

THE MEREDITH JUDGMENT

Comparatively few of our readers are very much interested in the Meredith judgment in so far as it is limited in its application to the local situation which affects the schools of the city of Ottawa. Very few newspapers, however, reproduced textually Mr. Justice Meredith's judgment. The summaries which were published generally stated that the learned judge said that the Ontario Legislature might abolish Separate schools altogether. This bald statement, though it might be justified by certain sentences torn from their context, is entirely misleading.

Assuming that the intelligent reader has before him the text of the judgment which we published last week, we shall proceed to show that the fears aroused by such misleading summaries are entirely groundless.

The clauses in the British North America Act which give, with certain limitations and reservations, to the provincial legislatures the power exclusively to legislate with regard to education, do not oblige them to maintain any system of State schools whatsoever. If the Ontario Legislature were to decide that it would not maintain State schools at all, then the Separate schools, which are part and parcel of the State system, would disappear with the disappearance of the system of State schools. This is the opinion of the learned judge. But he immediately adds, "This is out of the question." It is merely an academic consideration of a question raised by those who exaggerate beyond reason the rights of parents in education.

While not pretending to any competence in matters which pertain to the technical interpretation of the law, this opinion seems to be entirely in accord with cold common sense. And when properly understood, the legal phraseology of the judge's learned decision covers a whole lot of what those who make no pretence of being learned in the law would call cold common sense.

When we come to the question of just what is the status of Separate schools we shall find that it is based entirely on the assumption of a system of State schools. No State schools, no Separate schools.

Now let us get back to the rights of parents with regard to education. Mr. Belcourt's contention based on parental rights goes to the unqualified extreme. And extremes meet. The extremist with regard to the rights of the State meets the extremist with regard to parental rights on grounds equally untenable.

The State, as well as the parents, has its rights and duties in the matter of education. Just now we are not concerned with defining the limits of either. But it should never be forgotten that the whole question of the Catholic claims in respect of parental rights, is based on the assumption, or perhaps we should say, the concession that the State also has certain rights as well as duties with regard to education.

In so far as it is expressed or embodied in the Separate Schools Act of 1868, the rights of the State are acknowledged quite as freely as those of the parents.

Advocates of State rights are restrained just now by the consideration of the fact that Germany goes to the extreme in such claims. And we unreservedly condemn such pagan deification of the State. While we condemn without reserve the extreme claims of the German State we feel a natural reluctance in asserting precisely those German claims in the matter of education. On the other hand Mr. Belcourt

evidently has never read authoritative Catholic statements of the rights of the State. Catholics concede State rights. But they do not concede such rights as in Turkey and the State of Utah might be claimed by the State in matters pertaining to education.

With regard to the teaching of French it is quite possible for Orange-men and Catholics to agree. In the long run under our system of government it is the opinion of the people that ratifies or rejects any law or regulation of the government, and the natural sense of justice and equity together with the fact that English-speaking Catholics are dispersed throughout every constituency of Ontario is our best guarantee that legislation and regulation will be just and reasonable.

The whole principle of the Separate Schools Act of 1868 assumes and concedes the rights and duties of the State in the matter of education. Therefore we are not surprised to find that there is a clause in that act which concedes unreservedly the right of the Department of Education to make regulations which shall govern both Public and Separate schools. This is rightly invoked to justify Regulation xvii. Regulation xvii cannot be set aside as being in contravention of parental rights.

Nevertheless we cannot concede that any and every regulation is in keeping with the spirit of the clause which concedes Governmental regulation of Separate schools. The latter kills the spirit and gives life. It could easily happen that an untowardly administrator, taking literally and unfairly the meaning of this clause, might kill the whole spirit by adhering to the letter. The cure for all such exaggeration lies in the democratic form of our Government. Whether the interests affect Public or Separate schools the Government officials are the servants of the people. We expect, and we have a right to expect, that the spirit rather than the letter shall govern in the formulation of all regulations.

