

The True Witness

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, MARCH 7, 1862.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The debates in the Imperial Parliament upon American affairs are conclusive as to the sincerity of those professions of neutrality of which the British Government has been lavish since the commencement of the civil contest, and to which in practice it has rigidly adhered. Neither the overtures of Louis Napoleon on the one hand, nor the exigencies of the "manufacturing interests" on the other, have as yet prevailed upon the Palmerston Cabinet to look favorably upon the scheme for breaking the blockade, and recognising the Southern Confederacy. That, relying upon an easy conquest of Canada, the Yankees are determined to force a war upon Great Britain, no one who studies the daily press of the Northern States, in which are faithfully reflected, the opinions, passions, hopes and fears of our democratic neighbors, can for one moment doubt; but we may be sure that no legitimate *casus belli* will be afforded by England, and that she will not draw the sword until compelled to do so in self defence. The moment when she shall be so compelled involves only a question of time; and as the avowed policy of the Washington Cabinet is "one war at a time," we may hope for peace so long as the South remains unsubdued, but no longer.

The beauties of Caesarism have just received another illustration, by the action of Louis Napoleon towards the Pope and the Bishops of France. The latter are warned against accepting the invitation of the Sovereign Pontiff to the Prelates of the Christian world to assemble at Rome; and the Pontifical authorities are taken roundly to task for presuming to issue such an invitation, without the sanction of the French Government. It is in vain to speculate on the designs of the Emperor towards the Holy Father. So long as Imperial interests can in any manner be subserved by maintaining a French garrison at Rome, so long, but no longer, will it be maintained; but the moment it becomes clear to Louis Napoleon that he can make a profit by selling the Vicar of Christ to his enemies—that moment the modern Judas will strike the bargain, and pocket his thirty pieces of silver. The illustrious Pion-Pion was expected to deliver an address in the Senate, in which the real designs of the Emperor with regard to Rome, would be divulged. In the Kingdom of Naples matters remain unchanged. There, where the Piedmontese have military possession, order, such as practically reigns at Warsaw, is maintained; but wherever the people are not kept down by the bayonets of the detested "foreign mercenaries," there the loyalty of the Neapolitans to the ancient dynasty declares itself, and their aversion to alien rule and absorption by Sardinia is unequivocally expressed. Since the cold-blooded murder of the brave General Borge, the loyalists have unfortunately no leader, and the patriotic party is obliged to confine itself to local and desultory risings against their numerous and well-organized oppressors.

The capture of Nashville by the Northerners, has been followed by the abandonment of Columbus. The post being no longer tenable, has been destroyed by the Confederates, who falling back upon their second line of defence will still we hope be enabled to maintain the struggle.—They seem, from their late acts, to be animated by the same heroic and patriotic spirit as that which inspired the Russians in the campaign of 1812, and if so their subjugation is impossible. If oppressed by superior numbers, they will fall back, leaving the country behind them a desert, a mass of smoking ruins, and of devastated fields; and against such a system of tactics, aided as in a few weeks it will be by the malaria of the South, neither courage, nor the superior numbers of the Northerners will much avail.

In the meantime, and notwithstanding their boasted victories, the authorities of Washington are most anxious, and are adopting the most arbitrary measures, to prevent the circulation of accurate or reliable intelligence from the seat of war. They have laid an embargo on the press; and under pains and penalties, newspaper editors are prohibited from publishing any military news whatsoever, that has not reached them filtered through official channels, and has not previously

been submitted to the manipulations of the authorities. This, in so far as designed to prevent the divulging of the intentions of the government, and revealing to the enemy the movement of troops, is a salutary and perfectly legitimate precaution. But in so far as it prohibits the publication of all war news whatsoever, it is evident that the Washington authorities are aware of something or another which, as not very flattering to Northern prowess, they deem it advisable to conceal from their friends, as well as from their foes.

STATE RELIGIOUS SERVICES.—Even during the raging of civil war, the Legislature of Massachusetts can find time to exercise the functions of a Synod, and to pass edicts for the religious exercises of its citizens. It has just enacted, with regard to "Religious Services" in the State Schools—that:—

"The School Committee shall require the daily reading of some portion of the Bible, without written note or oral comment, in the public Schools; but they shall require no scholar to read from any particular version, whose parent or guardian shall declare he has conscientious scruples against allowing him to read therefrom, nor shall they ever direct any school books calculated to have the tenets of any particular sect of Christians to be purchased or used in any of the public schools."

