

The True Witness

AND
CATHOLIC CHRONICLE,
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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 1871.

ECCLESIASTICAL CALENDAR.

FEBRUARY—1871.

Friday, 24—St. Matthias, Ap.
Saturday, 25—St. Peter's Chair at Antioch (22nd).
Sunday, 26—First of Lent.
Monday, 27—Of the Feria.
Tuesday, 28—Of the Feria.

MARCH—1871.

Wednesday, 1—Ember Day. Of the Feria.
Thursday, 2—Of the Feria.

REGULATIONS FOR LENT—All days of Lent, Sundays excepted, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday included, are days of fasting and abstinence.

The use of flesh meat at every meal is permitted on all the Sundays of Lent, with the exception of Palm Sunday.

The use of flesh meat is also by special indulgences allowed at the one repast on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays of every week from the first Sunday of Lent, to Palm Sunday.—On the first four days of Lent, as well as every day in Holy Week, the use of flesh meat is prohibited.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The French Assembly has organised a Provisional Government for France, which received immediately formal recognition from the British, Austrian, and Italian ambassadors. A Ministry has been formed with M. Jules Favre as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The armistice has been prolonged to the 1st of March, and will it be confidently expected be followed by a peace. There is of course, especially in the South of France, a strong party opposed to any cession of territory; but peace upon any terms, seems to the majority of the people preferable to prolonging a hopeless struggle, which can only result in fresh disasters, and provoke the conquerors to exact harder terms. France may have yet some 350,000 men under arms; but for the most part they are badly equipped, badly disciplined, without confidence in their leaders, and altogether unfit to cope with the vast, well organised veterans of Germany, flushed with triumph, full of faith in themselves, their officers, and their cause. The probabilities are therefore at present altogether in favor of peace with the German Empire.

Then, and then only, will the real difficulty present itself. The cessation of foreign war, in the actual temper of France, is likely to be the signal for the breaking out of a civil war. The South of France is ripe for revolution, and the cession of territory which seems inevitable will precipitate the crisis. As yet we see no signs of a formation of a permanent government. The Orleanists have perhaps the best chance, but the extreme republicans will have a word to say in the matter. No one can foresee what may occur, but the internal prospects of France are gloomy in the extreme. Louis Napoleon has had a hint given him by the Prussian Government not to write proclamations, or dabble in French politics.

The opposition offered in many quarters to the giving a dowry out of the public purse to the Princess Louise on occasion of her approaching marriage with the Marquis of Lorne is a sign of the waning popularity of the Queen, and of the growth of an anti-monarchical sentiment amongst the democratic classes. In spite however of this opposition, the money has been voted unanimously by the House of Commons. Mr. Gladstone has met with another snubbing from Count Bismarck, who has refused to receive the letter from Earl Granville of the 20th ult., offering some suggestions as to the course which Prussia should pursue in her treatment of France. M. Bismarck gives the world to understand that his Government is not prepared to tolerate the interference in any manner of the neutral Powers.

No important business has as yet been transacted in our Provincial Parliament at Ottawa.

The Address in reply to the Speech from the Throne, in allusion to the Fishery Question, takes the ground that Canada has never transgressed her legal rights, or pushed her claims in an unfriendly spirit. The annexation of British Columbia will furnish an important topic of discussion; as one of the conditions of that union, a railroad across the North American continent is to be commenced within two years, and to be finished within ten, after the act of union is accomplished—said road to be commenced at both ends simultaneously.

The latest telegrams inform us that the armistice is not to be prolonged beyond Thursday; that if on that day the preliminaries of peace be not accepted by the French Government, active hostilities will be resumed, and that on Friday the Germans will march into Paris.—The terms are Alsace and Lorraine, with a war indemnity of £280,000,000. The sum is perhaps exaggerated. The marriage of the Princess Louise is to take place on Tuesday, 21st prox.; that day is selected, we suppose, by way of showing how little the Court sympathizes with the High Church Anglicans, who, in accordance with old Catholic usage, profess to regard Lent as a season, not of festivities, but of mourning, and austerities.—The rumor gains ground that the United States intend to insist upon the withdrawal of the British flag from this Continent, in settlement of the Alabama claims, and that the High Commission about to meet at Washington will adopt this mode of procedure. There is not, however, anything official, and we give the rumor for what it is worth. Sir J. A. Macdonald stated that it was probable that the Joint High Commission would be called upon to consider the claims of the Dominion upon the United States, arising out of the Fenian raids.