Just as soon as any individual official gets away from the democratic ideal he is likely to get into a position which, though it may be justified by the literal interpretation of the law, is contrary to its spirit, and subversive of all real democratic control.

There are, perhaps, other features of the Meredith judgment that call for comment; but we shall await the requests for explanation which we know will be forthcoming if explanations are necessary.

A Protestant lawyer made the remark in our hearing that the judgment in question lacked the clearness that usually characterized Justice Meredith's decisions.

More intimately concerned than he could possibly be we feel no hesitation in saying that we find Mr. Justice Meredith's decision marked by unusual clarity of judgment and lucidity of expression. And while we surrender no jot or tittle of the right of the people to demand explanation and justification of all educational regulations we find the judgment of Mr. Justice Meredith eminently satisfactory.

Quite to the point in so far as it affects the agitation against the laws and regulations of the Ontario Government, is the learned judge's distinction between those who make laws and regulations and those whose duty it is simply to interpret them.

In view of the uneasiness felt by many with whom we have spoken we shall be glad to answer any questions which may be suggested by the much discussed Meredith judgment.

ROMANIA

"Jur de pazi legile Roumaniei, d'a mantine drepturile sale si integritatea teritoriala."

Romania is a young country. Carlos or Charles its first king, is only recently dead: his wife, under the name of Carmen Sylva, is known to many of our readers. Those who have a speaking acquaintance with Latin, French or Italian will be able to read the sentence at the head of this article which in modern English runs something like this: "I swear (Juro) to respect Roumania's laws, to uphold her rights, and to preserve her territorial integrity."

Racially and linguistically the Romanians form a Romanic island in a Slavonic ocean. Small, wiry, alert, the Romanians stand out in striking contrast with their large-bodied, heavy and phlegmatic Slav neighbors, including the Bulgarians.

If we indicate the difference between Roumanians and their neighbors who surround them on every side it is not a reflection on the intelligence of our readers. For the last Canadian Census groups together Bulgarians and Roumanians. As well might Italians be bracketed with Swedes.

This is the first thing to be learned about the Roumanians. During the first century after Christ the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire were frequently ravaged by incursions of powerful barbarian tribes. In 101 A.D. Trajan in person led a large army against the Dacians and conquered their country. To protect the Eastern border of the Empire against incursions of the teeming millions of the East the Romans created a large military settlement in Dacia on the lower reaches of the Danube. The modern Roumanians or Romans are the descendants of these colonists.

This world-war is teaching us geography. But a little knowledge of history, also, is necessary to correct the coarsely misinformation that our newspapers are daily handing out. This is our justification for giving encyclopedic information with regard to Roumania.

Just now the Balkan situation is the centre of interest in the world-war. Apparently the only hope of the Allies in this war theatre lies in Roumania. Our papers tell us that she is, and has been for many months on the point of joining the Allies against the Germanic powers. A little knowledge of Roumanian history will enable us to give such war gossip its proper place.

Since so much rubbish is handed out with regard to Bulgaria, in spite of the fact that Bulgaria was the central figure in the war of the Balkan allies against Turkey so late as 1912 and the victim of the treachery of her allies in the war of 1913, it may not be out of place to recall something of recent though not very remote Roumanian history.

So late as thirty years ago Roumania's ambition was to become the Belgium of Eastern Europe depending for its national existence on international guarantees. Though even then some dreamers looked forward to complete self dependence and national expansion.

A glance at the map will show the important strategic position of Roumania commanding the lower reaches of the Danube and separating Russia on the one hand and Austria Hungary on the other from Bulgaria and Turkey. In the earlier stages of the war Roumania's participation on the side of the Allies might have enabled Russia to continue her victorious offensive or at least prevented its turning into the subsequent series of disastrous defeats.

From what has been said it will be seen that the Roumanians have no racial affinity with either Russia or Bulgaria. They are a Romanic people, akin to the Italians and French; but their kinship with these will probably weigh lightly compared with their national interests which are remote from those of their relations amongst the Allies.

