon, all is dark as ever, and appeal to sabre and bayonet seems inevitable. The position seems to be this. The King of Prussia, and the Emperor of Austria have, as an ultimatum, summoned the King of Denmark to withdraw the Constitution of November, assigning him only 48 hours for the performance of the unwelcome task. Should the King of Denmark refuse, or hesitate to comply with this summons, the Austrian troops were to advance immediately into Schleswig. Peace or war therefore is contingent upon the determination of King Christian, who seems inclined to temporise; and who seeing himself in a manner isolated, will very possibly yield to the imperious demands of his powerful neighbors.

The Polish question remains unchanged. In Italy the Government of the King of Piedmont is becoming alarmed at the progress of the revolutionary spirit which it evoked, and which it hoped to be able to lay, when the dirty work of spoliation and annexation had been accomplished. Victor Emmanuel having no longer need of the sword of Garibaldi, and the services of red-shirted filibusters, would fain see these gentry dispersed; but they will not disperse, and tell him plainly that if he will not go with them, they will go without him. In consequence, the Minister of the Interior has addressed the Prefects in a Circular, warning them to be on their guard against another Aspromonte, and asserting the determination of the Government to crush its opponents. A rupture between Victor Emmanuel, and the extreme revolutionary party, is therefore imminent, and the happiest results may be anticipated from their quarrel. "When knaves fall out," says the proverb, "honest men come by their own."

No additional light has been thrown upon Mazzini's plot for the assassination of the French Emperor, but the trial of the conspirators arrested in Paris will soon come on. From England the news is unimportant; the Princess of Wales and her baby are doing well.

There has been smart skirmishing in the U. States since the 1st inst., but the facts, as refracted through the medium of Yankee telegrams, are by no means well defined. On the 1st inst. the Confederates attacked the Federals in force, driving in their pickets—and making many prisoners: they seized also, and burned a Federal Gunboat, the Underwriter, and made themselves masters of Newport. Another telegram reports that the Federals crossed the Rapidan in force on Saturday last in presence of the enemy. The siege of Charleston seems to be making no progress; and to judge from the silence of the telegrams upon the subject, the public take no longer great interest in it. An expedition said to be destined for an attack upon Mobile, is about to start from New Orleans, under the command of Admiral Farragut, and General Banks.

MR. FOTHERGILL'S LECTURE.—We would remind our city readers that it is on Monday evening next, and in the Bonaventure Hall, that Mr. Fothergill will deliver his lecture on "The Fidelity of the Irish Race." A crowded house may be anticipated, and we would therefore recommend all those who intend to attend the lecture, to go early in order that they may secure good seats.

RENAN'S LIFE OF JESUS.—Every body must have by this time heard of this book; and indeed no Protestant work of modern times—not even that of "Essays and Reviews," not even "Colenso on the Pentateuch"—has been more widely circulated, or more generally commented upon than has this latest contribution to Protestant theological literature. This popularity, or at all events notoriety, must no doubt in part be attributed to the fact that M. Renan's book was published in the French language; but it is also greatly owing to its intrinsic merits, or as some would call them, demerits.

We are at a loss in what category to place this little work of fiction by M. Renan—whether to class it amongst bad works, or amongst good works. It certainly cannot be called a "good book," if we consider only the design of its writer; but if those books only are bad, whose effects upon the reader are bad; which tend to unsettle faith, to corrupt morals, to raise doubts, and to bring the Christian religion into contempt, we can hardly call M. Renan's "Life of Jesus" a bad book. It will do more to discredit rationalism than religion; and no matter what may have been the design of its author, its probable effect will be to bring, not Christianity, but theology into contempt. It is in fact, so supremely absurd both as to its manner and its matter; it is so transcendently silly or mawkish; it is such a farrago of nauseous twaddle, of irrelevant erudition, and whining sentimentalism, that it cannot fail to provoke the ridicule of the educated reader, and the disgust of the man of taste. Of the writer's style a very fair conception may be formed from the Dedication, "To the Pure Spirit of My Sister Henriette," who, it is insinuated, is at "rest in the bosom of God"—and who also "sleeps in the land of Adams near the holy Byblus, and the sacred waters where the women of the ancient mysteries came to mingle their tears." Of such incoherent rhapsodies, which no doubt M. Renan believes to be very beautiful and very sublime, is his great work made up.

