HE CASTS OFF THE MASK.

Mr. Meredith Replies to Archbishop Cleary.

LONDON, Dec. 27.—Hon Mr Meredith replies as follows to his grace Archbishop Cleary:—

LONDON, Ont., Dec. 27, 1889.

MY LORD BISHOP:—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of Dec. 22 (but only through the public newspapers), and were one content with a superficial reading, it would be difficult in the mass of exhortation, instruction and fatherly admonition which it contains, and which reaches its climax when you stay for a moment the torrent of your eloquent invective to drop a sympathetic tear at the thought of the injury I have done to my cause, to recognize the handiwork of the fiery ecclesiastic who, at the last provincial general election, swept Eastern Ontario with his denunciations of the party I had the honor to lead, and exhorting—nay, commanding—those of his episcopal flock to cast their ballots against it. But it has been impossible for you to conceal entirely your true sentiments, or to hide the motive or object of your attack, else why do you speak of my agnostic friends? or why do you talk of the "ferocious bigots" of the Equal Rights association, or falsely charge me with desiring to oppress the Roman Catholic minority, or with seeking, by disgraceful methods, to catch the votes of the unthinking populace, and influence religious passion against the Roman Catholic minority of Ontario; for, mask it as you may, that is the charge which you insinuate, though you do not appear openly to make?

I can appeal to a lifetime in this community for the answer to the charge of intolerance and bigotry which you insinuate against me, and to the utterances of nearly twenty years of public life as my defence against your calumnious charge. Tried by the same test, can you ask a verdict of acquittal, on a like charge, from your fellow-citizens? I trow not. They do not, they cannot, forget the cruel, the wanton, attack, which you publicly made upon the defenseless girls and young women of Ontario; and that, too, that you might make a point against the public school system of this province. Nor can they forget the language which you thought fit to use towards your Protestant fellow-citizens when you were addressing a body of Roman Catholic gentlemen connected with an association which had its meeting not long ago in Kingston. Then, too, by what right do you speak of those who are connected with the Equal Rights movement as ferocious bigots? Such language from a politician, in the heat of a political harangue, could hardly be palliated, but what is to be said of its use by a high dignitary of a great church, not spoken but written in the seclusion of his study and when he was penning a charge of intolerance and bigotry against a public man? Think of such language as applied to the recognized leader of the movement, whose position in the church to which he belongs is as high as that of your grace in your own, and whose every utterance—while he spoke with clearness against a piece of legislation which a vast majority of his fellow-citizens, whatever view they may entertain of the constitutional question involved, join with him in condemning—was characterized by that broad liberality, generous toleration and true charity towards all men, which should pervade the utterances, not only of a Christian minister, but of a Christian gentleman.

Then how do you justify your attempt to make me an oppressor of the Roman Catholic minority, if not in act, at least in intention? I had thought that you concurred with me in deprecating the advice given to the Roman Catholic minority by the writer of the article in the *Canadian Freeman*, to which you referred in your first letter, but as your last letter seems to leave that matter in doubt, the people of the province, whom you are addressing, by means of your own choosing are entitled to know whether you do or do not approve it, and if no other good results from my correspondence with you, much good will be done to have obtained a clear definition of your view on that subject. But you say that my proposition to meet such a combination as is suggested involves the oppression of the minority. Granting your premises, I deny your conclusion, and am astonished that in the face of the declaration which I made as to the principles upon which I believed that the government of this province should be conducted, you should make such a charge. In this province the Roman Catholic minority has been treated, not merely justly, but with generosity, and if—which I do not deny—prejudice exists in some quarters against the Roman Catholics, it is, in my judgment, due mainly to the policy of the church, which forbids the youth of the country being educated together, and to a system of education which tends to separate from the rest of the community a body of its citizens by creed lines, as well as the injudicious and intemperate utterances of men on both sides, who do not know or have forgotten what civil and religious liberty means.

