

The True Witness

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.
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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, DECEMBER 9.

NOTICE.

We request all our subscribers in Quebec and vicinity, who are in arrears, to hand in the amounts due to our agent, MR. JEREMIAH O'BRIEN, 18 BUADE STREET, Quebec.

ECCLIASTICAL CALENDAR.

DECEMBER—1864.

Friday, 9—Fast, of the Octave.
Saturday, 10—Of the Octave.
Sunday, 11—Third of Advent.
Monday, 12—St. Damasus, P.G.
Tuesday, 13—St. Lucy, V.M.
Wednesday, 14—Fast, of the Fecia.
Thursday, 15—Octave of Imm. Conc.

The "Forty Hours" Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will commence as follows:—

Friday, 8—St. Ambrose.
Sunday, 11—St. Joseph Asylum, Montreal.
Tuesday, 13—Convent of Chateaugay.
Thursday, 15—Hospice Lajemmerais, Varennes.

NEWS OF THE WEEK

The *China* from Liverpool on the 19th ult., brings us the latest European intelligence. All is quiet in the political world, and the most important items of news relate to the convict Franz Muller. The unfortunate man was executed on the 14th instant, making on the scaffold a confession of his guilt. Though no one who had studied the facts of the case, as presented in evidence on the trial, could entertain a rational doubt that Muller was the man who robbed and murdered Mr. Briggs, yet for the quieting of the public mind, which is easily affected by rumors, it is well that the justice of the verdict of the jury and of the sentence of the Judge has been admitted by the convict himself. The evidence on which he was found guilty was purely circumstantial—the best of all possible evidence—and cumulative; and the crime, trial, and execution of the wretched man will long be reckoned amongst the most remarkable of British *causes celebres*.

The Federals have won a great victory over the Confederates at Franklin, after which according to custom the victors boldly advanced some sixteen miles backwards, or in other words retreated to a stronger position near Nashville. Such at least is the story of the battle of Franklin as given by Federal telegrams. It is so much in harmony with the accounts of other victories which, through the same channels, are in the habit of reaching us, that we are disposed to give it implicit belief. This at all events is certain, that immediately after their decisive victory, the victors fell back—vigorously, or as the Federal telegrams state it, blindly pursued by the beaten Confederates. From Sherman up to the commencement of the week, we had nothing positive; but we hope that he may yet find his Caudine Forks in Georgia. Amen—So be it.

THE SCHOOL QUESTION.—It appears as if this question, which in so far as Upper Canada is concerned we had hoped had been set at rest for ever by the legislation upon the subject of the McDonald-Sicotte Ministry, is to be opened up again in both sections of the Province. In Lower Canada, as our readers are aware, there are complaints of injustice towards the Protestant minority; the *Globe* indicates in not very guarded terms, that the Protestant majority of Upper Canada not only will never consent to any extension of the separate or denominational school system, but will avail themselves of the earliest opportunity of repealing those existing provisions of the law in virtue of which the Catholic minority are enabled to claim some of the advantages of "Freedom of Education;" and Mr. Galt also in a speech by him lately delivered at Sherbrooke, seemed to express an intention on the part of the Brown-Cartier Ministry to introduce a new and general School Law, to continue in force in each Province after the proposed "constitutional changes" shall have been carried out. We may prepare ourselves therefore for a new and arduous struggle upon this great question. The battle of "Freedom of Education" verily "State-Schoolism" will in all appearance have to be fought over again.

That the issue will be favorable to the former is more than we can assert with confidence, yet

have we grounds for hoping the best. Inasmuch as the Protestants of Lower Canada, being in a minority, are liable to oppression from a Catholic majority, we expect that the former and their friends will assert in their own behalf those principles, which they have always repudiated when the interests of the Catholic minority of Upper Canada alone were at stake; and in the second place, we see symptoms in the press of the Western section, that a glimmer of the truth is beginning to dawn upon the minds even of Protestants, which we hope may be the forerunner of an era of general enlightenment. Much we say may be hoped when we find a Protestant paper—the *Toronto Leader*—giving expression to such sound opinions as these. The italics are our own:—

"The whole question of public education is full of difficulties. Is it as much the duty of a parent to educate his children, as to feed and clothe them. When the State assumes this duty, it trenches on parental rights."

