

ARCHBISHOP CLEARY AND MR. MEREDITH.

To William R. Meredith, Esq., Q. C., M. P. P.

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 politicians 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 the 22nd inst. Wherefore, let me repeat it here: "Were I or any other prolate 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 preceeding or following this 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 newspaper 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 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 over urging him to betray his own conscience and his child's temporal and eternal interests by the divorce of religion from youthful education. This 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 Lawgiver 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 dragged you gradually 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 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 inflame 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