Are our readers, or any of them, acquainted with Thackeray's capital story of the *Novocomes*? If so they must remember the sketch therein given of Madame la Duchesse D'Ivry.—But for the dates of their respective works, we should suspect that M. Renan was the original of Thackeray's clever sketch. Like the author of the "Life of Jesus," Made. la Duchesse belonged to the French romantic, or sensational school of writers; like him she did not much trouble herself about facts when these militated against her preconceived theories; and like him she drew upon her imagination rather than upon her memory for her descriptions of events and persons. Like M. Renan, Made. D'Ivry dealt largely, if not learnedly or profitably in sacred toposes. She described, for instance, as if she had been present and an eye witness of the transaction, the exodus of Israel from Egypt, and the crossing of the Red Sea; and drew a lively picture of certain unhappy love passages between Moses and Pharaoh's eldest daughter—which were perhaps the immediate cause of the catastrophe that befell the obdurate father's army.—Just such another writer as Thackeray's *Madame la Duchesse*, is M. Renan, *Membre de L'Institut*. He gives us the "Life," not of the historical Jesus, but of an ideal Jesus, of a Jesus whom, as the German artist did with the camel, he evolves from the depths of his own moral consciousness. About this Jesus, a person altogether unlike the Jesus of the Evangelists, M. Renan tells us everything, even to the most minute details, and in the most flowing language. The Christianity whose birth he celebrates was as he understands it, a "delicious pastoral," which he in such Parisian notes as he can command, mellifluously sings, with the taste and graces of a second rate *ballad* dancer from the *Opera Comique*. Jesus, according to this view of the case, was a kind of Galilean Titrus, idly stretching himself beneath the shade, not of his beech tree indeed, for there are few beech trees in Galilee—but of the vine or fig tree; dreaming dreams of rarest philanthropy, anticipating the *Contract Social*, and fascinating the simple, kind hearted peasants of the vicinity—the Galilean maidens especially—no less by the dulcet strains of his sylvan reed, than by his "transporting countenance"—one of those countenances which as M. Renan informs us, "sometimes appear in the Jewish race," and which "created around him a circle of fascination which hardly any could resist." These simple, well meaning, but fascinated creatures naturally, of course quite naturally, attributed to their fascinator the possession of thaumaturgic powers; but M. Renan, with a pitying smile for Galilean credulity lets us into the secret of all those miraculous healings, and laying of storms, and casting out of devils, and raisings of the dead, with which the fond piety of his disciples invested this pastoral Jesus. Thus in the case of Mary of Magdala, M. Renan, who knows all about it as if he had been present on the spot, assures that she was affected by nervous disease, and that "Jesus by his calm and gentle beauty calmed this troubled organisation." So too in the case of Lazarus, we are kindly informed by our *Membre de*

L'Institut, that he in concert with his sisters, and perhaps of Jesus, who at all events connived at the trick—shamed death, in order to give the latter a chance of restoring his waning popularity amongst the citizens of Jerusalem; and as for the resurrection of Jesus himself—why that M. Renan scientifically, and of course most satisfactorily, explains by the theory of hallucination. The loving women, and disciples fancied that they saw Jesus after his death; they fondly imagined that they conversed with him, put their fingers into the wounds in his hands and his side; and if they laid down their lives afterwards in confirmation of this incredible story, they did so the victims of an excited imagination. It must be confessed that M. Renan is not only a learned Biblical critic, but a profound student of human nature. But our readers will have had enough of this blasphemous rhodomontade.

Happily, we say, its blasphemies are fully counterbalanced by its absurdities. It is too foolish to do much, if any harm, and its inconsistencies are so obtrusively prominent that the most ignorant can hardly fail to perceive them, and to be repelled by them. Indeed by all sections of the Protestant press—even by those the most advanced and deeply wallowing in rationalism, the book is admitted to be a failure; whilst by Catholics it may, in one sense, almost be hailed as a triumph to their cause, since it shows to what ridiculous straits he is reduced who, admitting an historical Christ, and the fact of an existing Church or Christian organisation, attempts to explain, and account for, these phenomena upon purely naturalistic principles. More feasible, far more easy of accomplishment, would it be to maintain the theses—that there never was such a person as Christ; and that the idea that there is a Christian religion, that there is an organisation or Church, now existing in the world, is but a delusion—than to attempt the task which M. Renan has rashly undertaken—that of eliminating the supernatural from Christianity. He can only deny miracles in the physical or material order; by asserting greater miracles still in the moral order; for the origin and prolonged existence of Christianity and of the Church without the co-operation of miracles, are events more marvellous than are any of those exhibitions of thaumaturgic power recorded in the New Testament—more incredible even than the resurrection of Lazarus after he had been nigh four days dead.

