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THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 1854.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The British House of Commons has again given another signal proof of its attachment to the principles of "religious liberty," by adopting Mr. Chambers' motion against conventual establishments. It was attempted, last session, to put down these institutions by a direct attack upon their inmates, and by subjecting them to a series of insults, which, as no gentlemen would ever dream of inflicting, no ladies would ever endure. Foiled in this scheme, Exeter Hall has devised another plan, the first step in which was taken in the House of Commons, on Tuesday the 28th ult., by a Mr. Chambers—the mouth-piece of the swaddlers in the British Senate. This worthy opened the attack, by moving for a "select committee, to inquire into the number, and rate of increase of conventual and monastic institutions in the United Kingdom, and the relation in which they stand to existing laws; and to consider whether any, and if any, what, further legislation is required on the subject." For, as Protestantism was established by brute force, and iniquitous legislation, so only by the same means can it be supported at the present day, and its antagonist, Catholicity, be depressed.

The meaning of this apparently harmless, and cautiously worded, motion is obvious—to put down all Catholic religious establishments in Great Britain.—They are illegal as it is; but no government dares enforce the law against the religion of about one-fourth of its subjects. Indirect means must therefore be resorted to, in order to accomplish the object; and it is hoped that, by continually harassing the Nuns, and by exposing them to all sorts of insults, these ladies, with their institutions, may yet be driven out of the land. The Bill of last session authorised Protestant visitors to force themselves into the Nuns' sleeping apartments, and shutting themselves up alone with their intended victims, to treat them as they thought fit. Such a law was too beastly, too atrocious, even for a Protestant legislature; but by means of a "select committee," authorised to compel these ladies to leave their retreats, and to appear before a secret and irresponsible tribunal, there to answer every foul and obscene question which the malice and brutality of their blackguard interrogators may suggest, the objects of the "Nuns' Bedrooms Inspection Bill" of last session will be accomplished; and the odium which, in England, attaches to the idea of domiciliary visits will be avoided. This is the plain meaning of Mr. Chambers' motion, and the hardly disguised intention of its gentlemanly supporters.

In view of the statistics laid before the House, it is time that something were done to arrest the progress of Catholicity within the British dominions.—"It was a fact of the very greatest significance," said Mr. Chambers, "that, in this country, Nunneries should have increased at the rate of FOUR HUNDRED PER CENT., and MONASTERIES AT TWENTY PER CENT., IN TEN YEARS." The speaker then feelingly alluded to the laws, against Catholic ecclesiastics, sentencing them to the treatment of felons for the exercise of their spiritual functions, and against all monastic institutions, which are positively prohibited under heavy penalties; he mourned over the degeneracy of the times, and the decay of sound Protestant principles amongst the rulers, to which he attributed the lukewarmness of the government in enforcing these laws, and the consequent alarming increase of Catholicity. "No one could have thought," he concluded, "when the Catholic Relief Act was passed, that, in 1853, such a state of things would be in existence, as is now disclosed by the existence of 200 of these illegal institutions, and their portentously rapid rate of increase." Mr. Napier seconded the motion, which was opposed by most of the Irish, and many of the English members. Lord John Russell—conscious of the folly of alienating the affections of his Catholic fellow-citizens of Ireland at the present moment, when their arms and sinews are so greatly in demand to fight, in England's quarrel, and for the maintenance of her influence in the East—spoke strongly against the motion. He said that those who brought it forward, and supported it, were evidently afraid; or ashamed of their measure—that no case had been made out, calling for enquiry—that after two or three years' circulation of a number of stories, nothing had been produced but what turned out to be "the most worthless rubbish." There are laws, added the Hon. Member, "affecting the property of Catholics, by which the fair and legitimate use of that property is forbidden, in a manner which I do not think consistent with the religious liberty which Catholics now enjoy;" and in concluding a long and masterly speech, he ably disposed of the argu-

ment which the supporters of the motion had attempted to deduce from the fact that, in some Catholic countries, Catholic conventual establishments, were subject to government interference. No other members of the Ministry spoke on the question; and, on a division, there was a majority of 67 in favor of Mr. Chambers' motion—186, being for, and 119 against it.

Ever on the look out for a pretence to justify in the eyes of the civilised world their piratical designs upon Cuba, our neighbors on the other side of the lines have found, or fancy that they have found, such a pretence in the seizure of the *Black Warrior*—an American trader from New York to New Orleans—by the Spanish Custom House authorities at the Havannah. The facts of the case are very simple. Though in cargo, the *Black Warrior*, upon her arrival in the Spanish port, was reported in ballast; whereupon the Collector of Customs seized the vessel, for an infringement of the Spanish fiscal regulations, as in strict right he was authorised to do. The Americans complain of the seizure, because, they contend, similar irregularities and false returns, had been long allowed to pass unnoticed; on the other hand, the Spanish authorities assert that they had never been aware of, and never countenanced such violations of the existing laws; and that they are determined to put a stop to them for the future.