We copy from the Boston Pilot, who seems to look upon the above decree as a great boon, or concession to his fellow-Catholics; from whence we may form some idea of the hateful tyranny to which the latter have been long subjected, and under which they are still condemned to linger. Truly, if the Catholics of Massachusetts are thankful for such a law, they are thankful for very small mercies indeed. We, in Canada, being accustomed to freedom, should deem such an enactment an insult, and an injury against which it would be our bounden duty to protest by every means within our power.

For mark what it implies. First, that the State has the right to impose religious observances upon its subjects—Catholics as well as Protestants—and to prescribe what book or books shall alone be used in such observances.—This of itself is a monstrous claim, subversive of all religious liberty, containing as in a germ the entire body of all despotism, and all the most repulsive features of State-Churchism. The only sure guarantee for religious liberty consists in the frank recognition of the principle that, in matters spiritual, or pertaining to religion, the State has no lawful jurisdiction, direct or indirect; and that it has no right either to prohibit, or to enjoin the observances of any "Religious Services" whatsoever. When oblivious of its proper functions, the State presumes to interfere with the religion of its subjects, it is the right and duty of the latter to treat its decrees with contempt, and to set them at defiance.

In the second place, it is worthy of note that the Act of the Massachusetts Legislature is not only repugnant to the first or fundamental principle of religious liberty—in as much as it tends to merge the Church in the State, and to assign to the latter the functions which appertain, exclusively, to the other,—but is, in particular, unjust and insulting as towards Catholics. These are by law compelled to pay for the support of the "public schools," in which "religious services" are ordered to be held; but no Catholic can, upon any pretence or excuse whatsoever, take part, or allow himself, or those over whom he has any control to appear even as taking part, in any religious services in common with Protestants, or directly or indirectly to communicate in sacred things with heretics or heathens. A conscientious Catholic cannot, under any circumstances, join in appearance even, in any religious service with a Protestant or heretic of any description. As the early Christians preferred death to burning a grain of incense before the image of Cæsar, so the true Catholic of the nineteenth century would rather submit to all and everything that the malice of man can invent, than be guilty of the sacrilege of joining in any kind of religious service with Protestants; and yet, unless Catholic parents in the United States consent to allow their children to be daily guilty of this abominable sacrilege, or virtual apostasy, they will be debarred from the use of those schools for the support of which they are unmercifully taxed.—Wherein, in principle, does the State-Schoolism of Massachusetts differ from the State-Churchism of Ireland?

In the third place, it is instructive to note what account Protestants make of the Bible, and in what esteem, as a rule of faith, or all sufficient guide in religion, they themselves hold it.—The Act by us above cited, which enjoins that the Bible without note or comment shall be read in the public schools, prescribes also that no books,—

"Calculated to have the tenets of any particular sect of Christians . . . be used in any of the public schools."

From this the legitimate deduction is, that in the opinion of Protestants themselves, the Bible—which they hold up as their infallible rule of faith, as their sure and sole guide in all things pertaining to religion, and as the all sufficient authority in matters spiritual—is so vague and ambiguous in its language, so confused in its utterances, and gives forth such a faint and uncertain sound—that it cannot be deemed to endorse the