In these words lies the whole School Question; and we rejoice that this great and important truth for which, in opposition to the entire Protestant press of the Province, Catholics have so long contended, is acknowledged by a leading Protestant journal of Upper Canada. Yet must we not be too sanguine; for consistency in carrying out a principle to its logical consequences, reckless whither it may lead, is not a virtue for which Protestants are, or ever have been conspicuous; but still it is a great point gained when we find a leading and influential Protestant journal admitting that "State-Schoolism," or the assumption by the State of the task of educating the children of its citizens, is an encroachment upon "parental rights." These words should be written in gold over the door of every Common School in the Province.

For they put the School Question on its proper basis. It is not at all, as we have for years insisted, a religious or sectarian question, a question between the State and the Church. It is essentially a question between the "Family" and the "State"—the former protesting against the encroachments of the latter upon "parental rights." No man can plead his right to dissent or separate from any system of Education set up and supported by the State upon the grounds of his religion, upon the pretence that he is either a Catholic or a Protestant; but every man has an absolute right to dissent or separate, upon the grounds that the State, by setting up a particular system of Education, has iniquitously encroached upon his rights as a parent. Education is not a legitimate function of the State; it belongs exclusively to the "Family;" and when the claims of the one come into collision with those of the other, the State has nothing to do but to give way, and to renounce its impertinent pretensions. These are the logical consequences of the sound principles laid down by the *Toronto Leader*; if our politicians would but carry them out, we should hear no more of a "School Question" in Canada than of a "Church Question." Indeed "State-Schoolism" and "State-Churchism" are one and the same, and must stand or fall together.

But we say that we fear that the fundamental principle of "Freedom of Education"—to wit, that the education of his children is as absolutely the right and the duty of the parent, as are the clothing, feeding, and the keeping in good order of the bowels of his children—will not be adhered to when the School Question comes up for discussion in the legislature. Of our Protestant contemporaries many ignore the principle altogether, as for instance the *Globe* and the *Montreal Herald*; the tendency of all democratic societies is towards the concentration of all power in the hands of the State, and a contemptuous disregard for the rights of the Family and of the individual; and the effect of the proposed "constitutional changes" will be to give almost unlimited political power to the most Protestant, and the most rabidly democratic section of our Canadian community. Already the *Globe* foresees from these changes the speedy, even if not immediate overthrow of the denominational system in Upper Canada, and already it anticipates the triumph of State-Schoolism, and the downfall of "Freedom of Education." Thus speaks Mr. George Brown through his own organ:—

The *Newmarket Era* complains that by the resolutions of the Quebec Conference the continuance of the Upper Canada Separate School law "has been guaranteed for all time to come." This is true, with the exception, of course, that no constitutional arrangement is "for all time." In a free country no constitutional system ought ever to be put forward as a finality.

But for some "time to come" we shall undoubtedly be obliged, in accordance with the proposed reservation in the new constitution, to continue the Separate School law of Upper Canada where it is.

The arrangement relative to education which was made at the Quebec Conference has very great advantages for the friends of non-sectarian schools. Though the reservation is made on behalf of existing privileges for the Separatists, the power to enforce further concessions and to make further inroads upon our school system will be taken from them. Legislation upon educational questions will devolve upon the local legislatures, and so long as the people of Upper Canada are determined to maintain their excellent educational system, they will be able to resist any attack from its enemies. Hitherto, the great fear has been that the assaults of sectarianism upon our school system would go on, until not only should the Romish clergy succeed in withdrawing the whole Romish population of Upper Canada from the support of the common schools; but also that ultimately different Protestant sects would obtain the same privileges, and thus complete the ruin of our

system. When the local legislature of Upper Canada becomes an authority in all school legislation, there will be little danger of either class of Separatists making much further progress.—*Globe*, 28th Nov.

Thus the Catholics of Upper Canada see what they have to expect when the local legislature of Upper Canada shall have become an authority in all school matters—supported as that anti-Catholic local legislature will be, by an equally anti-Catholic, and an omnipotent central legislature. We hope our friends like the prospect, and are convinced of the propriety of throwing their political influence in favor of those proposed "constitutional changes" which the *Globe* tells us have such "great advantages for the friends of non-sectarian schools"—that is to say schools to which Catholic parents are by an iniquitous law compelled to pay, but to which they in the exercise of their absolute rights as parents do not see fit to send their children.