Here the matter for the present rests; but as the annexation of Cuba to the United States is looked upon as "manifest destiny," and as therefore our neighbors are but too glad to have a pretence for quarrelling with its government, it is likely that this affair may lead to renewed aggressions upon the independence of Cuba. The President has sent a very angry message upon the subject, to the House of Representatives, announcing his having taken steps to obtain redress, and hinting at ulterior measures, should the former prove unsuccessful. A general war in Europe would offer a fine opportunity for an attack upon Cuba; and though nothing can be more trumpety than the cause of complaint growing out of the seizure of the *Black Warrior*, yet it will no doubt serve the purpose of picking a quarrel with Spain, as well as a better. In case of hostilities breaking out in Europe, it is not impossible that the New, as well as the Old, World may be involved therein.

"*Le Canadien*," in a recent article on the subject of the "Clergy Reserves," professes to put the merits of this long agitated question within every man's reach; in reality he throws out a feeler to ascertain, if possible, the sentiments of the Catholics of Lower Canada, as, from the balanced state of parties, it is now clear that by the Lower Canadian vote, will the fate of the Clergy Reserves be decided.

"*Le Canadien*" is a docile Ministerial hack; and, though French Canadian, its opinions must not be accepted by our Upper Canadian brethren as the opinions of French Canadian Catholics. The interests of his masters, the Ministry whom he supports, and by whom he is supported, are of course of paramount importance in the eyes of "*Le Canadien*;" and these interests may perhaps require that the votes of French Canadian Catholics should be added to those of Upper Canadian demagogues, infidels, and "Pharisaical brawlers," in order to effect the perpetration of an act of sacrilegious spoliation, and thereby to keep those masters in the enjoyment of salary and patronage. But the interests of the Catholic Church, which we prefer to the interests of any set of men, of any ministry, of any government, point out a very different line of conduct, as that which Catholics should pursue in the coming contest betwixt the advocates of "secularisation," and its foes.

Le Canadien thinks to render the "secularisation" of the "Reserves" acceptable to his fellow-countrymen by the assurance that, by voting for the spoliation of Protestant endowments, they will expose the property of their Church to no peril.—"Nothing is more absurd than such fears," says *Le Canadien*; meaning the fears that the secularisation of the Reserves will be immediately followed by a Protestant Alliance, and a combined attack upon Tythes—Ecclesiastical Corporations—the Colleges and Convents—of Lower Canada. "Nothing is more absurd" says *Le Canadien*; and yet nothing is more certain.

Oh, but it can't be, argues our cotemporary, with the most naive simplicity—"Is there any resemblance betwixt the 'Clergy Reserves' and our institutions? Not in the least"—says *Le Canadien*; therefore the latter will not be assailed; and the radicals, and the demagogues—whom no promises can bind, whose oaths no man can trust, to whom the most solemn obligations are but a mockery, and whose sense of honor is about as keen as a pig's capacity for metaphysics—will shrink from laying a finger upon the long-coveted Catholic property of Lower Canada, at the very moment it lies temptingly within their reach. Oh credulous, simple-minded, *Canadien*! if you are in earnest in what you say; but treacherous, deceitful, and false to the religion which you profess, if you are not! If you are really the simpleton you proclaim yourself—if you are so insensible to all that is passing around you, so blind to the signs of the times, so deaf—we do not say to the voice of warning—but to the boldly spoken threats of the implacable enemies of your laws, your language, and your religion, as to believe that the "secularisation" of the "Clergy Reserves" will not be followed by an attack from the united Protestant forces of Canada, upon all Ecclesiastical property, it is in vain to argue with you—vain to remonstrate; you are but fit to eat grass with your fellow-simpletons of the pastures. But no—you do not believe it; you know that the attack is meditated, organised, openly threatened, and will inevitably be made; and that, as no attempt even is made by the advocates of "secularisation" to conceal their ulterior designs, it must be the height of

impudence on your part to deny them, or to seek to hide, from your fellow-citizens, the certain consequences of the political conduct which you advocate; we had almost said—the just retribution of the crime which you recommend. Crime! it is worse than a crime: it is a blunder.

