

THE TRUE WITNESS

CATHOLIC CHRONICLE,

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The True Witness.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, DEC. 10, 1858.

THE MORTARA CASE.—Gradually the facts of this much talked of affair are coming to light; and every fresh revelation tends to confirm us in our original opinion, that the statements of the Protestant press thereupon are utterly unworthy of credit.

We were assured for instance that the child was dragged from its parents, and confined in a Christian College against its will. Very minute details were given of its conversation with its parents, and of its promises to adhere faithfully to the Jewish law; and our sympathies were challenged in favor of a child of tender age, taken away from its parents by force under ecclesiastical or civil authority, in order to be made the subject of a mechanical conversion. To all this we replied that the child in question was already heart and soul a Christian before ever the Roman tribunals interfered with him; and that it was certainly not against the child's will that he is now in a Christian place of education.

This our reply, made upon the faith of statements in the *Univers* and other European Catholic Journals, is now fully corroborated by the "Foreign Correspondence" of the *London Times*, a journal which cannot be suspected of any "Romish" proclivities. In that correspondence then, we find under date November 17th, the following paragraph, which we think is conclusive as to the falsity of the assertions of the Red Republican press in one important particular. The *Times*' Paris correspondent under the above date writes as follows:—

"The following letter has been received in Paris from Rome, dated the 13th instant:—I return with regret to the Mortara affair, of which I have already spoken several times. This affair appears to be about to enter into a new phase in consequence of the semi-official explanations given by the *Civiltà Cattolica* in its last number. The question of facts is there explained in all its details, and the theological question is treated *ex professo*. This article is destined to create a great sensation in the world. It will certainly serve as the basis of the discussion which cannot fail to be continued on this matter. I wished myself to examine whether all that the review asserts is true. I have seen the boy. I have interrogated him, and I must acknowledge that he declares himself to be a Catholic in his heart. He even says to every visitor that his intention is to enter the ecclesiastical state."

Here then we have the confession, reluctantly extorted—"I must acknowledge"—that the story about the application of force to compel the child to profess Catholicity is false; and that he is as we said, "a Catholic in his heart."—Perhaps, as the facts of the case are more thoroughly ventilated, it will in like manner appear that the assertions as to the application of force to the parents are equally false; and that the version of the affair as given by the *Univers* and its cotemporaries is in all essential respects the true one. At all events we have enough now before us to shake our confidence in the statements of the democratic and Protestant organs of both Europe and America.

It may be interesting to our reader to learn that they need not travel as far as Rome to find a case in almost all respects analogous to that which we have just been discussing. We have here in Montreal the case of the children of a Catholic mother, who have been torn by force from their only surviving parent, and incarcerated by sentence of our Law Courts in a Protestant Orphan Asylum, in order to be made the victims of a "mechanical conversion" to the Holy Protestant Faith. In vain has the poor mother remonstrated against this outrage upon her natural rights as a parent over her children; in vain do the children protest against the violence done to them—their sense of which they have already manifested by effecting their escape from the prison in which they are confined, and returning to their mother. The law is inexorable; and the unhappy children of a still more unhappy mother are, in order that they may be coerced into a renunciation of the Catholic faith and a profession of the Protestant heresy, torn once more from the arms of their natural and apparently legitimate guardian, and are now closely immured within the walls of a Protestant institution. These things are done in our midst, and provoke no comment; but the rumor even of an outrage not more gross, perpetrated upon a Jewish child, sets the whole Protestant community in an uproar.

We give the above case as it has reached our ears, and without any intention of arraigning the decision of our Law Courts. It is their duty,

not to make law, but to administer it; and there may well be reasons for their decision of which we are as yet ignorant. This we state, lest we be suspected of a design to prejudice a case which may yet come before the tribunals, for whose decision we feel bound to wait.

