



VOL. XLII., NO. 12.

MONTREAL, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1892.

PRICE 5 CENTS.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

In its new form THE TRUE WITNESS salutes its many readers and expresses the fervent hope that their number may never cease to increase.

We hope that, with time and energetic action, we will be enabled to present our subscribers with one of the most attractive Catholic weekly papers, not only in Canada, but upon this continent. In a few weeks we will issue THE TRUE WITNESS in an ornamental cover.

Again we desire to remind our friends that from this date until the first day of next January, we will send THE TRUE WITNESS free to each new subscriber. Consequently a subscription given in between this and New Year's Day will insure to the subscriber THE TRUE WITNESS, from the 12th October, 1892, till the 1st January, 1894.

Mark Twain once compared the world to a large ball of soap, growing daily smaller, as it is rubbed in the hands of old Father Time. To a certain extent the comparison is very exact. With our steam and electric facilities of communication, time and space are almost annihilated, and we are nearer to London, Paris, or St. Petersburg to-day than, half a century ago, we were to Quebec, Ottawa, or Toronto. The smaller the world grows—in this sense—the more cosmopolitan are the nations becoming. There is a great consolation for the Church in all this change. As rapidly as a train can speed over plains and through mountain passes, as swiftly does it bear the missionary and the light of Faith, that he carries, into new regions. The Church keeps pace with electricity it is her servant.

Joseph Ernest Renan is dead! He was honored with a state funeral by France. He asked that the funeral service should consist of a civil ceremony. He rests in a provisional grave in Montmartre; but when the Chamber of Deputies meets, authority will be asked to have his remains placed in the Pantheon. All this is in due accord with the man, his life, his works, his principles, and with the sombre spirit of cold infidelity that haunts the "Eldest daughter of the Church."

From a purely biographical standpoint a great deal might be written about Renan. We will strive to give a short summary of his career with a few comments. He was born at Tregnier, Cotes-du-Nord, 27th February, 1823. He belonged to the Institute of France: he began his course of studies in Paris. Once he dreamed of studying theology with the object of becoming a priest. His ideas did not agree with those of his teachers, and his principles were rather loose and dangerous, especially in a man of great natural ability. The inevitable consequence followed,—Renan left the seminary and dashed into a course of his own, or rather one traced by the pens of unbelievers. He took the Volney

prize for a memoir on the Semitic languages in 1847. It was a dangerous year, for in 1848 the semi-centennial wave of infidelity and revolution surged over Europe and especially France, and the name of Volney—author of that abomination, "Les Ruines"—was enough to inspire with evil a mind only too open for its reception.

In 1860 Renan was sent to Syria: in 1862 he became a professor of Hebrew; in 1863 he wrote his "Vie de Jesus"; in 1880 he was decorated with the Legion of Honor; in 1889 he published his "History of the People of Israel till the time of David." He married a daughter of Henri Schaffer, the painter, and he died in his sixty-ninth year. Such is a hurried sketch of a long life and an exceptional one. Renan was endowed with extraordinary gifts by the Almighty: he was a linguist, an historian, a man of scientific knowledge beyond the ordinary; he had a facile and an elegant pen; and possessed the French language in all its perfections and beauties of detail. He had glorious opportunities, he had all that man could require to raise and instruct as well as edify and guide his fellow-men. To-night his name is on the page of human history, and his soul is before God to answer for the thoughts, words and deeds of sixty-nine years of life, to render an account of the talents that the Creator had given him in trust.

In the Pantheon, amidst the ashes of dead atheists and departed scoffers—all the victims of the merciless Angel of Death,—Ernest Renan's remains may await the last trumpet; but on earth the seed he sowed will bear fruit for many and many a year. One monument has he left behind, his "Life of Jesus." Like Etna vomiting forth its fiery lava, this volcano of literary blasphemy will not cease to pour out the scoriac streams of its death-dealing sentiments. It is at once the coolest and the most fiery piece of infidel audacity that has, perhaps, ever fallen from the pen of man. It is the coolest,—for one stands against at the confidence of Renan confronting the Almighty and calmly shooting the shafts of his irony, his satire, his ridicule at the figure of our Saviour; it is the most fiery,—for no other work, that we have ever heard of, equals it in the hellish ardor of its attacks upon the Redeemer of mankind. Renan is dead! Neither his atheism, nor his blasphemy, nor his Voltairian cynicism could save him from the doom of all men. He lived sixty-nine years, and, like other mortals, he died. It is not for us to judge him: God's mercy is without limit: Christ saved the penitent thief at the last hour; Renan's soul has gone before the "Jesus" whose life he ridiculed and whose divinity he made little of; Ernest Renan now knows—and for all eternity he will know—either the Infinite Mercy of the Saviour he scoffed, or the Endless Power of the Judge he despised. Would that his works could be burned and buried with his own ashes under the dome of the Pantheon. That temple of

mortality, where sleep those who mistook temporal fame for Immortality, would then hold the dust of the most wicked writings that man, maybe, ever penned, and the remains of the writer.