Our contemporary the *Journal de Quebec*, hitherto a supporter of the Brown-Cartier policy, is beginning to see the probable consequences of that policy to the Catholics of the Province; and in its issue of the 1st instant has an excellent article on the subject, from which we make some extracts, and with which we will for the present conclude, purposing to return to the subject shortly, more especially with reference to the School system of Lower Canada:—

(Translated from *Journal de Quebec*, Dec. 1st.)

"The *Globe* has always been wanting in courage to wrestle with prejudices, and to-day it gives us a sad example of that lamentable weakness which, to avoid shocking popular sentiment, has impelled it towards all kinds of fanaticisms—les fanatismes de tous les noms."

The *Journal* then publishes the passages from the *Globe's* article in reply to the *Newmarket Era*, which we have given above, and thus comments on them:—

"Thus, according to the organ of Mr. Brown, the same who, this Spring with eyes full of tears, and trembling with emotion, came imploring the Lower Canadians to come to an understanding, sincerely and cordially, with him in order that they might put an end and forever to the unhappy conflicts between the two Canadas; thus then this Constitution which upsets the constitutions of six Provinces, which fundamentally changes them and sets up a new organization over all of this vast territory, whilst displacing all social balance; all this according to him is but a temporary arrangement which must be taken in hands again, and cast over anew in the Clear Grit mould."

This mode of looking at the question by the *Globe* is a new and dangerous element thrown into the discussion. It says to the Lower Canadians, all those protections, all those guarantees for the benefit of minorities are but idle words, inserted to catch fools withal, and to bring them within the vortex of the actual revolution.

"With such a spectacle before us, better wrestle lustily as we have done heretofore, taking our chances for the future."

Thus the *Journal de Quebec* begins to see that all the promised "checks" and "guarantees" of the bogus Confederation are but what the TRUE WITNESS always affirmed them to be—idle words to ensnare simpletons withal—des vains mots mis la expres pour surprendre les niais.—*Journal de Quebec*, 1st Dec.

ROMANISING TENDENCIES.—It is instructive to note what, by sound Protestants are considered Romanising Tendencies, what are the outward and visible signs of Popish proclivities. Anything it seems that tends to withdraw man from the pleasure and service of this world, and to fix his attention upon the things appertaining to the world to come, is by the more rigid Protestants immediately denounced as savoring of Popery, as an impulse towards Rome.

Thus the Anglican Bishop of Salisbury published a short time ago a Circular to his clergy wherein he recommended to them the practice of occasional "Retreats"—or religious retirement, during the course of which, by prayer and meditation upon God, Eternity, Heaven and Hell, the minister in holy things might recruit his faculties, and brace himself up for a more vigorous struggle with the world, the flesh, and the devil. This very sensible, and may we not say Christian exhortation, has provoked an outburst of indignation from the more staunchly Protestant section of those to whom it was addressed. "What!" say the latter, "would you have us withdraw for a season from the world, from our comfortable homes, from our pleasant dinner tables, and from the cheerful social circle, to become ascetics, and anchorites, and altogether as are those besotted Romanists?"

Such is the reception which the Bishop of Salisbury's well meant advice has met with from many of his clergy. We are moreover assured that, were that advice to be followed, that were the clergy to give themselves up for a season to prayers, meditation, and seclusion from the world "the enlightened Protestant people of this country" would view such conduct with much suspicion; and that "they feel assured that such clergy as might avail themselves of such retreats as are now suggested, would return to their parishes only the more strongly imbued with Romish tendencies."

Protestant intuitions are in this respect infallible. Nothing can be more true than that solitude, and withdrawal from the world, and renunciation of its pomps and vanities, and prayers, and meditation, and self-examination, and everything in short that savors of asceticism, of self-denial, and of the "taking up of the cross," do prepare men to embrace the errors of Popery, do smooth and as it were make straight the way to Rome.