Prince Charles (later King Charles) Roumania's first ruler, having established order and discipline, and reorganized the army, offered his aid to Russia in 1877 in the Russo-Turkish war. This was haughtily refused and Charles was told that his country could only exist under the shadow of the Russian armies. A few months later, when Turkey had beaten Russia to her knees at Plevna the help so contemptuously refused was eagerly sought. The Russian army was in desperate straits and it is no exaggeration to say that it was saved by the Roumanians from defeat, and perhaps from annihilation. The Czar's parting words to Prince Charles were: "Les Roumains peuvent dans l'avenir compter en toute occasion sur mon sympathique et puissant appui." In spite of this however the Roumanians were excluded from all participation in the peace conference of San Stefano, refused territorial compensation, and the next year were obliged to cede Bessarabia to Russia in order to avoid war with her powerful and ungrateful neighbor; which impelled Lord Beaconsfield to say to the Roumanian minister "En politique l'ingratitude est souvent le prix des meilleurs services."

In March, 1880, Prince Charles wrote to Bismarck:

"Owing to her geographical position, Roumania is destined to play an important part in the settlement of the Eastern Question, and as she is the defender of the mouths of the Danube, the greatest German river, German and Roumanian interests tend to become closely united. We sincerely desire to support the interests of Germany, especially as such action is in harmony with our economic development. Consequently, it will be the aim of my Government carefully to promote the valuable relations with the German Empire, and I hope that my country may count upon the benevolent support of Germany in all future contingencies."

With Austria Hungary, also, relations became cordial and intimate. Roumania's foreign policy was modelled on that of England. Just as England bent all her efforts to maintain "the balance of power" in Europe, Roumania's sole desire was to maintain the balance of power in the Balkan Peninsula.

The downfall of Turkey two years ago marked the beginning of great ambitions in the Balkan States which now with some degree of justice regard themselves as nations. With this glimpse of Roumanian history it will be easy to discount the press despatches which tell of Roumania's imminent entrance into the war on the side of the Allies.

The present situation and the future, so far as may be divined at present, give no ground for any such hope but ample reason to fear that when Roumania strikes it will be on the side of the Central powers. This is the course that her national interests dictate. Had the Allies succeeded or had they still a chance of success in the Balkans then Roumania's weight would be thrown into the scale on their side.

NEUTRALS

Long ago Christ laid down this principle: no man can serve two masters. Suppose we had been amongst the crowd who heard Him enunciate this principle would we have dared to challenge it? And yet, how many of us do challenge it in every day life? Although we have been warned that we are not of the world, do we not strive to discover a via media; do we not exercise our ingenuity in endeavoring to see how far we can conform to the spirit of the world without entirely denying our Catholic faith? Have we not a cowardly fear of the world's opinion, and a shrinking from its disapproval?

No man can serve two masters. But are we not attempting the impossible when we refuse to give ourselves whole heartedly to the service of God? Is not the Church's minimum the maximum of our effort? Do we not anxiously seek out what is of obligation, and then weigh and measure even the obligatory things to discover how little will be enough? As a natural consequence our faith is a poor, stunted growth, a winking that goes down before the first wind of temptation.

Although it may seem like a paradox, nevertheless it is true that in order to do the things that are of obligation we must do a great deal more. The time will come to all of us when even the obligatory duties will prove irksome. It is then that the generous exercise of our faith will prove a safeguard. The private devotions that we have loved and practiced will ensure our safety when the enemy brings up his legions for the attack. In order to carry the citadel by assault he must first capture the outer defences. He may succeed in carrying a trench or two, but by that time we are thoroughly aroused and on our guard. But if we have no outer defences—if we have never aimed at doing more than the minimum, then it may happen that when he comes to attack us he may find us off our guard.