opinions of one set of Christians more than those of another; that as betwixt Trinitarians and Unitarians it pronounces no sentence; and that to those who deny, and those who affirm, the doctrine of the Vicarious Atonement as a fundamental or essential doctrine of Christianity, it is equally favorable in its utterances. This is the view which the Protestant Legislature of Massachusetts professedly entertains of the Bible; and in this view of the Bible, as interpreted solely by private judgment, we most perfectly coincide.—It is, as has often been remarked—like a nose of wax, which may be made to assume any and every form which the manipulator desires to impress upon it. In the hands of a man, being a Puseyite, it shall assume a decided Roman cast of expression; in the hands of another, a Low-Churchman, it shall become a snub, or evangelical nose of the most repulsive character. Sometimes the Jewish element shall declare itself, as amongst a certain section of the Calvinists and extreme Sabbatarians; but in the hands of that more refined and highly cultivated Protestant school of which the late Rev. Theodore Parker was the prophet or exponent, the Grecian or graceful Pagan type of expression will predominate. And so with all the sects, and sectaries; they all know how to mould the language of the Bible according to their several tastes, and how to impress upon its plastic surface the impression of their several mental traits. The Bible in short, has no distinctive or peculiar objective character; but as treated by Protestants, it becomes a sort of convenient mirror, wherein everyone may see reflected his own mental features, or subjective moods of thought. In this sense the Bible may well be said to be non-sectarian; seeing that there is no sectary, however extravagant, who may not, if he diligently "search the scriptures" for it, find therein that of which he is in quest—or rather that which he has already determined that they contain. Give me where to stand, cried the sage of old, and I will move the earth; give us the Bible, and the Bible alone, and there is no error so monstrous, but that we will undertake to prove it true.

And this peculiarity of the Bible, which every one who has studied it carefully by the light of his human reason must recognise as adhering to it, and which to any one amenable to reason must be a convincing proof that the Bible alone could never have been designed by God as the "rule of faith" to beings destined to an immortal life, and whom He holds responsible for their belief—this peculiarity of the Bible we say, constitutes in the eyes of Protestants its chief merit, and furnishes the main reason for their insisting upon its use in "Common Schools." It may be so used as to countenance any absurdity, or immorality—from polygamy and divorce, to Table-Turning and Spirit-rapping; much more than may it be so used and read as to shake the belief of Catholic children in the teachings of the Church, and so as to unsettle their faith; but he whose belief in those teachings is shaken, he whose faith is unsettled, is *ipso facto* a Protestant. Besides, the custom of hearing the Bible, and the Bible alone, read as a daily religious exercise, will, indeed in time must, predispose the minds of those who so hear it read, to accept as true the Protestant view of the design of the Bible, and the nature of its authority in religious controversy. It is above all important that the youthful mind should be thus predisposed; for so absurd, so ludicrous, so utterly groundless, so devoid of all shadow even of argument to support it, indeed so demonstrably false is the Protestant theory respecting the Bible, as the source and origin of the knowledge of the Christian religion—that it can make little or no impression upon those who have once acquired the habit of reasoning and thinking for themselves; but will at once be rejected by them, when in mature years tendered to their acceptance, as a degrading superstition, which can find acceptance with none except very young children, and some very old women of either sex.

Bearing in mind that, a few years ago, the Montreal Herald was the most zealous advocate of Yankee annexation, and that to the very last moment it did its best to palliate the Trent outrage, and to persuade the people of Canada that Great Britain would submit to the insult patiently, and that it was therefore useless to prepare for defence—we are neither surprised nor sorry to find that the political opinions which we advocate with respect to the duties of subjects, are received with marked disapprobation by our Clear-Grit contemporary. His friends and allies of Upper Canada are ever looking to Washington, are ever seeking to borrow a leaf, as the Globe has it, "from their neighbors' books;" and it is therefore natural that we, who are no admirers of Yankee institutions, who regard annexation as the greatest curse, and the lowest degradation that could possibly befall us, and who look upon democracy as the chief danger which the friends of constitutional liberty have to dread, should provoke the wrath of the Yankee hireling, the traitorous champion of annexation, and the Lower Canada ally of the democratic *canaille* of the Upper Province.