But Catholic property is held on a different tenure from the "Clergy Reserves;" therefore, whilst the latter is "secularised," the other will be respected. Bah! it is impossible to conceal one's contempt for such twaddle. As if the Protestant spoiler, the demagogue, respected treaties, oaths, pledges, honor, truth or justice!—as if he cared for any of these things!—or as if he would allow such paltry considerations to stand in the way of dealing a blow to the object of his deadliest hatred. That by robbing the Catholic Church he is, adding falsehood to theft, treachery to robbery, and meanness to sacrilege, will add zest to the pleasure which the Protestant demagogue will feel in trampling under foot, international treaties, the rights of property, and the strongholds of Popery. True; the property of the Catholic Church in Canada, her lands, her revenues, are not the gifts of the Crown, but the charitable donations of private individuals, and the proceeds of purchase—so many reasons the more why the Church should be robbed. True; her property is not wasted or misapplied; true, it is entirely devoted to the promotion of religion, morality, and education—additional reasons why it should be wrested from her, as one source of the influence which she now exercises over the people. True; the confiscation of the endowments of the Catholic Church, would be a violation of the rights of private property—an admirable precedent for the demagogue and the socialist, which, when the day comes, they will well know how to apply. And *Le Canadien* would fain persuade us that triumphant democracy, flushed and strengthened with its victory over the "Reserves," will respect, and refrain from laying its filthy hands upon, the more obnoxious, because more sacred, endowments of the Catholic Ecclesiastical Corporations! Oh incredible credulity!—If *Le Canadien* fancies that we can rely upon the reasons he assigns for the security of our Church property, he must either take us for fools, or he himself, what we do not wish to name.

Every man of ordinary penetration in Canada knows, and the "secularisers" openly proclaim, that the main object in "secularising" the "Clergy Reserves" of Upper Canada, is to obtain an opening for dealing a mortal thrust to the Ecclesiastical endowments of the Lower Province. It is for this that many Protestants, now advocate the spoliation which they once condemned; for they well know that till that piece of rascality be accomplished, the revenues of the Catholic Church cannot even be assailed; and they hate Popery more than they value the "Reserves." This too *Le Canadien* well knows, in spite of his assumed "*bonhomme*," and affected simplicity; but to induce his unwary readers to sanction the perpetration of a great crime, he endeavors to conceal from them that it will most assuredly result in a great misfortune to them, and to the Church of their affections.

After the 1st of May next, the old Catholic burial ground in the St. Antoine Suburbs will be closed, in virtue of a law of the Corporation, prohibiting all intra-mural interments; and the Catholics of Montreal are called upon to take the necessary steps for providing a fitting receptacle for their dead.—Two plans are spoken of; we presume not to hazard an opinion as to which is the more eligible.

On the one hand, some recommend the purchase by the Fabrique, of a piece of land, of about 130 acres in extent, belonging to Dr. Beaubien, situate near the *Cotes des Neiges*, which has been offered for the sum of, we believe, £3,000. On the other hand, the Seminary of Montreal has offered gratuitously a site of about 20 acres, near their new church of St. Luc; an offer which many seem to be inclined to accept, though others contend that 20 acres are not sufficient for our large Catholic population. Both sites are at a considerable distance from town, that at the *Cote des Neiges* being a little the nearer of the two; but that at St. Luc having the advantage in this, that it possesses a Church, Presbytery, and resident clergy; in fact the site offered at St. Luc is a "*churchyard*."

The question of disposing of the remains of the dead, from amongst the populations of our large cities, presents many difficulties. On the one hand their remains should be so disposed of, as not to endanger the health of the living; and therefore at a certain distance. And on the other hand, care should be taken, not to increase the already too heavy expences of funerals, by selecting a site at a distance unnecessarily great. There is yet another consideration, which to the Catholic heart pleads strongly in favor of retaining, as far as is consistent with the health of the living, the remains of our departed friends and relatives within the range of our daily walks. We bury our dead out of sight, but not out of mind, and therefore still make remembrance of them in our prayers; for still, from their graves, they invoke our sympathies. How eloquent are the silent appeals from the humble head-stone, or more pompously decorated monument; and—"Of your charity pray for the soul of"—or the "*Ci Gît—priez pour moi*." Profitable too to the living, are the thoughts to which such appeals, such scenes, give rise; they teach us that in the midst of life we are in death, and bid us number our days; they preach, in their sublime silence, the comforting doctrine of a life beyond the grave, and keep fresh within us the fact of the communion of saints, a communion which not death itself can dissolve, or interrupt.

And thus it is, that Catholics still desire to lay the remains of their dead in "*Churchyards*." Protestantism—which in so far as it is Protestantism, is but heathenism in a black coat and pantaloons—thrusts

them into a fantastically arranged plot of ground in the suburbs, which it decorates with plaster of Paris mausoleums, and vilely executed heathen devices, and calls a "*Cemetery*."