INFALLIBILITY.—There are two theories—the Protestant theory, and the Catholic theory—with respect to infallibility. According to the Catholic theory, every man is fallible except the Pope, to whom under certain circumstances, God in His merciful regard for His Church, grants a supernatural immunity or protection from error, on questions of Christian faith, and Christian morals. This is the Catholic theory of Infallibility.

The Protestant theory is the very reverse; it is briefly this: That every man—being a non-Catholic of course—is infallible; or that every one is infallible except the Pope.

It is in short a self-evident proposition, self-evident at least to every one not a natural idiot, that every one who, calling himself a Christian, rejects the authority of the Church on matters of faith and morals, must be either a believer in his own personal infallibility, or else a sceptic. For if he entertain the slightest doubts or misgivings as to his own infallibility, he must doubt, or entertain misgivings as to the truth of the conclusions to which the exercise of his private judgment has led him; and if he entertain such doubts he is a sceptic—that is to say "one who doubts." And if he entertain no doubts as to the perfect accuracy of his private judgment on matters of faith and morals, then he must believe himself to be, on those matters at least, infallible; that is to say, all that Catholics predicate of the Pope, speaking *ex cathedra*, and addressing the Church Universal.

Amongst the intelligent classes of the Protestant community the sceptics are in an overwhelming majority; indeed it may be said that all educated Protestants are sceptics, who have seriously addressed themselves to the consideration of the great religious questions, and asked themselves—"why should I assume that my religious views are the truth, when those of my neighbor—who is as honest and as intelligent as I can pretend to be, and who has access to all the same means of information as those which I have access to—are so widely different, not to say contradictory?" We repeat it: all Protestants who in a modest spirit—that is who do not believe themselves to be infallible—approach the domain of dogma, are sceptics—that is to say they will never be too sure about anything. They will neither deny positively, nor affirm positively. If pressed for an opinion they will say that it is not given to man to know anything in the supernatural order with certainty; that the utmost that can be attained to in religious questions is a high degree of probability: That Christ, may, or may not, be God; that he may, or may not, have been conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of a pure virgin; that the Gospel writers who assign to him a supernatural origin could have known nothing of themselves about the matter; that they may, or may not have been inspired; but—and this only is certain—that there is no conclusive proof of their inspiration, if the testimony of a corrupt Church, which has also proclaimed the Pope to be, in certain circumstances, infallible—be inconclusive; that there may be, or may not be, a resurrection of the body, and a judgment to come; an eternal heaven or an eternal hell. In short with the modest Protestant, conscious of his liability to err, all religious dogmas

resolve themselves into a "great may-be." Only the shallow, conceited Protestant dares to be positive on matters supernatural. Though he may not say so explicitly, he implies that he is infallible; and he will often, most revolting of all, lay claim to the possession of an inward light or assurance, which gives him immunity from all error, and makes clear to him the darkest passages of Scripture. He rejects of course as blasphemous the proposition that the Pope is infallible; but the same peculiar privilege he challenges for himself, and for those who agree with him.

FAIR FRANCE.—By the Author of John Halifax, Gentleman, &c.; Messrs. Dawson Bros., Montreal.

This is a charming little volume—charming to every body from its style, and to the Catholic especially charming from the topics of which it mainly treats.

Miss Mulloch, the writer, is a very Protestant lady, naturally of strong anti-Romanist and anti-Ritualistic proclivities, who, in the years 1867 and 1868 visited France, and, on her return home, sat down at her desk to give the public the "impressions of a traveller." The result is the work before us.