But even in his wrath, the Herald should re-

member certain laws of prudence. He should not make a fool of himself—or rather, seeing that this has been already abundantly done for him by a bounteous providence, he should not seek to parade the fact before the world; and when he deliberately sets himself to indite untruths, he should at least endeavor to maintain an appearance of probability in his writings. When for instance the Herald taxes the TRUE WITNESS with being a friend to "negro slavery," our contemporary should at least attempt to support his allegation by quotations from the journal which he asperses; and when he pretends that we have "justified the confinement of Poerio and his comrades into those horrible dungeons described by Mr. Gladstone," he should bear in mind that the said Mr. Gladstone's calumnies have been fully and publicly refuted by the Marquis of Normanby; that Mr. Gladstone by his silence, and by his refusal to pick up the gauntlet thrown down to him by his opponent, has tacitly admitted the validity of Lord Normanby's vindication of the Italian Sovereigns; and that therefore the TRUE WITNESS could never have so much as attempted even "to justify the confinement of Poerio," and those "horrible dungeons"—seeing that we believe in the existence of neither one nor the other; that we know that Poerio was but an "invention" of the Jacobins; and the story of his confinement in those "horrible dungeons" a revolutionary *canard*, which, set in circulation by knives, imposed on none but simpletons. We do not pretend that the prisons of Naples were models of architectural excellence, or that they were either well drained, or ventilated, or that they were any better than some of the filthy jails still to be found in portions of Queen Victoria's dominions; but we do reject as groundless fables, the stories which, originated by the rascal demagogues of Italy, were palmed off upon dear silly Mr. Gladstone as truths, and were by him administered in oft-repeated doses to the intelligent Great Britain, who swallowed them with his traditional voracity.

Neither do we hold up the late Italian governments to the admiration of the world as models of constitutional perfection. There were, no doubt, many abuses, theoretical and practical, in those governments; and Austrian rule in Italy has as little claims upon our sympathy, as has the alien rule of the Sardinians over the unhappy Neapolitans. All we contend for is this—that the abuses existing in those Governments did not justify, either the armed interference of Piedmont, or the rebellion of their subjects; for with all their faults, there was no abuse in any one of the Italian States so monstrous as that which obtains in Ireland in the form of the "Protestant Church as by Law Established" amongst a Catholic people; and yet we have always insisted that even that monstrous grievance does not justify rebellion in Ireland, or authorise the armed interference of either France or the United States.

So too with regard to the King of Naples, Francis II., whom the Herald foolishly calls *Bomba*. For the deposed sovereign, personally, we care but little, looking upon him as a well meaning, honest man indeed, but weak, and sadly deficient in those sterner virtues which we expect in rulers. But we do sympathise, and sympathise warmly, with the Neapolitans, and heartily do we wish them success in their efforts to throw off the alien and military despotism beneath which they now groan. We know that the Neapolitans hate the Sardinians. Even the "Special Correspondent" of the Times admits that the *plebiscite*, or pretended appeal to the vote of the people, upon the strength of which Victor Emmanuel calls himself King of Italy, was a humbug; and that—we quote the very words of the writer—"if the *plebiscite* were again to be taken, and taken fairly, it would not be favorable to the Government of Victor Emmanuel;" and if other evidence were wanted to establish the truth of the intense and general hatred of the Neapolitans towards the Sardinians and the rule of Victor Emmanuel, we should find it in the simple fact that it requires the presence of from sixty to eighty, thousand foreign mercenaries to keep down the incessant efforts of the Neapolitans to purge their soil of its alien invaders, and to re-establish their national independence. If it was no crime for the Scots to resist in arms the bowmen of the English Edward—if the Spaniards in 1808 had the right to refuse to accept a sovereign from the hands of Napoleon—and if to all ages the tale of the loyalty of the Vendéens to their God and to their King, shall stand out as the one bright page in the filthy, mud-and-blood begrimed annals of the French Revolution—so in like manner, by all generous hearts, by all who believe that the brave man struggling with adversity offers the most glorious spectacle which the sun in his daily course beholds, by all except the worshipper, of brute force and of the Almighty Dollar—will justice be done to the gallant Neapolitans, hopeless though their case may seem now to be, and resistless as may appear the might of their alien oppressors. We do not seek to disguise, we would scorn to apologise for, our sympathy with the Neapolitan patriots; and it is for their sake that we trust that the cruel attempt to rob them of their national independence may yet be summarily de-

feated; and that the flagrant violation of all law, honor and justice of which the robber king of Sardinia has been guilty towards them, may meet with speedy and signal retribution.

As a specimen of the style of Government which Sardinian invasion has imposed upon the Neapolitans, and as a set off to poor Mr. Gladstone's "cock and bull" stories about "Poerio" and those "horrible dungeons," we may be permitted to quote again from the Times' correspondent; a witness who makes no secret of his Sardinian proclivities, and who cannot therefore be suspected of exaggerations, prejudicial to the intrusive regime. The writer is speaking of the treatment reserved for those Neapolitan political prisoners whom the brave Sardinians do not shoot in cold blood; he says:—

"I can guarantee it to you that on one morning, 13 persons brutally treated, under the excuse of being disaffected to the Government, were brought into the Quæstura, and on the following morning six; one of the unhappy victims has since died of his wounds."—Times' Corr.