I have no quarrel with my Roman Catholic fellow-citizens, I have nothing to do with their religious views or opinions, and cannot be drawn into a controversy as to the merits or demerits of the dogmas or practices of their church. I am ready to give to them every right which I enjoy, and I seek to take from them none that I claim for myself, but I am not willing that exceptional privileges should be granted to them, and I protest against, and shall use my best endeavors to prevent their utilizing the party system for enabling them by means of the balance of power which it is claimed they hold to dictate their terms to political parties. As to their separate schools I have nothing to add to what I have said, except that the principle on which they, in my judgment, rest, is that their organization and support depend solely on the voluntary action of the Roman Catholic citizen; and that the state has in their creation, and for their conduct, committed to its citizens, and not the hierarchy, the management and control of them. Upon no other ground and on no other view of their true position can the existence of them, in a free country, be excused, much less defended. By the principles which I have avowed, my party and myself must be judged, and not by unjust inferences, which you, against the whole spirit of it, profess to draw from my language.

You have too long been accustomed when any question affecting—or supposed to affect—the Roman Catholic people of this province was being raised to see its public men, through fear of the cry which you are now seeking to raise against me, deterred from the efficient discharge of their duty, but I have the satisfaction of believing that, whatever effect my declaration of principles may have on my party, or myself, and it may be that your forecast of the result may prove correct (for I know the effect of the crusade you seek to preach), those principles must ultimately receive the endorsation by their votes, as they do now of the convictions, of the people of Ontario, because, as I believe, they have their foundation in the principles of eternal justice, and that without the recognition of them there can be no full development of the principles of civil and religious liberty which have done so much for humanity and for none more than for the Roman Catholic minority of the great empire of which we form a not insignificant part. I have the honor to be your grace's obedient servant,

W. R. MEREDITH.

The Most Reverend the Archbishop elect of the Diocese of Kingston, Kingston, Ont.

Archbishop Cleary to Mr Meredith.

THE PALACE, KINGSTON,
SUNDAY, 29th Dec., 1889.

To W. R. Meredith, Esq., Q.C., M.PP.:

DEAR SIR,—Last evening's mail brought me the Toronto journals containing a letter which purports to be your reply to mine published on Tuesday morning, 24th inst., in the same papers. I confess to disappointment and some degree of surprise that after four days of preparation you have failed to produce a single argument in reply to mine, and have found it necessary to substitute angry invective for reasoning, and to scamper off into the limitless regions of space, frothing and foaming with terrible agitation. I sincerely regret having been the innocent occasion of your grievous mental disturbance. But you should remember that you have been the aggressor, and mine has been simply self defence. Had you not thought fit to make a direct personal attack on me, when addressing the Liberal Conservative Association in London, you would most certainly have passed without a word of comment on my part I would have left you and your utterances to the politicans, and continued to attend to my ever-pressing official business, probably without reading your speech. If, therefore, you feel hurt, be candid enough to blame yourself.

Although your letter sets no argument before me for consideration, I take note of your eulogy of the Equal Rights Association, whose "ferocious bigotry," poured out in torrents of bubbling vitriol upon the platforms of all the cities and chief towns of the Province, is an unction of sweet odor to your soul as you stand in the centre of your grotesquely combined allies just now.

I also note your reiterated demand on me to muzzle the press when it dares to disagree with your ideas. It may be that in your mental excitement you overlooked the reply given by me to this singular demand in my letter of date 22nd inst. Wherefore let me repeat it here:—

Were I or any other prelate to exercise a rigid censorship of the press, such as you demand, on political topics or on any other than those directly bearing on faith and morals, although you would, as your letter intimates, applaud our action, many amongst your modern associates would, I am convinced, ring out their loudest denunciations against the Catholic Church and proceed to vilify her from day to day and from week to week as the very type of "despotism," the enemy of "free thought" and "modern civilization," the citadel of "obscurantism" and all else that would depreciate her before men. It nowise concerns me whether you have rightly or wrongly interpreted the naked sentence you have produced from the Kingston newspaper. You know, as well as I, that a sentence withdrawn from its antecedent and subsequent context may be plausibly presented to the public in a sense wholly foreign to the mind of the writer. Wherefore, since I have no knowledge of the context preceding or following the short sentence you extracted from the Kingston paper, I am unable to form a prudent judgment as to its meaning. Neither does it appertain to my business in any way whatever. The conductors of the paper are, I presume, able and willing to give you due satisfaction."