When the Lord in a vision spoke to Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus, "for behold, he prayeth," the conversion of the persecutor of the Church was not far off. So also, was it when Cornelius the centurion, a devout man, who fasted, and gave much alms, and prayed to God always, was about to receive the Holy Ghost; he too was prepared for the visit of the Lord by a spiritual retreat; and so also, to-day, when we see a man giving himself up to prayer, meditation, and retirement from the world, we may say of him that almost he is a Romanist, and that the current is bearing him swiftly towards the portals of the Catholic Church. Religion is all very well, on Sundays, and so long as it does not interfere with more important business, and does not withdraw a man from his counting-house, and his family; but the wise man, the intelligent man, above all the sound Protestant is much of the opinion expressed by good Dame Quickly to the moribund Falstaff, when she to comfort him, bade him not think of God yet. Evidently in this respect the religious views of mine hostess were strictly evangelical; and her aversion to spiritual meditations acquiesces her of all "Romish tendencies," whatsoever, or howsoever numerous, her failings with respect to chastity and temperance.

The English papers are discussing the expediency of private executions, incited thereunto by the hideous scenes which occurred at the hanging on Monday the 14th ult. of Franz Muller, the murderer of Mr. Briggs. The arguments in favor of inflicting capital punishments in the interior of the jail, and in the presence of only certain duly appointed witnesses, though not generally conclusive, though opposed by other and apparently equally strong arguments in favor of publicity, are by no means destitute of force, and when applied to the infliction of capital punishments in Protestant communities merit serious consideration from the legislator.

At Muller's execution the brutality and the obscenity of the immense crowd collected—100,000 according to some estimates—to witness the last moments of the convict, surpassed all belief. From an early hour on Sunday afternoon the crowd commenced to gather round the spot where the scaffold was erected; nor was this composed of men the very dregs of the population, alone, but women of all ages were present. The long hours of the night were relieved by filthy conversation, obscene songs, blasphemous jests, and occasionally by the still more blasphemous harangues of the itinerant preacher "improving the occasion," as the slang of the conventicle has it. Pick-pockets plied their profession briskly under the very shadow of the gallows; and undeterred by fears of the police the garrulous pursued their trade without interruption on all unfortunates within their reach. All hell seemed to have broken loose, and Satan held high holiday in the midst of the metropolis of the land whose boast is that the Bible is ever open.

Under such circumstances it is manifest that capital punishment must lose all its deterrent effects, and these lost, the gallows is shorn of its peculiar excellence. The feelings which animate the modern Protestant crowd around the scaffold, are the same as those which in the days of heathenism inspired the frequenters of the Roman Games, and found their appropriate expression in the shouts of joy which hailed the appearance in the circus of the actors about to engage in mortal combat. Men in our days go to see an execution as of old they went up in early morning to secure a good place in the Flavian amphitheatre, to witness and gloat over the dying agonies of the fallen gladiator. An execution is with us a spectacle of precisely the same character as were the ancient gladiatorial exhibitions with which the Emperors favored their subjects before Christianity had extinguished their taste for blood, and their morbid delight in the sufferings of their fellow creatures. Protestantism has undone the work of Christianity; it has reproduced in the large masses of the community all the most repulsive traits of heathenism; the same indifference to human life; the same delight in human suffering; the same callousness of heart which we marvel at, as we read in ancient annals how noble Roman matrons, and delicately nurtured virgins shrieked with ecstasy as the gushing blood proclaimed how well the blow had been aimed, or with reversed thumbs spurned the petition of the wounded gladiator for mercy, and bade him submit his throat to the point of the victor's sword. Who can doubt that if the old sports of the Roman amphitheatre were to be renewed in London to-day, those sports, in spite of the "open bible," would be as numerously attended as they were in the days of heathen Rome, in the days of a Caligula or a Nero.