The novel scenery, the social life, so different from that of England, which Miss Mulloch beheld in France, are all beautifully described,—but with these we have nothing to do. That which most interests the Catholic in this little work, is the record of the startling, indelible impressions made upon the writer by the aspect of the religious life of Catholics, with which, in France, for the first time Miss Mulloch became acquainted. This side of French existence she was never weary of contemplating; Catholic churches seem to have exercised over her a strong overpowering attraction; the fascinations of a Cathedral she could not resist; and above all, the strange sight of people praying, yes, actually praying themselves, and not being prayed at, or prayed to, as is the custom in the places of worship which in England she had frequented, struck her as something so novel, so unaccountable, that she is never weary of putting on record the phenomenon. For the first time presented to her in a Catholic church.

On the very first morning after her arrival in Paris she hastens to attend Catholic worship, which happened to be an early Mass in the Church of St. Roch, Rue St. Honore—the very first Catholic Church she had ever entered in her life:—

"Nothing can be more opposed to our English devotional idea than this French Church," not merely because of its decorations and architecture, but because of the demeanor of the people therein hearing Mass, before going forth to their daily toil:—

"These latter, all kneeling, and absorbed every one of them, in an intensity of devotion that there is no mistaking, and which cannot possibly be pretence, affect us most of all. . . . But in many of our churches nobody attempts to pray at all. In Scotland they stand still and are prayed to. In England they sit still and are prayed for. Now these people—(Papists)—old and young, rich and poor, come into the churches, and kneel down and pray for themselves."

Being Passion Week, the devotees were chiefly dressed in mourning; some very richly in silks and velvets; some in black gowns, evidently improvised for the occasion out of shabby wardrobes; and some of the very poorest made no attempt at all; they came just as they were in their daily rags.—p. 17, 18.

And yet there they were, all alike praying. The shabby washerwoman in scant and seedy attire, kneeling side by side with the high born dame, each unconscious of the other's presence; both conscious—but conscious of naught besides—of Him Who deigns to abide with us in the ever Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; adoring Him in loving adoration; laying bare to Him their hearts, their sins, their sorrows; casting at His feet the burden so hard to be borne, and asking for strength from on high to bear it; to take up their daily cross, and to follow Him—though with aching hearts, and with lacerated feet up the jagged side, and thorn strewed slopes of Calvary—no matter—so that step by step, and day by day, they might but draw nearer to Him, their God. Yes! There they were these benighted Papists, each with the unmistakable mark of the Beast on his, or her face, praying, actually praying!!!

This was the first impression made upon our "Protestant Traveller," and the more she saw of Catholic Churches and Catholic worship, the more was she impressed, the more was she astounded at such a novel, and to her inexplicable phenomenon. "Whenever we saw a church-door open" says the writer "we went into it; rested from fatigue in its cool shadows, and studied life—lay and clerical—from the numberless points of view it afforded us."—p. 27.

Some of these studies we will give our readers the benefit of. It is the afternoon of Holy Thursday:—

"In addition to this stationary congregation within, a large ambulatory one was perpetually circulating in the outer area, or praying in the little chapels. A crowd, most conglomerate in character, rich and poor 'meeting together,' as if they really believed that 'the Lord was the maker of them all.' Here, for instance, was an old, a very old woman, yellow as parchment, her nose and chin meeting like a witch's, her shabby clothes hanging round her shrunk shape as if upon a scare-crow, and her skinny hands clutching the dirty, tattered breviary that was almost dropping to pieces, leaf by leaf;

while beside her, so close that the velvet mantle rubbed against the ragged shawl, knelt an elderly lady, dressed in the extreme of fashion, praying out of a splendid gold-embossed prayer-book. Yet the expression of both faces ('the mark of the Beast') was strangely similar in its intense absorption, its entire singleness of devotion."—p. 29.