More attendance at Sunday Mass, and a Communion two or three times a year, will never build up a robust Catholic faith. And yet many Catholics, and especially many Catholic young men, never have any ambition to do more. They are always too busy to find time to come to Vespers. The various devotions seldom find them in their places. The First Friday Communion makes but little appeal to them. They are ashamed to be considered pious. Despite the Saviour's warning, they are trying to serve two masters. They want to get to heaven with the least possible amount of trouble. They are courting disaster. They are attempting the impossible. They are trying to be neutral in the eternal warfare between Christ and the world.

COLUMBA

Let us never voluntarily dwell upon the faults of others when they present themselves to our minds; instead of dwelling on them let us at once consider what there is of good in these persons.—St. Teresa.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

ARE WE near the end of the world? That is a question which has been profoundly exercising many minds for the past sixteen months and which may exercise them still more profoundly as this great war over. There are those who read into current events fulfillment of prophecy and who see in the "distress of nations" and in the "great tribulation" which has come so emphatically upon some of them, those signs or indications which are to preface the great dissolution.

BUT LEAVING aside the question of prophecy, the interpretation of which is not, as many rudderless Christians seem to think, the indiscriminate prerogative of every speculative reader of the Bible, it may not be uninteresting to hear to the warnings of science as to the exceeding fragility of the earth's crust and to the constant changes and cataclysms which are going on in the vast universe of which this terrestrial planet is physically so inconsiderable a part. They help at least to bring home to us the scriptural admonition that man's days upon the earth are as a shadow, and that "in the twinkling of an eye we shall all be changed."

IN THIS connection the recent researches of a French astronomer, Puisseux, may be cited with interest. He has been busying himself with solar phenomena, and with the study of the constitution of the great orb itself, upon which all life in this or in other planets incidentally depends. His findings are somewhat startling, to say the least, and as a Paris correspondent rather graphically expresses it, "unless the Allies hurry up in bringing the war to a close Old King Sol may solve the problem for them." "Incidentally," he adds, "the whole world would be blown to pieces at the same time and there would be nobody left to haggle over terms of peace." Henry Ford, with his "Pinaros" ship would likewise pass into the region of nothingness.

WHAT IS this great phenomenon which with the reminder of its possibilities Puisseux seeks to startle an already distracted world? He finds that instead of condensing and shrinking little by little, as has heretofore been supposed, the Sun is constantly dilating more and more, and reaching the point of bursting. It is, he proceeds to tell us, no use to bury this information as mere nonsense, for big suns, every white as important in their own constellations as ours, have terminated their existence in that way. There was one such catastrophe, he affirms, in the constellation of Perseus as late as 1901, and since then two others at least have occurred in other celestial groups, the last in March, 1912.

OBSERVATION has long since shown, M. Puisseux reminds us, that our Sun is also undergoing constant changes and is in a most uncertain condition in this era. Sun spots, fire blasts, and such-like phenomena, are by no means the most of which he is capable. The manner in which the Sun throws off atomic energy and transforms the heavy into light elements, hydrogen, helium, nebulium, archonium, and what not, spalls nothing good for this world, and a mere nothing might precipitate a disaster at any time. In short, this French savant declares, it is bound to come sometime or other, but science can give no idea as to the "when." On the other hand—let us extract what comfort we can from the thought—the same old Sun is just as liable to continue uninterrupted his present beneficent course for millions and millions of years. Man's manifest duty in the premises surely is, as some modern poet has expressed it, to "work as though we were to live for aye," and "live as though we were to die to-day." And it is well to remind ourselves that the universe, vast and illimitable as it is to human consciousness, rests like an apple in the hollow of His hand, by Whom all things are, and without Whom not even a sparrow can fall to the ground. Where science ends, faith has only just begun.