We look upon it then as a misfortune, though an unavoidable one, that we should be compelled to seek at a distance from our homes, our daily haunts and places of worship, where to lay our dead; but the health of the living imperatively demands it, and from the over-crowded state of the old burying ground, decency requires that we seek another spot wherein to bury them. This will probably entail some expence on the community; as, wherever selected, the ground will have to be enclosed and properly laid out, ere it can be fitted for the reception of the destined inmates.—This too should inculcate the necessity, the duty we would say, incumbent on every one, of discouraging by every means in his power, all superfluous parade and expence at funerals. How often is not the poor widow compelled, by the absurd usages of society, to take the bread out of her children's mouth, and throw it into her husband's grave; how often would not the sums lavished in idle trappings, and vainly thrown away upon the dead, have sufficed to support the living family for a week. A great reform is needed in this respect; and, humanly speaking, it must be commenced, and accomplished by the rich.—It is for them to study the utmost simplicity and economy—consistent with decency and a due regard to religion—in the internment of their dead; to discountenance all parade, all pomp, all unnecessary expenditure; and to bring into fashion the system of cheap funerals. If the rich will but set the example, it will be soon followed by the poorer classes; it will no longer be considered the duty of the widowed mother to waste the means which should be devoted to the sustenance of her helpless and fatherless little ones, upon feathers, hearsees, handsomely embossed coffins, gloves, hat bands, and all the silly paraphernalia of a modern funeral, which exhaust the means of the living, but cannot be of any profit to the dead. This should be reformed altogether.

The *Montreal Witness* has made the important discovery, that the Bishops of the Catholic Church in the United States are at issue with their brethren in Canada "as to the nature and cause of 'Spiritual Rappings';" the former assigning them to diabolic interference, whilst the latter see therein nothing but what can be accounted for by the operation of natural causes.—"The faithful," therefore, argues our logical cotemporary—"knowing that their Bishops are not agreed about the nature of 'spiritual rappings,' will be induced, if not justified, to experiment for themselves, and great mischief will be done." This is drawing conclusions with a vengeance.

Our cotemporary may make his mind easy; amongst Catholics there is no fear of any danger from "spirit rappings" or "table turnings." For, were it true that there existed any differences of opinion amongst the Bishops of the Church, as to the nature of the causes by which the phenomena are elicited, there are none as to the evil effects thereof. Therefore, by all the prelates who have issued their decrees upon the subject, all experimenting with "table turning" has been discountenanced, whilst all pretended eroking or questioning of "Spirits," whether by means of "rappings," or any other means whatsoever, has been emphatically condemned and prohibited; and therefore "the faithful" will neither be induced to try, nor yet justified in trying, experiments for themselves. It is sufficient for the "faithful" to know that the Church condemns these experiments—some as positively sinful, all as exceedingly dangerous—for them to abstain altogether from the absurdities of "table-turning and spiritual rappings."

But it is not true that there is any difference whatever betwixt the Bishops of Canada, and those of the United States, "as to the nature and cause of spiritual rappings." For, content with condemning them, the Bishops have not pronounced any opinion whatever upon that subject. They have told their people what were not the causes of these phenomena; they have assured them that they were not to be attributed to the agency of the spirits of the just, and, have, therefore, so far declared that, if superhuman, they are diabolically superhuman; but neither in Canada, nor in the United States, has the supernatural character of the phenomena been positively asserted, in any of the Pastorals issued upon the subject, though neither has it been denied. Laymen indeed, writing about Spiritual Manifestations—good Catholics, and intelligent observers very likely, but still, as laics destitute of all authority in matters of religion—may have expressed an opinion in favor of the supernatural, and therefore of the devilish, origin of these phenomena; but the Bishops, to whom alone it is given to speak with authority, have hitherto thought fit to preserve a discreet reserve; it is not for us—whose duty it is, diligently to hearken, and humbly to obey—to criticise the conduct of the Pastors, to whom God has committed the care of His Church.

The editor of the *Montreal Witness* has been reading up in his Bible, to see what he could make out of the Eastern Question, and the probable result of the hostilities in which Europe is about to be engaged; it is gratifying to know that our saintly cotemporary has found out all about it. From reading the 38th chapter of Daniel—he tells us—"we should be inclined to expect that the war will be set at rest in Europe in some way—we trust it may—and that its great and final struggle will take place in Palestine." Our cotemporary should hasten to communicate this interesting discovery to the British Government; we fear however, that Daniel would be little thought of at the Horse Guards, as an authority upon military matters.