

REMITTANCES

ENGLAND, IRELAND, SCOTLAND & WALES

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THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE,

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY AFTERNOON, At the Office, No. 4, Place d'Armes. TERMS: To Town Subscribers, \$3 per annum. To Country do, \$2 1/2 do. Payable Half-Yearly in Advance.

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MARCH 14, 1856.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The Paris Conference were to open on the 25th ult., and, if the information of the Paris correspondent of the London Times may be relied on, with every prospect of a successful issue. The question whether the arsenal of Nicolaieff should be included amongst those which were to be destroyed, has long presented the gravest difficulties; and it was surmised that Russia would never consent to such humiliating conditions as those on which the Allies were determined to insist, as alone calculated to place Turkey beyond the reach of future Russian aggression. The Czar has, however, it would appear, made up his mind to swallow the bitter draught presented to him. Nicolaieff is to be dismantled; and the great obstacle to a pacific solution of the problem to be laid before the Paris Conference has thus been got rid of. The Times correspondent alluded to, writes from Paris that nothing can be more certain than that peace will be the issue of the Conference—and that the Conference itself will be but a matter of form. This happy result, the writer attributes to the identity of views between France and Great Britain. In allusion to certain rumors that Louis Napoleon was determined upon peace at any price, it is stated that the Emperor has formally declared his firm resolve to adhere faithfully to the policy originally traced out by the Allies—as would be seen at the approaching Conference. The tone of the Parisian press is strictly in accordance with these sentiments.

Though the Peace prospects are so far favorable, the Allies seem by no means prepared to relax in their military preparations. An advance squadron, consisting of several heavy steam frigates was under orders for the Baltic; to be followed by the greatest naval armament ever despatched from the ports of Great Britain, should the negotiations at Paris not terminate favorably.

The vacancy for Sligo occasioned by the death of John Sadleir, Esq., who poisoned himself on Hampstead Heath, has not yet been filled up. In Irish politics we have little to record, except that on the 20th ult. Mr. Moore introduced his Tenant Right Bill, which was read a first time. The affairs of the late Mr. Sadleir appear to be in a state of inextricable confusion; and it would seem that the unhappy man was driven to the perpetration of the crime which hurried him before his Maker, by the certainty of the exposure of numerous nefarious pecuniary transactions in which he had been extensively engaged. In fact for some time before his death he seems to have been chief actor in some of the most infamous swindles ever concerted; and if he had not perished by his own hand, there is every reason to believe that he would have ended his days in the Penitentiary.

The excitement on the American Question is now fast subsiding; and the Imperial Parliament has been far more intent upon the questions—Whether it be lawful to share a man on a Sunday? and—whether the British Museum should be open?—whether the gates of Hyde Park should be closed, and the band be prohibited from playing on the Sunday?—than upon the legality of Mr. Crampton's conduct, or the Central American difficulty. Just as on this side of the Atlantic, it is proposed to inaugurate a Temperance Millennium by Act of Parliament, so on the other side, are all hardworking men and their wives, their sons and their daughters, and the strangers that are within their gates, to be converted into a holy people, by the simple process of interdicting them from all rational and intellectual amusements, upon the only day of the week during which they have time to amuse themselves at all. To Mr. Roebuck belongs the honor of having introduced the subject—he having put a question to the Secretary of State, respecting the case of a poor, but profane barber, whose the Magistrates had, like good Christians, fined 5s on Monday, for the atrocious offence of shaving another poor man, with a superabundance of beard, but sadly deficient in religion, on Sunday. The British Senate having disposed of this grave question, proceeded to consider a motion made by Sir J. Walmsley—to the effect that, it would promote the moral and intellectual condition of the working classes, if the collections of national history and art in the British Museum and National Gallery were opened to them on Sundays after morning service. An interesting debate followed; and the pious reader will rejoice to learn that the impious proposal to assimilate a Puritan Sabbath to a Popish Sunday, and to substitute intellectual amusement and rational enjoyment, for the truly British and Protestant pastimes of wife-beating, child-kicking, gin-drinking and Sabbath-day-bestialities generally, was negatived by the enlightened, liberal and Protestant legislators of

Great Britain by a majority of 376 to 48. In the course of the discussion some very valuable statistics were laid before the House, conclusive to the superior morality of the great Anglo-Saxon race. We extract the following, from the speech of Sir J. Walmsley—"I am of opinion"—said the Protestant authority quoted by that speaker:—

"That vice and immorality are relatively more prevalent in London than in the great Continental capitals; and especially, that the relative proportion of the immorality which prevails on the Sunday, compared with any other day of the week, is far larger in London than on the continent; that in Edinburgh and Glasgow, where that which may be called the Judaical observance of the Sunday is greater than in London, the vice and immorality prevalent on that day are also relatively greater than in London."