THE TRUTH that man is more than flesh or blood is a reminder that in regard to his earthly existence there is a whole range of subjects with which Science has nothing to do, such as joy and sorrow, hope and charity, and the like, and that even in regard to those subjects which are its legitimate province its limitations are clearly marked. For while

Science presents to us a universe of matter, and that matter in motion, it can never tell us how matter came into existence or how set in motion. It is to revelation we must look for such knowledge in this direction as finite intelligence can comprehend. For Faith tells us that matter was created and set in motion and launched upon its portentous history by a Self-Existing and Eternal Being.

THIS IS the Christian solution of what an unbeliever has termed the "riddle of existence," and to the properly trained scientific mind it is, as against the materialistic, the easier to believe. It was one of the foremost students of science, the late Lord Kelvin, who said that science positively affirmed creation. Or, to make use of the words of an eminent Catholic scientist, Sir Bertram Windle, to affirm the opposite theory—"science, itself, poetry, philosophy, which emerge from the brain of man, not to speak of all the minor things of the universe, must have sprung by blind chance from a nebula which was eternal and, so we must argue, sentient."

FURTHER, Sir Bertram Windle goes on, by blind chance must have arisen those orderly series of occurrences which men call laws of nature. It seems difficult to imagine how laws could exist without a law-giver, and this has been admitted even by persons of an extremely materialistic bent of mind. Or to take the homelier illustration of Mother Carey in "The Water Babies." To the fairy who made a butterfly she said that anyone who worked hard enough could make a thing, but that no one but herself could make things make themselves.

ON THE BATTLE LINE

THE Balkans continue to be the chief centre of interest but the news from there gives little or no reason for optimism.

The general retirement of the Allies from Serbian Macedonia continues. Late despatches indicate that the British troops in the Lake Doiran region are now holding lines located on Greek soil. The centre and the left wing, consisting of French troops, are also evacuating their positions near Gradece and are now concentrating near the Greek frontier. The French midnight report states that "when it had been clearly demonstrated that there was no further possibility of affecting the desired junction with the right of the Serbian armies the Commandant decided to evacuate the advanced positions held by our troops on the Cerna and in the direction of Krivolak. Our successive movements of withdrawal were carried out methodically and without great difficulty in spite of repeated Bulgarian attacks. After violent engagements fought during the days of the 8th and 9th, in which the Bulgars were repulsed and suffered heavy losses, we occupied a new front in approximate alignment with the course of the Bojmitia and in junction with the British troops." The only stream shown on the maps which corresponds to the indicated location of the Bojmitia is one flowing west from Lake Doiran to the Vardar just north of the Greek boundary.

Will the Germans and Bulgars be content to expel the Allies from Serbia, or will they follow the Franco-British army over the Greek frontier and lay siege to Saloniki? If they do continue to attack the Allies on Grecian territory will the Greeks warn them off? Will King Constantine at the same time insist upon the evacuation of Saloniki by the Allies so that the Germans and Bulgars will have no cause to cross the Greek frontier? These questions must all be settled within the next few days. The diplomats of the Entente are believed to have put the problem plainly before King Constantine and his advisers, and to have demanded a categorical answer at the earliest possible moment. If Constantine insists on the evacuation of Saloniki the Allies will undoubtedly refuse to give up their base there, and Greece must choose between a remonstrance accompanied by passive resistance, and a declaration of war upon the Allies, followed by active efforts in co-operation with the Germans and Bulgars to drive out the Franco-British army. Remonstrance and passive resistance are more likely than war by Greece upon the Allies. In that event a guarantee will no doubt be given by France and Britain that any damage done to Saloniki during the anticipated siege will be paid for the allied powers.—The Globe, Dec. 11.

BEYOND THE BALKANS

Constantinople, Dec. 10.—"The enemy's resistance is decreasing sensibly. Our troops repulsed all British sorties with heavy losses to the attackers. Six aeroplanes which were captured have been repaired, and are now being used against the enemy."