A public execution in Protestant countries is therefore but a barbarous brutalising exhibition, tending to encourage contempt, rather than to inculcate respect, for human life. Not so in Catholic communities—or at all events not to the same extent: for in the most degraded of these there still linger some of the old Catholic traditions, enfeebled though they have been by modern progress. Of old, amongst our fathers in the faith, whose superstitions we condemn, an

execution was in a certain sense a holy thing, almost, not to say it profanely, a sacrifice, at which men assisted with feelings of deep reverence and religious awe. The crowd around the scaffold was not so much a mob, as a congregation; assembled, not with morbid curiosity to note down the last acts, words, and looks of the victim, but to pray for him and with him, and thus to smooth his passage into eternity. His ears, like those of the dying gladiator and of Franz Muller, were not assailed with brutal jests, and ribald scoffing, nor were his eyes as they took farewell of earth, doomed to encounter only the cruel, unsympathising gaze of his fellow sinners, eager for the spectacle of his agony. He saw before him not a crowd of pickpockets, thieves and strumpets—fruit already ripening for the gallows,—but of Christians, members of religious societies and brotherhoods especially organised for the pious and charitable object of praying with and for the dying, and of offering suffrages for the souls of penitent sinners departed. There was consolation and edification then in those days, in the system of public executions. Criminals were deterred from crime by a striking exhibition of the infliction of man's justice, impassive, inexorable; a stranger alike to vengeance and to mercy; but they were consoled also by the presence of religion, and by that doctrine of the Catholic Church which teaches that all punishment suffered by the penitent sinner, borne in a proper spirit of humiliation and resignation, and by him united to the all meritorious sacrifice on Calvary, becomes in one sense itself also a sacrifice, an atonement, and an expiation.

An Anglican contemporary is grievously, but we think needlessly exercised in spirit by the "blessing of two new bells" or the Parish Church of this City, which ceremony took place a few days ago. Nor is this all. Some Protestants were present at the ceremony; and from these things our contemporary aforesaid realises how great is the power of Romanism in Lower Canada, and how unsafe it would be to entrust to men thus influenced the unbounded control over religion and education in the Province.

Now all this is very silly, and very inconsistent as coming from a professing Anglican. Does not his Church, do not his bishops solemnly consecrate material and unconscious substances, such as stones, and bricks and mortar, to the service of God? do they not bless them, and by stated rites, and set form of prayer dedicate them to religious uses? Wherein, in principle does the blessing or consecration of the bell of a church, differ from the blessing or consecration of the church itself?

Did not the great King Solomon when he builded a house unto the Lord, act in like manner? did he not also bless, consecrate, and set apart for special religious uses, the vessels of gold, and the vessels of silver which he placed therein? Neither can we look upon this consecration of material, inanimate substances as a vain thing or a superstitious usage—for the Lord Himself ratified it. Was it not, for instance, imputed as sin to Belshazzar the King, that he defiled these dedicated things, and laid sacrilegious and unclean hands upon the sacred vessels which his father had brought with him from Jerusalem? why then should we doubt that the Lord still accepts the dedication unto Himself and to His service of all His creatures—animate or inanimate?

The forms and ceremonies employed by the Catholic Church in the blessing of bells may seem to our critic superstitious and meaningless, but this is so because he does not understand them, because he does not know what doctrines are as it were therein embodied. Ceremonies are as it were the garments in which dogmas are wrapped up; and even Anglicans do not scorn to use them, as witness the rubric in the Anglican office for baptism, wherein the minister is enjoined to "make a cross upon the child's forehead." With what show of consistency then, can they object to Romish ceremonies, unless there be in those ceremonies something indecent or evil per se? In that making of the sign of the cross upon the forehead of the newly baptized child, positively enjoined by the Anglican liturgy, and to which every Anglican clergyman professes to give his unfeigned and unqualified assent, the entire principle of "ceremonies," or the use of visible material signs as representatives of things invisible and spiritual, is conceded; and the difference in this respect between Anglicans and Romanists is but one of degree, not of kind. If our carping critic were a little better acquainted with his own ritual, and the usages of his own sect he would be a good deal more guarded in his strictures on Romanism and Romish ceremonies.

VIE DE MICH. F. H. PREVOST PIRE DE S. S. DE MONTREAL. E. Senecal, Montreal.

We have here a brief but interesting biographical notice of the late Rev. M. Prevost of the Seminary, which will we doubt not, prove an acceptable offering to the Catholics of this City, amongst whom the deceased long prosecuted his charitable labors, and by whom his memory will long be held in affectionate remembrance.