Very similar is the testimony of the London Times—"Nineteen out of twenty"—it remarks—"go to no place of worship on Sunday; don't emerge from their musty dens till the middle of the day, pay an occasional visit to the gin shop, and sit, sulk, or saunter about during the rest of the day." Again he says:—

"We deprecate this continual comparison of our own metropolitan population with that of the continental capitals. What in the world do our legislators see of the London artisan on the Sunday, or know of his manners and motions, and his haunts and resorts on that day? We can tell them that he does not spend the day in the bosom of his family. He does not take his wife on his arm and lead his children in procession to take a walk in the field or on the river-side, thanks to the obstinate indifference of Parliament to these public benefits. The London artisan does not spend the Sunday in psalm-singing, or in prayer, or in reading the Bible. Gentlemen who go abroad in the autumn, and investigate the suburbs of Paris, and Munich, and Vienna, will, of course, see a great deal of bad taste, and even some bad morality; but if they would take a tour this year through Bethnal-green, Spitalfields, Bernoldsey, Lambeth, or even the neighborhood of the Royal establishments at Chelsea, Greenwich, Deptford, and Woolwich, so as they use their eyes and ears properly, they would observe a good deal that is not in keeping with a sacred day, or even any day."

Nevertheless, British morality, which is the fruit of British Sabbatarianism, is a great fact; and "must be kept up"—as Mr. Squeers said when he walloped the young gentlemen at "Do-the-boys Hall" by way of maintaining a cheerful and lively disposition amongst his pupils.

From the Crimea there is nothing to report. A straggling shot occasionally from the North side of the harbor alone diversified the monotony of the soldier's life.

The Arabia, with dates to the 1st inst., arrived at Halifax on Wednesday. Three meetings of the Peace Conference at Paris had been held, but the details had not been allowed to transpire. All sorts of rumors were in circulation; but in spite of a slight panic caused by a report on the Stock Exchange, that there was a "litch" somewhere, the general opinion is still that peace is not far distant.—An armistice till the end of March had been agreed to; and in the meantime active preparations for a continuance of the war were being made on both sides. No news of the Pacific. The steamship Edinburgh reports having passed on the 7th ult., on her voyage from New York to Glasgow, a quantity of ice, covered with fine cabin furniture, such as might have belonged to a first-class steamer. It is affirmed however that the description given of this furniture does not agree with that on board the missing steamer.

WHAT DO CATHOLICS WANT?

One unfortunate, but inevitable consequence of the repeated tinkering of the Upper Canada School Law has been to leave a strong impression upon the minds, even of liberal and well disposed Protestants, that Catholics are insatiable in their demands; that every fresh concession will serve but as an excuse for asking more; and that when that "more" is accorded, the cry of the dissatisfied Papists will still be "give give." And to speak plainly, "give give" must still be our cry, so long as a full measure of justice be withheld from us by our opponents.

In substance our demands are very simple, and very moderate. We ask:—

1. That we—Catholics—be exempted from all taxation for the support of an educational system to which we are conscientiously opposed; and of which we cannot avail ourselves without incurring the risk of "mortal sin." Lenten Pastoral of His Lordship the Bishop of Toronto 1856.

2. We ask—not that Protestants be taxed for the support of our schools, or of a system to which they are opposed; but this—that, if government gives any material assistance or encouragement to the cause of education—such assistance and encouragement shall be given impartially both to its Catholic and non-Catholic subjects. That Separate and Common Schools shall share alike in all sums accruing from public sources.

3. We demand that the Catholic minority of Upper Canada be as liberally dealt with by the Protestant majority, as is the Protestant minority in Lower Canada, by the Catholic majority of that section of the Province.

But to grant this would be to destroy the "Common School" system of Upper Canada, we are told; concessions such as these are inconsistent with the principle upon which is based the entire educational superstructure of the Upper Province. True—perfectly true. But this is no valid argument against the claims of Catholics, unless the "Common School" system of Upper Canada be just; unless the principle on which it is based be sound. And this is why—to the disgust of the Montreal Pilot—instead of quibbling about paltry details, we address ourselves to the consideration of the previous question—Is the "Common School" system sound in principle, and just in its operations? If it is, Catholics have no right to ask to be exempted from its operation at all; if it is not, the sooner it is entirely abolished in so far as they are concerned, the better.