Yet though it is supremely illogical on the part of M. Renan to admit, as he does, an historical Christ, and the existence of a Christian religion, whilst he at the same time rejects the theory of a supernatural factor in these phenomena, he is as a Protestant strictly logical, and thoroughly consistent throughout with his premises. That Christianity has been miraculous throughout its existence, is but the counterpart of, or necessary corollary from, the proposition that it was miraculous in its inception; that a thaumaturgic power presided over its birth, ushered it into the world, and set it a-going, as we may say, are facts only as credible as that the same power has all along controlled its destinies, directed its course, or in other words kept it always going; and if we eliminate the supernatural element from the history of Christianity, so also, to be logical, must we eliminate it from the history of Jesus, its founder. But all Protestants do eliminate the supernatural from the history of Christianity; not only in that they deny all miracles subsequent to the Apostolic age, but in that in its fortunes they recognise only the workings, and the passions of men. But all Protestants in that they deny the infallibility of any Church, or Christian organisation; in that by implication they ignore the Spirit of God ever present with His Church, and preserving it from error or corruption—do deny that a supernatural control has ever been exercised over the destinies of Christianity, and that it has been guided, and sustained by divine power. M. Renan is therefore only logical as a Protestant, when as the consequence of denying the supernatural in the life of Christianity, he denies it also in the birth of Christianity.

Our readers will now understand why, and in what sense, we said of M. Renan's "Life of Jesus" that almost it might be called a "good book"—good if we consider not the intentions of the writer, but its probable effects upon the reader. M. Renan was born, and educated as a Catholic; and in his own person he is an instance how impossible it is for a Catholic to renounce his Church, without renouncing also the entire of Christianity. M. Renan is no doubt a scholar, and a man of education; and in his work before us he shows us the absurdities into which a man of genius and learning inevitably falls when he adopts the Protestant theory of the Christian religion; to wit—that it has not always been miraculously assisted by the divine presence, and therefore always miraculously preserved from error. Adopting this theory, which of course underlies, and gives its meaning to Protestantism, M. Renan saw that he could no longer believe in the supernatural or miraculous origin of Christianity, or admit its founder to have been in any sense a divine person. By His works Jesus Himself told men to judge

Him; and M. Renan has judged Him by His works, as seen from a Protestant stand-point.—The great work of Christ was Christianity; and as we deem that work, so also must we deem of him who wrought it. If therein we can perceive naught but man, so also in Jesus; if the work were but a perishable work, liable to decay and corruption, so also must it have been with its author; for it is impossible to depreciate, or think meanly of the one, without depreciating and thinking meanly of the other.—This has been the course of reasoning which, since his defection from the Church, and conversion to Protestantism, M. Renan has felt himself compelled to pursue. The result at which he has arrived is before us. He gives us a purely natural Jesus; a Christianity merely natural in its inception, and therefore in its subsequent career, naturally liable to corruption and decay. But in attempting to sustain this thesis, in his efforts to reduce Jesus and His work to facts in the natural order, to eliminate miracles, and to explain away for instance the Resurrection of Our Blessed Lord, M. Renan is constrained to have recourse to so many extravagances, that the absurdity of his thesis, and therefore that of his Protestant premises, are obvious to the keenest intelligence. His book therefore may be called "good" or useful to Catholics, in the same sense that the drunkenness of the Helots, though *malum per se*, was good or serviceable to their Spartan masters.

In the *Montreal Witness* of the 3rd instant, appeared an editorial under the caption "Religious Orders and Schools in France," based professedly upon an Official document, set forth by the French Government, and styled "Exposition of the Situation of the Empire." To this official, or rather pretended official document, "the statistics of which," so boasts the *Witness*, "no French Canadian will question," our contemporary refers for proof of the gross immorality of the "Religious Orders" in France engaged in the work of education; and more especially of the "Jesuits, Priests," by which name we suppose that our contemporary intends to indicate the Christian Brothers.

Before we take any serious notice of the contents of the article in the *Witness*, or reply to its attacks upon the aforesaid "Jesuits" and "Priests," we must learn something about this mysterious official document—this "Exposition of the Situation of the Empire"—to which the *Witness* refers us so triumphantly, and on which he bases his savage attack upon the morality of the "Religious Orders." We do not say that our contemporary has himself forged the Official document in question—for we do not think that he has wit enough to accomplish so difficult a task; but we do think that he has allowed himself to be made a fool of, and to be egregiously duped by some wicked wag, who has taken advantage of the *Witness's* well known horror of Popery to make it the medium for circulating false and groundless accusations against the French Catholic Clergy, and "Religious Orders."

Without however committing ourselves upon this matter, we would for the present content ourselves with asking the *Witness* to inform us where a copy of the mysterious Official document which he cites is to be found; and by what means and through what channels he became possessed of the copy from which he quotes so many terrible stories against those wicked "Jesuits" and "Priests?" We have inquired diligently, and no one whom we have as yet encountered in Canada as either seen or heard of this extraordinary document—and some profane persons have gone so far as to insinuate, that it has no existence save in the diseased brain of the editor of the *Witness*. Upon these points we will however baffle no opinion: we knew nothing of the document referred to by the *Witness*; and we therefore content ourselves for the present by respectfully asking him—where a copy of it is to be procured? so that from a perusal of its contents we may be enabled either to verify, or to criticise the statements put forth by our contemporary. It is, certainly, strange to say the least, that the existence of a document so important, and containing such awful revelations as to the abominations of Romanism, should have been first made known to the world through the columns of a Montreal paper.