You are pleased to say it is a "calumny" to impute to you the "intention" of oppressing the Catholic minority of Ontario, should you ever succeed in gaining power. This sounds very strange indeed. If there be calumny in the imputation, yourself is the author of it. No words could more clearly than yours express the intention, the design, the passionate determination to oppress your 400,000 Catholic fellow-citizens in the Province of Ontario, if ever you get the power to accomplish it. The most copious division of your London speech is devoted to the multiform assertion of your purpose and the repetition of the stale old sophisms by which you strive hard to assure your modern allies that you are seriously of a mind with them in regard to it, and that they and you are excusable in making war upon the educational rights of the minority of the Province of Ontario, guaranteed to them by the Constitution equally and in exactly the same terms as to the minority of the Province of Quebec. And this, you are pleased to say, does not mean "oppression." It is oppression of the worst kind. It is oppression of the dearest religious and civil liberties of a loyal, honest, unoffending people. The Catholic parent has as much right as you, sir, to educate his child for this life and for the next in the light and warmth of religion according to his faith. He does not ask you to pay for his child's education. He pays cheerfully out of his own pocket without legal compulsion, without encouragement from the State to do so, and despite the social discouragements and deceitful artifices of political agitators ever urging him to betray his own conscience and his child's temporal and eternal interests by the divorce of religion from youthful education.

The parental right has been accorded by the God of nature; it is inalienable; no parent can surrender it to you. It is ratified with supreme sanction by the Divine Law giver of the Christian religion, who chose to be a child and, for our example, "to grow in wisdom and age and grace before God and men" under the tutelage of the earthly parents assigned to Him by His Heavenly Father. It was held and exercised by Catholic parents throughout this Province before Confederation, and before the British North America Act, and was bravely maintained against enemies more powerful than you, and was finally acknowledged by Hon George Brown and the whole body of dissentients to be an indispensable condition of peace in Ontario, and was accordingly embodied in the Act of Confederation.

The peaceful possession and free exercise of this parental right has hitherto been regarded as a sacred treasure, that makes our people feel more happy in Canada than they could hope to be in a neighboring country of brighter material prospects for themselves, but of darker surroundings for their children. Have you, sir, ever asked yourself why Annexation, so highly favored by some of your modern associates, has never been countenanced by the Catholics of Ontario as a class? It has been my business to make the inquiry, and the primary argument against Annexation always adduced has been the advantage enjoyed by parents in this country for the religious rearing of their offspring. And you would destroy this strong bond of loyalty if you could, and rob your 400,000 Catholic fellow-citizens of this priceless civil right, and then coolly turn to me and say you don't consider it "oppression." My dear sir, the same forces that have gradually dragged you down to your present depths would draw you to co-operation in still more grievous acts of oppression whensoever the exigencies of your position and the tyranny of your new masters would demand it of you. Religious persecution once begun, no one can tell where it may stop. The lessons of history on this subject are pregnant with warning. The enactors of the most infamous statutes in the penal code of the Tudors and Stuarts, that now bring a blush of shame to every Englishman's cheek, used to say, as you say to-day, that they did not mean oppression of their fellow-subjects, but only the enforcement of equal rights and the rule of conformity. Tell us not, therefore, that you are any longer the liberal-minded gentleman you formerly were; or that you are charitably disposed towards the law-abiding minority of this Province in your effort to despoil them of their religious and civil liberties; or that public justice or social peace or the good order of life among citizens, or all these together, constitute the principle and motive of your present crusade against the Catholics of Ontario. Lay your hand on your heart and you will feel it unmistakably; it is the pulse of Despair responding to the throb of Ambition.