The *Montreal Gazette* of Monday last gives the following extract from a speech delivered by Mr. McDougall, and reported by the *Spectator*, as an indication of the intended policy of Mr. Brown and his political friends, on the subject of "Representation by Population," and the "School Question":—

"Representation by Population, it was said, has been abandoned by Mr. Brown. This was not the fact. Whenever members of the Brown-Dorion Ministry had spoken publicly they had always said that was one of the measures they meant to introduce, and to stand or fall by. It was true that 'checks' had been spoken of. He was quite willing to give all the checks Mr. Dorion had demanded. Of course no Lower Canadian member could vote for Representation by Population unless his constituents were guaranteed from adverse intrusion. He never asked that Lower Canada should be forced to change its institutions at the dictation of an Upper Canada majority. (Hear.) The majority of the people here were Protestant; there they were Catholic, and had sectarian institutions. Doubtless articles had appeared in leading reform journals which seemed to aim at forcing Upper Canadian institutions on Lower Canada. But this was impracticable and ought not to be carried out. When we could persuade Lower Canadians that we were right and they were wrong let them change, not otherwise. The only checks that could be introduced, therefore, were to provide that a majority from one section of the Province should not force legislation upon the other. Another subject which formed part of the Brown-Dorion policy related to the School question. He was opposed to giving public money for other than public and non-sectarian purposes. (Hear.) It was Mr. Brown's intention to have changed the existing system in accordance with this view. And it was a great achievement that the Brown-Dorion Government had laid hold of this difficult question, and discovered a basis on which it could be settled to the satisfaction of all parties. He was not prepared to state the particular enactments they propose to accomplish this object. That Government had not had time to agree upon details, but this was determined upon, that the School system of the country should be national and not sectarian. And measures were to have been taken to prevent any tampering with any one's religious feelings."

Hereupon our Montreal cotemporary addresses to us the following queries, to which we shall do our best to give plain and unequivocal answers. The *Gazette* asks us—1st—If we are prepared to accept the above programme, and thereby abandon the cause of our co-religionists? 2nd—If the TRUE WITNESS will support Messrs. Brown and McDougall in that abandonment; and allow Mr. Brown to abolish separate schools in the Upper Province?

Without offering any opinions, as to how far Mr. McDougall's speech contains a fair statement of the intended policy of the Brown-Dorion Ministry; or as to whether they ever had any well defined policy at all, beyond putting their opponents out, and getting themselves in, we can answer frankly for ourselves, that we will never support, and will always, to the utmost of our abilities, oppose, every Ministry, no matter of what men composed, that does not make justice to Catholics on the School Question a plank of its political platform, with which it is determined to stand or sink.

2. That we will never support, but will always oppose, every Ministry that attempts to impose upon the people of Lower Canada a system of representation that would imperil their autonomy; and we may as well add that we believe that, no matter with what "checks" or guarantees accompanied, the system of "Representation by Population" would ultimately prove fatal to that autonomy. "Checks," or guarantees, might indeed be engrossed upon parchment, and embodied in statutes; but in practice would prove utterly worthless to protect Lower Canada against the encroachments of an Upper Canadian majority; and for this simple reason that there would be betwixt the two sections of the Province, no third party, capable of enforcing their faithful observance. Not in what men promise to one another, but in what they can be compelled to perform, lies the only security for the weaker. Now Upper Canada, in case of its obtaining a share of the representation larger than that of the Lower Province, could give us as a guarantee for its non-interference with our right of self-government and the integrity of our peculiar institutions, nothing but its word; and we are free to admit—as the diplomatists say—that we like not the security. Our last word therefore upon this matter is—"Equality of Representation" or "Repeal of the Legislative Union." To no other alternative will we ever listen.

On the School Question we will be equally explicit. We will accept of no solution of that question as satisfactory, which does not make the fullest provision for the separate education of Catholic and Protestant children. No conceivable modification of the "common" system, no pledges, or guarantee that the faith of pupils shall not be interfered with, no uniform or national system in short, will we accept; nor will we ever cease to oppose every Ministry that does not make separate schools and the "separate" system in its integrity, a plank of its political platform. This also is our ultimatum on the School Question, from which never will we recede one inch. We may be defeated, but never will we surrender or yield one iota; never will we consent to listen even to any terms of compromise. In the mean time we will take what

we can get; but if in anything short of our full demands, we will accept of it only as an instalment of a debt due, and long unjustly withheld; and we also assure the *Gazette* that we will never cease to urge upon the Catholics of Canada the duty of agitating for their rights, and of opposing every Ministry that refuses or delays to do us justice. If therefore Mr. Brown and his party have the design, in case of their obtaining office, to maintain a common, uniform, or national system of education, as opposed to a separate system, they may be sure of the hearty, constant, and uncompromising, even though ineffectual, opposition of the TRUE WITNESS.

Lastly, we always will oppose to the best of our abilities, any and every Ministry that gives, directly or indirectly, any official encouragement to any secret politico-religious society. With these explanations we trust that the *Gazette* will feel satisfied; and that it will give us credit for being sufficiently frank and explicit in our replies to the several queries it has addressed to us.