On the other hand our traveller was very painfully impressed by the sad sight of a woman going into a confessional, and kneeling down before a Priest. "I should like to have gone up to the young woman" and pulled her out of the confessional. In fact, like many other English Protestant ladies, Miss Mulloch considers that "the two most obnoxious points in the Roman Catholic Church are, the celibacy of the clergy, and the system of the confessional."—p. 30. Towards pictures, and sculptures, provided their artistic execution be good, she is indulgent; and she can speak of them with a glimmer of intelligence, and of Catholic truth, most rare, and most delightful in a Protestant:—

"There are" she says speaking of the interior of St. Roch, "for instance, in a chapel at the eastern end two groups, somewhat above life size, of the Crucifixion and the Entombment, startlingly vivid in their conception, and very fine in their execution—especially the first one. The Saviour lies prone—extended on the as yet unlifted cross, to which two soldiers are in the act of nailing, one a hand, the other a foot. Both pause, as if appealing to the centurion standing by, 'must we do this thing?'—but the Christ speaks not at all. Infinite submission is written on His face. And I think even a staunch Protestant—knowing how hard is this lesson, which we must all learn after him—might stand and gaze at the figure, lying so still and white in the sacred silence of the early morning, and accept from it a mute sermon, as good as many an anti-papal thunderbolt fulminated from some pulpits I could name."—p. 39.

On Sunday she hears 8 a.m. Low Mass in the same church:—

"I found at St. Roch, early as it was, not much past 8 a.m., a considerable congregation—in fact, two distinct congregations, assembled before the two principal altars, at each of which was going on the *basse messe*, which every priest is bound to celebrate once a day. These who attended it were chiefly the better order of working people, though there were some very poor—poorer than any of the folk who venture into our churches on Sunday: but here they are not afraid. There was also a large sprinkling of Sisters of Charity, paying their religious devotions before entering on their day's work of practical service—how hard, and how nobly done, probably none could judge except a Sister of Charity."

"One of them, which happened to be close beside me, will rest on my memory for years. She was quite a girl, certainly not five and twenty, with features correct as a piece of statuary. I never saw a lovelier outline of mouth, cheek, and chin, melting rosy down into a throat that was absolutely perfect in color and form. And the expression—so still, so absorbed, as she knelt utterly unconscious of my gaze, counting her beads with fingers that, in spite of the injury of hard work, were still finely shaped; through 'aristocratic' hands—Raffaello would have made her into a Madonna at once! One could not help thinking, Who was she? what was her history? Could any great anguish have awakened this religious ecstasy, which had led her to resolve to be nobody's wife, nobody's mother, but to spend her life in the incessant, often repulsive labors of a Sister of Charity?"—p. 100, 101.

Here we see how impossible it is even for the least prejudiced of Protestants to form an idea of the Catholic inner life. They cannot conceive, even, of the motives which prompt so many Catholics of both sexes to devote themselves to the Lord. What "great anguish" has driven them to this? Nay! Nay: not a "great anguish," but a great love; a burning intense love for Him Who for their sakes was made man, it is that does this; a love which deems no sacrifice too great for Him Who first loved them; Who weary, and a-thirst, went forth to search for them in the wilderness whither they had gone astray; Who, tenderly carrying them on His shoulders, brought them back to the fold; Who in return for this love, was scourged, spat upon, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross; and Who has promised to every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children for His name's sake, that He will be unto them as father, and as brother, and will give them everlasting life. This love is it, not earthly disappointment, that peoples the cloister, and that peoples heaven; that makes the incessant labors of the Sister of Charity not repulsive, but a delight, because truly a labor of love.

But our space is limited, and we must conclude our notice of this very agreeable volume; commending it as we heartily do to the perusal of all who care to study the impressions made upon the Protestant mind by the phenomena of Catholic worship.

THE REPUBLIC.—From the manner in which the elections have gone on, the tone of the press, it is generally expected that a Republic, with M. Thiers for President will be proclaimed. The contest, if contest there is to be, will be betwixt the moderate Republicans, and the advocates of so-called Constitutional Monarchy, under a Prince of the Orleans family. The Emperor is nowhere; and the elder branch of the Bourbons is no better placed.