T. P. O'CONNOR

DISCUSSES CONSCRIPTION

LONDON, Dec. 11.—The reception of Mr. Wilson's message in England was excellent, particularly as it shows that Americans realized the kind of enemy the Allies are fighting. The best specimen and epitome I can give of the British view of the document is in sentences from the Westminster Gazette, which says, "We, meaning Great Britain, are acting with our Allies for what we conceive to be the interests of civilization in both worlds and though we ask no favors, and may, perhaps, look for little forbearance, we may appeal to the American people who realize from their own experiences what is going on in Europe. And if they are unable to help us by positive assistance they are not to hinder us by asserting neutral rights or commercial interests to prejudice our naval power. This week closes in a darker fog of war than for weeks. All kinds of rumors are prevalent and each contradicts the other, everybody feels that momentous events are going to happen immediately but it is impossible to forecast their nature. There are rumors of German preparation for a big offensive on the western front but it is impossible to reconcile them with Germany's necessity to keep a big army on the Russian front and to make a big effort to attack the Allies in force at Saloniki before they become sufficiently strong to entrench for the winter."

It is equally difficult to discover whether the Allies mean to continue their efforts at Saloniki in the face of tremendous forces that have been released since Serbia's overthrow. Interviews with the Greek king confirm the view that he does not mean to give a particle of assistance to the Allies beyond what his engagements to the Kaiser permit. This and the Mesopotamia setback make the week-end an anxious one.

But the temper of the British people and the Allies is now so solidly determined for a long, decisive war that all passing events have come to be regarded as the inevitable ups and downs of war, without influence on the final result.

During a week-end visit to my constituents in Liverpool I found this spirit more pronounced than in phlegmatic, silent London, especially among the Irish.

Social events have been organized to send Christmas comforts to the famous Liverpool Irish regiment who at Festubert added a new chapter to the story of Irish valour. Liverpool has also joined other British cities in expressing horror of the Armenian atrocities.

Emphasis also has been laid there upon the splendid part the American philanthropists have taken in educating and otherwise helping this oppressed people.

There are two schools of extremists on the issue of Conscription. On the one hand there is the body which looks on Conscription as the beginning in England of Prussian militarism and all the hideous brood of evils which that infernal system has inflicted on the world. On the other side, there are the men who followed Lord Roberts in his passionate campaign for National Service and who insist that this war, with England's unpreparedness, has proved the unwisdom of that country in resisting the late old soldier's appeal.

Between two such bodies there can be no compromise, and if the issue come to be fought on the floor of the House, they will fight each other very resolutely.

But between these two schools there are a great many men who look on the issue as one mainly of fact. The first fact on which they want information is as to the exact number of men who are required, and how far the present supply falls short of that demand. It is a question on which it is very difficult to get information—largely because definite information, it is supposed, might be useful to the enemy. Nobody can say even in round numbers how many men we have at this moment in France, but it is generally assumed that they are about a million. Then one has to add to these the men detached for service on the other war fronts, in Salonika, in Gallipoli, in Egypt, in Mesopotamia. The men still training in the country are put down as something like a million and a half. The men whose tendency is against Conscription maintain that it is unfair to ask the country to send many more in addition to the gigantic numbers. Men, on the other hand, who have a leaning towards Conscription, speak of numbers up to half a million—some even go as far as a million—to complete the work of conquering Germany. The question unfortunately has got into the refracting atmosphere of party passion. I do not mean that the Liberals are all on one side and the Conservatives all on the other. The question cuts across ordinary party lines; for there are a great many Liberals who are at least as keen for Conscription as the most violent Conservative Conscriptionist. The leader, for instance, of the Conscriptionist group in the Ministry is Mr. Lloyd George; on the other hand, it is generally reported that the most powerful memorandum against Conscription was written by Mr. Balfour.

But all the same the question has got into the atmosphere of party again, and accordingly it is difficult to ascertain the facts. There are one or two facts however which one can definitely state—namely, that the Irish Party will oppose Conscription to the end. It is a curious indication of the eagerness of the