The *Montreal Witness* quotes a well-known Protestant work, "*Seymour's Evenings with the Romanists*," to show that the number of illegitimate births in Roman Catholic countries far exceeds that of Scotland; and asks us what we "think of Rome where every third birth appears to be an illegitimate one?" according to the statistics given in the aforesaid evangelically mendacious work.

Of Rome we need scarce give our opinion; but we will frankly tell the *Witness* what we think of its authority, Mr. Seymour the writer of "*Evenings with the Romanists*"—and that is, that in our opinion he has not been surpassed for cool unblushing mendacity by any Protestant Minister, since the days of the Reverend Titus Oates, the illustrious Confessor and Martyr of Evangelical Protestantism. Entertaining therefore this opinion of him, and rejecting altogether his statistics, we do not feel ourselves called upon to refute the false conclusions which from those false principles our cotemporary pretends to deduce.

The *Witness* will however please to bear in mind that for our statistics of illegitimacy in Protestant Scotland and Sweden, we are indebted, not to the statements of "Romish" and hostile authors, but to the documents furnished us by Scotchmen and Protestants. The *Witness* cannot therefore contest their truth; for it is a universally recognised principle that every one is a good witness as against himself. Our cotemporary might justly object to an argument based upon "Romish" statistics as to Protestant illegitimacy; but when, as in every case where those statistics are cited by the TRUE WITNESS, they proceed from, exclusively, Protestant sources of information, he cannot, even if he would, refuse to accept them.

We cite those statistics, not as the *Witness* insinuates, because we "take great delight in describing the immorality of Protestant countries;" but in confirmation of our thesis that Protestantism is, by its very nature, unfavorable to the cultivation of the moral virtues of chastity and temperance by those who have the most fully adopted and consistently carried out its principles; and in refutation of our cotemporary's reiterated assertion that Catholicity in general, and the Confessional in particular, are productive of vice, and immorality.

We argue that, if the practice of Confession as enjoined by the Catholic Church, be conducive to crime, those communities and those individuals who are the most given to the practice will invariably be the most impure and intemperate; and that, on the other hand, the contrary virtues will be found to flourish there where confession is least known. Do facts, as furnished us by reliable statistics—that is by statistics which both Protestants and Catholics recognise as authentic—support this hypothesis? We insist that they do not.

In support of our position then we appeal to the statistics, not of foreign countries, but of the British dominions; not to statistics compiled by tourists or interested parties, but extracted from official documents, and given to the world by Protestant writers. We take, in short, the statistics of the comparative morality of Protestant Scotland, and of Popish Ireland, from exclusively Protestant sources; and from these statistics we show that, whilst the purity of the latter, where the Confessional is thronged, is such as to extort the reluctant praises of the English Protestant, the impurity and licentiousness of the other, where the Confessional is unknown, are universally admitted facts. Hence we conclude that, as the Scotch are not naturally, morally inferior to the Irish, the cause of their moral degradation must be looked for, not in the natural, but in the supernatural order. If the *Witness* admits our premises—that is Protestant statistics—it has no right to contest our conclusions.

For instance, how will the *Witness* reconcile the following facts, furnished to us by a Protestant, and strongly anti-Romish periodical—the *Journal of Psychological Medicine and Mental Pathology*—with its favorite thesis that Romanism is unfavorable to morality. Our extract

is from an article on "*The Moral Pathology of London*," in which, treating of the vice of great cities, and its causes, the writer delivers himself as follows:—

"There is a section of the nether class—the street Irish—which although found in the same haunts, and exposed to the same struggles for existence, and to the same temptations and vice, differs greatly in the character of its morality from the ordinary members of the class. In the heart of London the emigrant Irish preserve almost intact the peculiar traits which distinguish them in their own country. They retain in a great measure their prejudices against the English, their warm attachment to their own family, their habits of herding together and of feeding on the coarsest food, their excitable passions (which often lead them to break the law) and their ready wit and tongue. The majority of the Irish are Roman Catholics, and they keep their hold of Romanism and that blind faith in the priest, which is only found—at least in this country—amongst the most ignorant professors of that religion. But the chief moral characteristic of the street Irish as compared with the remainder of the nether class, is their freedom from wantonness.—The females retain their virtue in the deepest sinks of vice; and the testimony is general that when the Irish females do fall into immoral courses, it is from the unfavorable influences to which they are exposed by constant association with vice."