Then again, we are met with the objection that public opinion in Upper Canada is strongly in favor of the "Common" system; and that it will never do for Catholics to oppose public opinion. This is the palmary argument of the Pilot, but it should have but little weight with the Catholic. True—public opinion we are bound to respect; to it we are bound to submit, when public opinion is right. But when it is wrong—and the history of the world shows us that public opinion has erred, and therefore may err—when public opinion is an erroneous opinion, we see no more reason for respecting or submitting to it, than we do for respecting or submitting to an erroneous private opinion. Now in the matter at issue, if the public opinion in Upper Canada is in favor of the "Common" system, and of forcing it upon Catholics, public opinion is wrong; and if wrong—it is perfectly lawful for us to oppose it. When, where, and with what weapons?—are questions that must of course be decided by prudential considerations.

The Pilot differs from the TRUE WITNESS as to the fact whether there be a "Common" School system, properly so called, in Lower Canada. He says:—

"The system in this section of the Province is common to the Catholics, as that of Upper is to the Protestants."—Pilot, 8th inst.

Now if this argument be worth anything, it would establish the fact that we have a "Common Church," as well as a "Common School," system in Lower Canada—because in this section of the Province we have a Church system which is "common" to Catholics. We put it however to our cotemporary whether it would not be in better taste, more in accordance with facts, and the meaning of words, to use the term "peculiar" instead of "common;" as thus:—

"The Church and School systems in this section of the Province are peculiar to Catholics; Protestants being entirely exempted from their operation."

The Pilot admits, however, that "Catholics, by getting Separate Schools for themselves, do get rid, in so far as they are concerned, of the Common School System." And he adds:—

"Beyond this we do not think it would be either just or politic for them to go."—Id.

Neither have we any, the slightest desire, neither have we ever manifested any desire, "to go beyond this." All we ask is, "in so far as we are concerned to get rid altogether"—(this word the Pilot omits)—"of the Common School system." Hitherto we have only partially got rid of it, and are still subjected to many of its most iniquitous provisions. Catholics in Upper Canada—though supporting their own Schools, though deriving no benefit from the Protestant Schools, School houses, and libraries—are still, by the Act of 1855, 18, Vict., c. 131, clause XII, compelled to contribute towards the building and support of those institutions.

Nor is this all; nor is this the only wrong which, by the intolerance of our Protestant legislators, the apathy of some Catholics, and the venality of others who make loud professions of good will towards the Church about election time, has been perpetrated upon our Separate Schools in Upper Canada, and which remains to this day unredressed. We allude to the V. clause of the Clergy Reserve Bill; a clause which was no doubt worded expressly and inserted in that Bill, with a view to the ultimate destruction of Catholic Separate Schools in Upper Canada; and which, unless modified in accordance with the spirit of the petition from the Bishop and Catholic Institute of Toronto during the debates on the Reserves Bill, must render all attempts at amending or modifying the existing school system a farce and a sham.—In fact, so soon as the funds accruing from the secularised Reserves are at the disposition of the different Municipalities, for Common School purposes, the supporters of Separate Schools may close their establishments; as it will be impossible for them to make head against the Common School system, after such an enormous accession shall have been made to its wealth and influence. This fact was clearly recognised in 1854 by the Catholic Institute of Toronto; which society, under the guidance of the noble Bishop of that diocese, did its best to counteract the treachery and venality of the supporters of the government measure, a measure which, as we said before—if not speedily modified—must inevitably, and at no distant date, prove fatal to the cause of "Freedom of Education" in Upper Canada.

In the mean time, the following Bill to amend the XII Sect. of 18th Vict. c. 131, has been introduced. Even if it passes, however, nothing of any substantial benefit to the Catholic cause will have been gained, until the Clergy Reserves Bill shall have been so amended as to render it obligatory on the County Municipalities of Upper Canada—to whom the funds accruing from the secularised Reserves are to be handed over, and if of those funds they make any appropriation whatsoever for Common or Non-Catholic school purposes—to give to the Catholic separate schools their share thereof, in proportion to the average attendance of pupils upon such separate schools. With nothing short of this ought the Catholics of Upper Canada to rest satisfied:—

"An Act to amend the Upper Canada Separate School Act of the year 1855.

"Whereas it is expedient to remove certain impediments found to exist in the working of the above named Act: Therefore Her Majesty, &c., enacts as follows:—

"I. The twelfth section of the said Act shall be, and the same is hereby repealed.

"II. Notwithstanding anything in the above named Act, or in any other School Act or Acts to the contrary, every person paying rates, whether as proprietor or tenant, who, when required to pay his School taxes or rates, shall present to the Collector a certificate in duplicate from the Secretary-Treasurer of the Trustees or of any Board of Trustees of any Roman Catholic Separate School or Schools, that he has paid all School rates or taxes required by such Trustees or Board for the then current year, shall be exempted from the payment of all rates or taxes imposed for the building or the support of Common Schools,

or Common School Libraries, for the same year; and it shall be the duty of such Collector to retain one of the above named certificates, and sign his name to the other to be returned by him to the rate payer. "III. This Act shall take effect from the first day of January, One thousand eight hundred and fifty-six."