What is a Republic? wherein does it essentially differ from the so-called Constitutional Monarchy? are questions that naturally suggest themselves. Strictly speaking a Republic, or Commonwealth—we prefer the English to the Latin word—is any State whose Government holds from God, through the people, and is exercised for the common good or weal of those subject to it: and in this sense it matters nothing whether the title of the Chief

Executive be that of King, or President. In this sense, the true sense of the word, Great Britain under Queen Victoria is just as much a Republic as are the U. States of North America under President Grant. The only reason why one is called a Republic and the other a Monarchy that we can see is this:—That in the first named, the office of Chief Executive is held for life and is hereditary; whilst in the other it is held for a term of years, and is elective. But if the word Monarchy implies "one man power," the country ruled by the President is certainly the more Monarchical of the two, President Grant has more political power than has Queen Victoria.

Now in the case of France, whether the popular vote be cast in favor of a Republic with M. Thiers as President, or for a Constitutional Monarchy with a scion of the House of Orleans as King—the office of Chief Executive will be elective, and not hereditary; and the only difference betwixt the Republic and the Orleans Monarchy will be, that in one case the said office will be held for a term of years, and in the other theoretically for life; in both cases however, the Chief Executive office holder will be liable at any moment to be deposed by a plebiscite, or revolution.

After all then, whether France call herself a Republic, or a Monarchy; whether M. Thiers, or an Orleans Prince discharge the functions of Chief Executive—the practical difference will be but small; and in so far as there should be a difference the advantage would be on the side of the Orleans regime. France cannot stand constantly recurring elections for the head of the State; such elections would keep her constantly in hot water, as the saying is; and though it is not probable that either King or Emperor in the present social condition of France would be able to transmit his crown to his son, or to establish an hereditary dynasty, yet as he would probably hold his office for life, the country would enjoy a longer respite from the political fever, and the dangers of a contested election.

It is not however, so much the political, as the social future of France that should occupy our attention. There is, especially in the large cities, the centres of intelligence, and amongst the artisan classes, a very large and very influential party who advocate the most advanced Communistic theories, and who are determined to carry these theories into practice, no matter at what cost.

For these men—men of faith who believe in Rousseau and Marat; men of action, be it also remembered, and who do but bide their time, the words "Charter, Constitution, Civil and Religious Liberty," have no charm. They care for none of these things, or rather they look upon them as a positive hindrance to their designs. Absolutism, or a political order based upon the assumption that the individual has no rights, and that the Family, that Property are evils to be abolished ere the new era of Communistic Fraternity can be inaugurated—is the only political order which these men favor, as under no other form than that of a pure despotism could their theories have any chance of being carried out. In short the only political machinery that they look upon with a favorable eye is the guillotine.

Dread of the ascendancy of this party, and not love for the man or his corrupt regime now passed away, was it that secured for Louis Napoleon his eighteen years of rule; and procured for him the support of so many wise and good men who saw in the second Empire, bad as it was, the only barrier to the ever advancing wave of Communism. With the army at his back, and the prestige that attaches to the commander of half a million of disciplined soldiers, Louis Napoleon was able to repress or keep down the dreaded monster, which can be ruled and kept in subjection only by a rod of iron. That rod is now broken; the army will not, for some years at all events, not until it shall have vindicated the ancient military glory of France, enjoy any thing like its former political prestige; and we may well be permitted to doubt whether either Constitutional Republicanism, or Constitutional Monarchy will long be able to prevent the outbreak of another Revolution, which shall aim, not at dynastic, not at political changes of any kind, but at an entire destruction of all existing social usages. The Family far more than the State, is what Communism abhors.

ADDRESS TO THE SOVEREIGN PONTIFF.—The address, and contributions from the English speaking Catholics of Montreal were forwarded on the 10th inst.; care of course being taken that the money should not fall into the hands of any of the members of Victor Emmanuel's government, by whom it would undoubtedly be stolen. The sum amounted to \$2,788.

ARCHBISHOP OF QUEBEC.—The consecration of Mgr. Taschereau Archbishop elect of this Province will, if the Bulls from Rome arrive in time, take place on Sunday the nineteenth of next month, that day being the Festival of St. Joseph.