And there is another point to which we would respectfully direct the attention of our contemporary, lest he still continue the victim of a singular delusion. "No French Canadian," no honest and intelligent man of any creed or of any origin will receive without question—and indeed without grave suspicion of its mendacity, any document put forth by, or in the name of, the French government on the question of education—and on the comparative merits of State and Ecclesiastical education. In this question the French Government is an interested party, and therefore a most incompetent judge. For years, and under every system, it has been its steady object to make itself the sole teacher, and to bring all schools and colleges under its control. It has opposed violently every movement no matter from what quarter proceeding, for "Freedom of Education;" it has constantly persecuted and ma-

igned all who have ever dared to assert the natural rights of the Family, and the supernatural rights of the Church, against the unnatural and degrading claims of the State. If a Montalambert, if a Lacordaire raised his voice for an instant in behalf of "Freedom of Education," French "Jack-in-Office" was down upon him in a twinkling, and silenced the audacious champion of liberty; and from such an inveterate, unrelenting, and most unscrupulous opponent of free teaching, we expect neither truth nor justice when dealing with the rival whom it hates and dreads. On the Education question in France, the Church and the State are irreconcilably opposed to one another; and there are no means which the latter would not have recourse to, provided that thereby it could discredit its rival in the opinion of the public. The statements therefore of the French Government with regard to the respective merits of State and Ecclesiastical schools, are mere *ex parte* statements, the pleadings, almost the invectives of the lawyer; and by no means the calm and unimpassioned deliberance of the conscientious and competent judge.

We wait, however, with impatience for an answer from the *Witness* to our question respecting the document itself; and lest he should misunderstand us, or pretend to misunderstand us, we again ask him where did he find, where can others obtain a copy of, the pretended official document put forth by the French Government, which in his own words, "shows that there is fearful internal corruption in the religious Orders of Rome, in spite of their holy externals; professions?"—*Witness*, 3rd inst. We pause for a reply, and will return to the subject in our next.

In the meantime, we would remind the *Witness* that his appeal to the "Catholic Legislators of Canada" is irrelevant. The question—by whom shall the child be educated? by a lay or by an ecclesiastical teacher?—is a question with which the State has nothing to do, with which no legislator, be he Catholic, or be he Protestant, has the most remote right to interfere. It is a question which every individual parent must settle for himself. He, and he alone, has any rightful voice in the matter; and it is for him to determine, absolutely, how, with whom, and by whom, his child or children shall be educated. In this matter no Christian parent, knowing his rights as against the State, and his duties as towards God, will brook interference of any kind from any power upon earth.

We have requested by the Council of the Montreal Canadian Alliance for the total suppression of drunkenness, to publish a Resolution; by that body lately passed, strongly condemning the appointment of a person, said to be a tavern-keeper, to the office of jailer for the Montreal prison. As it is not the business of the TRUE WITNESS to engage in party politics, we must respectfully beg leave to decline compliance with this request, as only by so doing can we maintain that position of perfect neutrality which it is our ambition to occupy.

We must also decline publishing the "Appeal of the Montreal Temperance Society to the Voters of the City," because although we have the greatest respect for the members of this Society, and for the motives by which they are actuated, we do not adopt their views with respect to the influence of legislation upon the vice of intemperance. From long and intimate experience of the working of all prohibitive measures, we know that law is impotent to remedy an evil, which has its roots too deep, far too deep, to be reached by Acts of Parliament. It is not, as some people would seem to believe, the Legislature or the License system that created the traffic in intoxicating drinks—for the traffic existed before, for revenue purposes, restrictions were placed upon it by the Legislature; and if the License system were abolished to-morrow, the traffic would continue in undiminished vigor. There is no proposition in Euclid more certain than these. That the demand for intoxicating drinks continuing, the supply, no matter what the law, will still remain the same; and that the quantity of liquor sold in unlicensed houses, always varies inversely as that sold in licensed houses. To suppress the latter, which is indeed within the scope of legislation, would be but to give an impetus to the other, or the unlicensed houses, and we doubt whether society would thereby be a gainer.

Admitting the evil of many licensed liquor houses, we look upon them merely as the sign, as the effect, of wide-spread, and deep-seated moral depravity, but by no means as its cause. These houses are numerous, because the appetite for intoxicating drinks is strong and general; but they are no more the cause of the dire disease than are the pustules of small pox the cause of that loathsome malady; and it seems to us about as rational to attempt to suppress drunkenness, by suppressing licensed taverns, as it would be on the part of the sailor in a heavy gale of wind at sea, to expect to influence the weather in his favor by a mechanical effort to compel the mercury to rise in the tube of his barometer. As the gale breaks the mercury will go up of itself; when a moral improvement in the drinking habits