Our readers will here recognise a peculiar feature of the poorest and most Romish classes of the "*London Poor*," that was also much insisted upon by another writer upon the habits, and modes of living, of the London "*street-folk*;" and from the whole tone of the article, and its scarce concealed sneer at the "*blind faith*" of the "*Roman Catholics*," no doubt can be entertained of the writer's freedom from all partiality in favor of "*Romanism*." The facts then as stated by him—the chastity of the poor blinded Romish females, under the most unfavorable social conditions—cannot we think be disputed.

And yet if Romanism be what the *Witness* says it is; and if the influences of the Confessional be so morally deleterious—we have here one of the most extraordinary, indeed inexplicable moral phenomena on record. We have a "*Romish*" people, driven by their poverty into "*the deepest sinks of vice*" and blindly attached to a most dangerous and immoral practise (daily examination of conscience, and confession of their sins to a Romish priest), "*retaining their virtue*" whilst all around them are sunk in wantonness and impurity. We find in short the same contrast betwixt the Protestant and the Catholic, in London, as that which distinguishes the Romish females of Ireland, from the Protestant women of England, Wales, and Scotland. How comes it then, we ask the *Witness*, that if Romanism be so unfavorable to morality, we invariably find that those who are the most blindly attached to it, and most faithfully adhere to its precepts, are in spite of their ignorance on many points, in spite of their social disadvantages, and in spite of the dangers and temptations to which they are exposed, precisely those who, by the admission of Protestants, are the most remarkable for "*retaining their virtue*?" This is a phenomenon which requires to be explained; and most happy shall we be, if the *Witness* will favor us with his interpretation thereof.

Our cotemporary will see that in comparing Protestant with Catholic morality, we confine ourselves to the statistics of the British Isles; and we do so, because in the first place those statistics are easiest of access and of verification; and in the second place, because the social and external conditions of the Catholic and Protestant populations in the British dominions are very similar, any difference that may exist being in favor of the latter. We know, of course, that there is much immorality on the Continent of Europe; but we know also that it prevails mostly there, where the people are least "*Romish*," and have the most abandoned the peculiar practices of Romanism. In Paris, in Vienna, there is, of course, much debauchery; but if our cotemporary will enquire, he will find that it obtains chiefly amongst those classes who do not go to Confession, who do not approach the Sacraments, and who in short, though nominally Catholics, do most closely in their habits resemble Protestants. Now if the theory of the *Witness* were correct, the most faithful in fulfilling the precepts of Romanism, the most assiduous frequenters of the Confessional, and the most fervent communicants would be the most abandoned; whilst the indifferent, whilst those who least practised the duties of their religion would be the most pure, and remarkable for their exemplary conduct. That such is actually the case is what the *Witness* has to prove, or else he must abandon his thesis as untenable.

A friend objects to our inconsistency in asserting the validity, whilst admitting the illegality, of the baptism of the infant children of Non-Christians without the consent of their parents. "How," he asks, "can that be done validly which is illegally done?" We will endeavor to explain.

It is illegal to kill; and yet if Mr. Jones applies a pistol to Mr. Smith's head, and discharging the weapon blows the latter's brains out, Mr. Smith is validly, though at the same time illegally, killed. A jury would sit upon him and find him dead; his friends and relations, if he had any, would no doubt take advantage of the circumstances to bury him; nor would any sane person contest the validity of Mr. Smith's death, even though they might stoutly maintain its illegality. So with illegal baptisms, or baptisms prohibited, as in the case of the infant children of Jews, or other Non-Christians; the act is illegal, but if done, is valid nevertheless.

ST. PATRICK'S LITERARY ASSOCIATION.

The inaugural session of the St. Patrick's Literary Association took place on Thursday, 25th November last, in the Hall of the Association. The President, Thomas D'Arcy M'Gee, Esq., M.P., occupied the Chair—the Director, the Rev. Mr. O'Brien, at his right.

Mr. Edward Murphy being introduced to the assembly, read a paper on "Comets," which was prepared with much ability and research. He commenced by giving a short history of the most remarkable comets which have appeared in modern times; dwelling at some length on that of 1835, commonly called "Hally's Comet;" its return to the sun every 76 years, was predicted by Hally in 1682; and his computations were fully verified, by its having twice appeared since that date—namely, in 1758 and 1835; thus proving the soundness of the principles on which the astronomy of Comets is founded, and the extraordinary accuracy which has been introduced into astronomical calculations. Mr. Murphy closed this part of his paper, with some interesting remarks on the magnificent Comet which lately visited us.

