

AN IRISH CATHOLIC SCHOOL COMMISSIONER.

It is well known to our readers that during the last year and more, the TRUE WITNESS has taken, as in duty bound, a special interest in the important question of Irish Catholic representation in school matters. In 1893 we fought, with all the strength at our disposal, to have the rights of the Irish Catholic school-taxed people recognized in the form of due representation upon a Board that holds in its hands the important work of dispensing the moneys paid in for school purposes. Eventually, and through the assistance of our representatives, we succeeded in securing that which we asked, and that which was duly recognized by the present local government to be just and fair. Scarcely had that object been attained when a new shuffle of the cards took place. The then existing law was so amended as to necessitate the entire change of the form of representation on that Board.

It is not necessary that we should go over the whole question that has been fully threshed out, during the past summer, in the press. Suffice to say that the only Irish Catholic representative on the Board was removed under the wing of the new Act, and that the interests of the Irish Catholic element were entirely ignored. We do not purpose entering into any personalities, nor shall we make use of any names; we merely desire to express an opinion, in harmony with our former course, upon this matter. It must not be forgotten, however, that the one who was appointed as a member of that Board had scarcely time to take his seat, was scarcely able to glean an idea of the proceedings, was scarcely allowed to post himself on the questions of major importance, when his services were no longer required, when he was—not dismissed—but “superseded,” to use the words of the Honorable Provincial Secretary, in the office that he held. Without casting any reflection upon the gentleman who thus “superseded” him, we can honestly say that in no way did that gentleman—either in qualifications before his nomination or in practice since then—represent the element that he was supposed to represent. Granting him all the ability, the integrity, and the honesty of intention possible to conceive, the fact still remains that he in no way—neither by association or inclination—is calculated to fill the gap left open by the wiping out of the Irish-Catholic representative above referred to. In the next place the views of the particular element—so represented, or unrepresented—were never consulted. The opinions of the Irish-Catholic tax-payers were not asked, nor, when given, were they considered.

Last Wednesday evening, in the House at Quebec, Ald. Kennedy, who represents the most Irish-Catholic division in our province, brought the question somewhat forcibly before the government. Mr. Kennedy deserves credit for the manly stand that he took. While being elected supporter of the Government, he did not hesitate to step in when the occasion required it and to bring that same government to task for the most unjustifiable manner in which it acted towards the people whose interests he is elected to represent. Mr. Kennedy clearly pointed out the situation and asked for such legislation as would tend to rectify the great mistake that had been committed. Supported, to a certain extent, by other members of the House, both on the government and opposition sides, Mr. Kennedy boldly pushed the enquiry until the Provincial Secretary, and then the Premier, came to the rescue and sought to explain away the

action taken by the Government. Of what did that explanation consist? The Provincial Secretary hid himself behind the petty technicalities of the recently enacted amendment, and the Premier sought to show that by that amendment the Irish-Catholics had more representation than ever. In the first place they both took a false ground whereon to base their defence. Heretofore the Irish Catholics had a representative—in the person of the ex-school commissioner—who was the choice of the people, and who had their entire confidence. By the new law the representation on that Board was divided into three sections—one representing the Church, another the city and the third the people. In the section representing the people the Irish Catholic element was deprived of the representative known to that people, accepted by that people and competent in every sense to fulfil the wishes of that people. Once more, we repeat that we do not wish to reflect upon the gentleman who is supposed to be the Irish Catholic representative—all we need say is that we have heretofore clearly proven that he no more represents their interests and is no more their choice than had he been a member of any other nationality bearing, by accident, a name indicative of Irish sympathies.

It is not necessary that we should enter into a lengthy discussion in this matter, nor would it be possible for us to treat the subject in less than a dozen articles. All we wish to say—for this week—is that the Hon. Mr. Taillon's government has not done its duty by us, nor have the explanations given been satisfactory. One man—and only one of that Government—seemed to thoroughly grasp the situation, and his views were not fully ventilated—we refer to the Attorney-General, Hon. Mr. Casgrain. The motion of Mr. Kennedy, the Irish Catholic representative from Montreal, called for all correspondence in connection with this question. If this is not considered as a mere matter of form, and that the House looks upon it as a simple parliamentary proceeding in order to reach a given object, we trust that when such correspondence will be brought down, the Government will not neglect to place before the House the communications from us to the Premier, to the Hon. Commissioner of Crown Lands, to the Attorney-General, and to the Provincial Secretary, on this subject. Perchance they may cast some new light on the matter.

The fact is that Hon. Mr. Taillon and the Government—through the medium principally of the Hon. Mr. Pelletier, Provincial Secretary, hid behind the transparent mask of a poorly and miserably concocted amendment to the law. Yes, truly, on the statute book to-day that law exists. But how comes it to be there? A question that we are prepared to answer if necessity demands. But even as that law stands we hold that it is not obligatory. And the fact of it not being obligatory alone savors of some special object, apart from the general public interest, in its coming into existence. Why is it not obligatory?

Legislators should be the first to know the principles of jurisprudence. If rumor speaks truly Hon. Mr. Taillon is a most learned advocate and one deeply read in the law. If our own past experience does not fail us, the Provincial Secretary is, above all men, the one who should have by heart the most elementary principles of legislation. Surely neither one of these gentlemen will dare to state that an enactment passed by a legislature, which leaves no condition absolute to be fulfilled and leaves an option that is tantamount to the nullification

of its own effects, is other than a mere infringement on the space of the statutes, and by no means a law. The Act to which we refer, and upon which the Government has based its unmanly (excuse the term) defense, states that the members of the Board of Catholic School Commissioners shall be chosen—“in as much as possible”—from the ranks of University men. That “in as much as possible” is the clause that nullifies the Act; because “a law that is left in its application or interpretation, to the option of any persons other than the legislation, is no law, and is null and void, to all intents and purposes.”