On Monday evening the first meeting of the newly elected City Council was held. Our late Mayor was present, and delivered a valedictory address; in which, whilst he congratulated the Corporation upon the favorable state of its finances, and the ability of its officers—he lamented the great amount of crime that prevailed in Montreal, as would be but too apparent from the Report of the Chief of Police.

For the motives of our late esteemed Mayor we have the highest respect; but we feel inclined to question some of his facts, and the soundness of his political economy. Indeed he himself refutes himself; for, after telling us that the amount of "Crime" in Montreal is "quite appalling," he proceeds to show that that which he calls "Crime" is, after all, for the most part nothing but poverty; and that if a great number of paupers have been arrested during the year, this has arisen from the great number of persons, engaged during the summer upon our public works, but in the winter, with bread at famine price, suddenly thrown out of employment, and left no choice betwixt death and the watch-house. The jail is the only asylum open to these unfortunates; and to them the policeman who arrests them, in spite of staff, glazed hat, and blue coat, appears rather as an angel of mercy, than as the stern minister of justice. Destitution, want of employment, and consequently, of food, clothing and shelter, are the chief "Crimes" of which our Police have to take cognizance; and of such as we may deplore this, yet we can hardly admit with Dr. Nelson, that there is anything in it "truly appalling"—especially when compared with the criminal statistics of other cities. We may have more poverty for instance, because of our longer winters, than many of the cities of the neighboring republic; but we have far less serious crime; far fewer cowardly and brutal assaults, murders, burglaries, infanticides, &c., to record. A well disposed and sober person—man or woman—may walk the streets of Montreal at all hours of the day or night in perfect safety. This—if the statements of the Upper Canada papers may be relied on—is more than can be said with truth of Toronto, and other cities in the Upper Province; where, according to the Toronto Colonist, it would seem that "the number of criminals—both for the more serious crimes, as well as those for petty misdemeanors—appears to increase yearly"—where the Police are impotent to protect life and property, or to shield the wives and daughters of respectable citizens from outrage and insult—and where "hardy ruffians who keep sober for a purpose, nightly perambulate the streets, insulting all they meet—male or female—especially the latter." Our soldiers, it is asserted on good authority, swore horribly in Flanders, and we may have a very fair share of rowdies in Montreal. But neither amongst our soldiers, nor our Montreal rowdies, are such ruffians to be found as those who infest the streets of the cities of Upper Canada with impunity.

How to get rid of a portion of our pauperism, is one of the problems which the Buffalo Convention proposed to solve; and if to any extent it should have solved it successfully, it will by so much, have diminished the amount of crime which our late Mayor finds so appalling. The fact of the matter is, that, attracted by the offers of employment at high wages on the public works, too many of our newly arrived immigrants, forgetting that these works are suspended during winter, prefer the precarious wages of the hired laborer, to the smaller profits, but greater certainties, of the hardy settler. They stick about our large towns, instead of starting at once for the bush; where axe in hand, they might, with no greater expenditure of strength than that which leaves them paupers for about four months in the year, make themselves masters of homes and lands.

Another important fact which should not be lost sight of in discussing the "Criminal," or rather the "Pauper" statistics of Montreal is this. During the winter months, from the closing to the opening of the navigation, Montreal is the receptacle of almost all the pauperism of the surrounding districts and parishes—attracted hither by the hopes of relief from our convents, ecclesiastical corporations, and charitable societies. But these however in, spite of all their funds, and the devotion of their members, are quite inadequate to provide, not only for their own poor, but for all the poor of distant districts. Here then is another subject of consolation for Dr. Nelson. The greater part of that criminal, or pauper population whose presence so much appals him, will in a few weeks be scattered far and wide over our rural districts; such if it at least as shall not have returned to its summer labors on the public works.

What can be done to alliterate this state of things? Nothing evidently by legislation; little by the police; a good deal by the philanthropist and the Christian. The Irish residents in Montreal especially, should exhort their fellow countrymen,—immigrants—against remaining loafing about town; and should do their best to convince them that, as settlers upon their own lands, their position, social and material, would be far superior to that of the hired laborer, exposed to the corrupting influences of a city life, and certain almost to be thrown out of employment at the most rigorous season of the year.

Our late Mayor's remarks also upon prison discipline do all honor to his heart; and in so far as practicable, in so far as consistent with the main object of punishment, may we hope, be realised. But it should be borne in mind that the main object of punishment, inflicted by the State, is; not the reformation of the offender, but to prevent him and to deter others, from a repetition of the offence; and that it