And this is the Government which the Herald, who is moved to tears by the fictitious agonies of Poerio, lauds, and hold up to our admiration for the "freedom, security and civilisation" which it has established. From such freedom, from such security, and from such civilisation Good Lord deliver us.

With regard to that sympathy with negro slavery with which the Herald falsely taxes us, and that sympathy with the Southerners which with more reason, he attributes to the TRUE WITNESS, we need only remark that every one not a born idiot must see that the triumph of the Secessionists, and the establishment of an independent Southern Confederacy, would inevitably and speedily bring about the emancipation of the negroes. It is by their Federal Union with the North, and by that means only, that the Southerners have been enabled to preserve intact their peculiar "domestic institution." Interposing its hundreds of leagues of territory betwixt the South and the free soil of Canada, and by Fugitive Slave Laws making every inch of that territory accessible to the slave-catcher wherein to recover his runaway chattel, the North has hitherto presented an almost insuperable obstacle to a general delivery of the blacks from bondage. But with the triumph of Secession all this would be changed. The Fugitive Slave Laws would be repealed; a land of freedom would be brought into immediate contact with the land of serfdom; and the slave, ill-used by his master, would in a moment, and by crossing an imaginary line find himself for ever delivered from his shackles. Thus the Southern master's hold over his property would be weakened by the success of his arms; and his separation from the North would expose him to the danger, or rather the certainty, of losing his slaves, unless by his humane conduct he made it their interest to remain with him. Were negro slavery a system congenial to the TRUE WITNESS we should pray for the North, since the perpetuation and extension of that system is only possible upon condition of maintaining the Union of the Southern with the Northern States. If therefore to a certain extent we sympathise with the former, the consideration of Slavery neither stimulates nor represses those sympathies; but they are evoked simply by the spectacle of a brave people struggling for independence and self-government; and by our hatred of centralised despotism, towards which all democracies naturally gravitate, and which must inevitably be the result in North America of the military subjugation of the Southern States by the Yankees.

Since our last, death has removed from us one of our most highly esteemed, and generally beloved citizens of French Canadian origin, Mr. Alexis Laframboise. As a proof of the universality of the regret which his death has occasioned, we copy the following obituary notice from the Montreal Herald:—

DEATH OF MR. LAFRAMBOISE.—It is with deep regret we announce the unexpected decease, at six o'clock on Saturday evening, of Mr. Alexis Laframboise, one of the oldest and most widely esteemed citizens of Montreal. It was not until late in the afternoon of Saturday that his physician conceived him to be in any danger. But a few minutes before his death, and when in possession of all his faculties, he, having addressed a few words to those around his bed, said he felt inclined to sleep, and it was only shortly after that the physician, on approaching him with a light, found that he had breathed his last.—His disease was congestion of the lungs. Mr. Laframboise was 68 years of age. He was one of those happily constituted characters, with whom it is impossible to come into contact without loving. Liberal and scrupulously considerate in all his transactions with others, he was a man of the kindest feelings and widest sympathies. A zealous benefactor of the poor and ever ready to sacrifice his own wishes to those of his friends, he was of those who, on leaving this for a better world, have the consolation of knowing that they leave not one enemy behind. His unexpected decease created a profound sensation in our community, not only of surprise, from its suddenness—he having been out, and apparently in his ordinary hale and healthy state, only the day before his death,—but of the deepest and most sincere sympathy with the grief which his loss must have occasioned to his family and more immediate friends.

To-morrow evening at 8 o'clock, in Nordheimer's Hall, Mr. C. Heavyside will give readings from his drama of Saul, a poetic work of high merit, and which has elicited the applause of the first critics of England. The evening's entertainment will be under the patronage of the Rt. Rev. Dr. Fullford, and the Commander of the Forces. Tickets: 50 cts. to be had at Messrs. Dawson's and at the door.