If it is absolutely necessary we are prepared to enter into the argument of this question. For the present moment we merely desire to thank Mr. Kennedy for having brought it up, and to point out the petty subterfuge by which the Government wishes to escape its consequences. We claim that the amendment, as interpreted by the Taillon Government, is an injustice direct to our people; secondly, that the enactment behind which the Government hides is null and void in law; and thirdly, that we are, by quibbles and political exigencies, deprived of that just representation which our tax-paying Irish Catholic citizens deserve.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION.

At the request of a large number of our subscribers we reproduce this year the article which we wrote in 1892, on the occasion of the grand festival of the Immaculate Conception. Strange to say that last year we were asked to reproduce this article again, and we did so; here is the third time that it appears in our columns. In once more placing before our readers this humble tribute to the Immaculate Mother, we do so in the hope that some good may flow therefrom, and that our Catholic friends may receive a deeper impression of the grandeur of Mary, while our non-Catholic friends may learn how glorious, how noble, how sublime is the devotion that our Church pays to the Queen of All Saints. Trusting that our many correspondents will be pleased, and that our article may serve in a slight way to increase the respect, love and veneration which all Catholics should have for the Immaculate Mother of Our Lord, we give again the words penned two years ago.

In the grandest temple of the universe, in presence of the assembled Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of the world, over the spot where the Prince of the Apostles suffered martyrdom, in the heart of eternal Rome, surrounded by all the pomp and splendor of the immortal Church of Christ, seated upon the throne of the Popes, gorgeous with the accumulated dignity of ages, with every knee bending and every eye blessing the prince of one world and the prophet of another, on the eight day of December, 1854, the majestic figure of the great Pontiff, Pius IX., appeared to the eyes of the world and before the gaze of the generations, past and to come, as he proclaimed *ex cathedra* the consoling, loving, lovable dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Heretofore our reason, as well as our Faith, taught that the Mother of the Son of God must have been conceived without sin; but henceforth not only “all generations shall call her blessed,” but all the Catholic world must accept the truth of that most beautiful and most rational of all the dogma of our immortal Faith. The news reverberated among the hills and across the Tiber; the news resounded from the Adriatic eastward to Jordan, from the Pillar of Hercules westward

over the Atlantic, around the world; the words flashed back through the ages, forward through the cycles of time; the diapason struck by the Pontiff with the keys of Peter, upon the Rock of Ages, sounded away beyond the starry dome into the region of eternal glory, and the choirs of heaven joined the chorus of the universe as they chanted:

Immaculate! Immaculate! Loud swells the angels' song;
Immaculate! Immaculate! The heavenly aisles prolong;
Immaculate! Immaculate! Like lark above the sod,
The chorus wings its flight to the very throne of God.
Immaculate! Immaculate! The virgins raptured sing;
Immaculate! Immaculate! how the universe doth ring!

With Catholics we will not pause to argue the reasonableness of that splendid belief; with real Christians it is unnecessary to go into the evidence that the Divine One must have come to us through the most perfect of created beings; for the one who believes that the Saviour of men is the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, co-Eternal with the Father, it would be superfluous to bring evidence to show that His Mother must have been free from all taint of sin. From cold reasoning, on such an occasion, we turn to the unalloyed contemplation of the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, the Tower of Ivory, the House of Gold, the Comforter of the Afflicted and the Help of Christians, seated upon a throne, only a degree below that of the Eternal. Her Divine Son placing upon her brow the crown of undying glory, and her purity, like a jewel of untold value, glistening, radiating, flashing the scintillations of its perfection and matchless brilliancy upon the chancel of Heaven, and “like the light that left the distant stars ten thousand years ago,” stealing through infinite space and lending to frail humanity the less intense but yet wonderful aid of its sheen, to guide the race of man through all the darkness of sin and all the blackness of temptation, safely to God.

Such is the picture that all Catholics should contemplate upon this great festival! Painted with the pencil of the imagination upon the canvass of the mind, and lit with the perfect light of Truth, that grand fresco of Faith should hang in the gallery of the soul, and the heart should kneel before it, to admire, love, and adore; admire the beauty of Mary's perfection; love her as our Mother for all the graces she ever obtains for us; and adore the Creator in gratitude for the boon of such a resplendent creation as that of the Blessed Virgin.

Let Masses be sung and hymns resound; bring out all the beauty and splendor of the Holy Sacrifice; let flowers adorn the altar, and let censers fling their wreaths of vapor around the deep-pealing organ; it is a feast when all humanity should rejoice, and join with all pure created beings in their hymns of jubilation.

“Triumphant the Church, all thy glory revealing;
Militant, the Church is wrapped in thy fame;
Suffering the Church, all thy bounty is feeling,
Mary, we hail thy Immaculate name!
Pius, our Pontiff King,
Unveils the Jewelling,
Gloriously set in thy bright diadem;
Mary, thy Holy Face
Mirrors the Saviour's grace,
Mary, our pure, our Immaculate gem!”

May this grand dogma of our Faith be a means of bringing thousands into the fold of Christ, as it has already attracted many to the Faith of Ages. And on this eighth of December, may all our readers rejoice, may they participate in the heavenly joys of that great day, and may Mary, conceived without sin, shed the rays of her maternal love upon their earthly path and guide them to the home of the blessed that surround her throne in Heaven.