After making a few observations on the physical constitution of Comets, Mr. Murphy went on to discuss the probabilities of their ever coming in collision with our earth; and proved from the mathematical calculations of Arago, and others, that of 281 millions of chances, there is but one which could produce a collision between a comet and our earth. This important calculation of probabilities should be borne in mind by alarmists and timid people. He concluded his paper by an examination of the question—Whether comets, in passing near the earth on their approach to the sun, have any influence in producing climatic changes, and other atmospheric phenomena on our globe? This question he discussed briefly; showing that, while comets can have no influence in producing the famines, pestilences, wars, and other dreadful evils, with which in former times they were charged, still that as this universe is one great whole, and all its parts bear a certain relation to one another, comets may possibly produce a certain slight effect on our globe; but what that influence may produce, has not yet been ascertained.

Mr. Murphy, at the close of his paper, expressed his regret at the shortness of the time allowed him for preparing it; as it prevented him from making diagrams of Comets, and their orbits, which would have materially assisted him in elucidating so abstruse a subject as that of the Cometary Worlds. He concluded by thanking the President for the honor conferred on him in calling upon him to prepare the first paper, read before the members of the St. Patrick's Literary Association.

Mr. John P. Kelly next came forward, and declaimed in a very eloquent manner an extract from Nott's speech on the criminality of duelling. He was loudly applauded.

Mr. Thomas J. Walsh was then introduced, and pronounced a discourse appropriate to the occasion. He commenced by alluding to the favorable circumstances under which the inauguration took place. The bright vista which it held forth—the amelioration in a social position to which we might look forward as the result. The presence of gentlemen, who had so often borne the first prizes of literary excellence;—of youth eager to enter on the same noble career;—the plaudits ready to encourage their success;—and the apologies with which experienced knowledge would cover the imperfection of their first attempts—all warranted him in accepting the most flattering anticipation which hope presented. He then sketched rapidly the advantages which the cultivation of literature confer; and allayed the fears of those who might be sceptical on that point, by bringing before them the example of the great nations of antiquity. He then continued: I must remind my juvenile associates that waving corn-fields do not here invite the sickle; that the pendant vine does not present her spontaneous gifts to be gathered; that here the Nile does not flow to leave, amidst her alluvia, the seeds of spontaneous and luxuriant vegetation. Labor must prepare an incult soil. We must submit to the toils of the spring, to gather the riches of the autumn. Ceres does not bestow her gifts on idle hands. Does not the sailor dare the tempests of the deep, and cast his frail bark to the mercy of the angry waves? When terrific death strews the field with the shattered fragments of his comrades in arms—when war puts on all the horrors of ruthless destruction, does not the soldier seek to inscribe his name on the records of the glorious at the cannon's mouth? And shall we be at liberty to choose a path for ourselves, where unwon rewards will enrich us at our request? Not so the great names of history have been won; not without days of toil and painful vigils, did Cicero ascend the Rostrum, and wield at desire the people assembled in the Forum Romanum. Where Demosthenes has written his reputation, he has written the story of his patient labors and industry. Not by supine inaction did Cujacius, Budæus, Joacim, Rheticus, Cupernicus, Ubaldi, &c., inscribe their names in the temple of fame. Literary men are not, more than others, exempt from the penalty entailed upon us by our first parents: "And in the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread." But here refreshing zephyrs will cool the parched brow, and the lofty palm and laurel will spread their shady verdure; and the lyre of Apollo, tuned on Helicon, will make our labors easy.

Here Mr. Walsh recited several beautiful passages from Horace and Cicero; expressive of the high esteem in which those authors held the pursuit of letters, and of the pleasures and advantages to be derived therefrom. He concluded, by saying:—

Gentlemen, the short duration of our session is the common property of the Association; and I will not, therefore, by unjustifiable protraction, abuse the kindness which has called me to this tribune. But certain impressions which this assembly makes on my mind, shall I express them? If so, I must say that we owe much to the venerable gentlemen who came to afford this youth their protection. We know, in the words of Mentor: "La Jeunesse est presomptueuse, elle se promet tout, et croit n'avoir jamais rien à craindre; elle se confie légèrement et sans précaution." You have sailed seas yet unknown to us; you have