Your "intention" to oppress and, in fact, to ruthlessly crush the Catholic minority of this Province is still more forcibly proclaimed in that part of your address to the Liberal Conservatives of London wherein you took unfair advantage of an ambiguous word written by some unknown person in a Kingston paper, and, after odiously interpreting it in a sense suitable to your purpose, hastened to charge it with astounding recklessness of aspersion upon the entire Catholic population of Ontario, and to denounce them as a body worthy of universal execration. Hear your own most awful language in reference to that fictitious charge: "Is there not great danger to the State in this solid compact of the minority?" "Danger to the State" has ever been the keynote of penal legislation. Whence the danger? From the "solid compact" of the minority. Now, sir, when you sought to influence the already excited passions of your auditory by this unworthy appeal, you knew full well—every resident in the country knew—that there is no "solid compact" among the Catholics of Ontario such as you described. It has never been heard of by friend or foe; it has not been organized, or projected, or in the remotest way suggested in public or in secret. It has existence only in the brain of your patron and preceptor, The Toronto *Mail*, which has excogitated this, and many other more wicked theories, for its own purposes of malignity against the Catholic community, and has not been ashamed to repeat it hundreds of times in the last three years. From the editor of that journal you borrowed it, and to his purposes you have striven to apply it. Your aim was to arouse all the evil passions of the fanatics that hung around the skirts of the two great political parties, and, to lash them into fury, you shouted, "Is there not great danger to the State in this solid compact of the minority? I say it is one of the dangers to modern civilization, one of the greatest evils we have to contend with in Parliamentary government." Nor yet enough. Abandoning yourself to uncontrollable fury, you "out-Herodded Herod" by your final call for vengeance upon unoffending citizens: "Both parties should cry, 'Unite, unite against a COMMON ENEMY.'" Good God! was it not the most shocking language that ever fell from the lips of a public man—a practised lawyer to boot, and a political leader of many years' standing.

Now, Mr Meredith, look me straight in the face and say, did you not signify your "intention," should the power at any time be yours, to oppress the loyal, peaceful, industrious, religious Catholic minority? If they be the "common enemy" against whom both political parties have to fight for their very existence, what can possibly result but oppression, and, if needs be extinction? If the Catholic minority be a "great danger to the State," does it not become an instant and imperative duty of the State to protect itself by depressing and oppressing them through the agency of penal enactments and divers disabilities? I take the liberty of repeating here what I wrote in this reference to you a week ago:—

Did the Hon. Mr Mercier or the leader of the Opposition in the Quebec Legislature attempt by any disgraceful method of this kind to catch the votes of the unthinking populace, and influence religious passion against the Protestant minority of Lower Canada, your innate sense of justice and fair play would then, I trow, rise up in revolt against such petty politicians' barbarity. David, the royal sinner, felt no remorse of conscience over the murder of the brave and faithful officer whose bed he had defiled, till the prophet of God appealed to the unextinguished spark of natural justice in his breast by a parable of infinitely less grievous injury done to one of his peasant subjects. Let Lower Canada be your parable.

In conclusion, let me add that the loyal Catholic minority of Ontario are not in the least perturbed by your denunciations and threats of oppression. Witness their peaceful attitude, their absolute composure under such grave provocation. They rely on the protection of the God of righteousness; on the stability of the Constitution and the fidelity of our most gracious Queen to the Royal Charter bearing her sign manual and the Royal Seal; on the sense of justice and fair play and Christian charity and public honor and social peace that animates the great Protestant majority of the electorate of Ontario in laudable rivalry of the great Catholic majority of Quebec. Three years ago they gave the world a splendid proof of their possession of these virtues, which are the solid basis of national prosperity. Why, then, should the Catholics of Ontario be alarmed today?

I remain, dear sir, yours very respectfully,

† JAMES VINCENT CLEARY,
Archbishop (elect) of Kingston.

John Lawson, who was shot near Trenton some days ago, died yesterday.

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