There is another author who, happily is not yet with the silent majority, one whose life, works and aims have been too often misjudged by the hurried and superficial. With what a glow of delight we read an article, on John Ruskin, in the first of October number of that splendid Catholic weekly magazine, the Ave Maria. Thus speaks the writer:

"The pleasant news comes from England that Ruskin is no worse,—that he is, indeed, enjoying life in a mild sort of way, as befits the last years of so good and great a man. He is pre-eminent, also, in the ranks of the misunderstood. Many who might have heard his message to men would not; many who would have listened were beyond its reach, uncaring because unknowing. It has never altered—that trumpet call to the world to turn away from that which is sordid and debasing and degrading, and to ascend to the purer regions, where each may have, by striving for it, his meed of the happiness which was meant to be his heritage.

Thus continues the same article, and with the quotation of a very characteristic letter:

"Mr Ruskin's strictures require some translation, and are chiefly thought, by the reading people at large, to be the ravings of a seold; but his friends—and the number of them will not lessen as the years pass on—know better. A letter of his which has just come to light, addressed to Joseph Severn so far back as 1843, will prove his steadfastness, and will be of interest not only to those who believe in him, but to those who take pride in an opposite opinion.

"It is not the love of fresco that we want: it is the love of God and His creatures; it is humility and charity and self-denial and fasting and prayer; it is a total change of character. We want more faith and less reasoning, less strength and more trust. You neither want walls, nor plaster, nor colors—*ca ne fait rien a l'affaire*.—It is Giotto and Ghirlandajo and Angelico that you want, and you will and must want, until this disgusting nineteenth century has, I can't say breathed, but steamed its last. A pretty way Mr. Eastlake takes to teach our British public a love of the right thing—going and buying a disgusting, rubbishy, good-for-nothing, bad-for-everything Rubens and two brutal Guidos, when we haven't got a Perugino to bless ourselves with! But it doesn't matter, not a straw's balance. I see what the world is coming to. We shall put it into a chain armor of railroad, and then everybody will go everywhere every day until every place is like every other place; and then when they are tired of changing stations and police, they will congregate in knots in great cities, which will consist of club-houses, coffee-houses, and newspaper offices; the churches will be turned into assembly-rooms, and people will eat, sleep, and gamble to their graves."

In conclusion the writer in the Ave Maria says:—

"Mr. Ruskin has a message for the Catholic to listen to; indeed it is the most religious who can comprehend it best. And the writings of a man who has been known to kneel in the street as the Sacred Host was borne along can work no harm to living soul. His earlier writings, to be sure, were infected with the bigotry which was the outcome of his early training; but that he has again and again heartily repudiated."

That we agree entirely and heartily with the author of the foregoing is almost unnecessary to state. However, it cannot be generally known, so we will mention the fact that to John Ruskin we owe a debt of literary gratitude that knows no limit. Times out of number have we heard the works of Ruskin criticised by persons who evidently had never read them, or if they had read them, most decidedly did not understand them. We have listened with indignation and attempted to check the torrent of ridicule and abuse that some, would-be learned, persons deemed proper to pour out over his writings. At one time we were almost convinced that everybody else saw a literary crank in Ruskin, and ego-

tistically sweeping condemnations of every person and every thing, in his writings. Imagine the pleasure with which we read the article above quoted,

John Ruskin is a noble teacher and a grand preacher. Many is the pleasant hour we whiled away in his company. With him we walked upon the "Stones of Venice" and studied all the historic and artistic relics of the "Queen of the Adriatic;" with him we contemplated the frescoes of Munich and Dresden, the models in Madrid, and passed along the galleries of Florence and Rome, pausing before the master-pieces of old, and holding converse with the spirits of the Corregios, Domenichinos, Angelos, and Raphaels; with him we loved to stray into the old temples of Europe and to contemplate the sunlight playing, through the holy twilight of the edifice, upon the images of Madonas and Crucifixions; with him we contemplated the ray of inspiration, passing through the window of the soul, and illumining the genius of some dead artist; with him we beheld the beam of Faith piercing the shadows of unbelief, and, in the language of Art, teaching the lessons of Truth that are as old as time and endless as eternity. Is it any wonder that we loved Ruskin and his books, that we pitied those who misjudged or misunderstood him, that we rejoiced to read that page in the Ave Maria?

Elsewhere we refer to the death of Cardinal Howard, the last of England's cardinals. In connection with the loss which the church sustained in the illness, and final death, of the eminent prelate, the London Daily News has one of the most foolish and ridiculous paragraphs that ever appeared in the press. The Daily News says:

"It may interest your readers to learn that Cardinal Howard was, according to general belief in this country, a Bohemian Jew. He was believed to have been born at Prague, his parents' name being Austerlitz. At the age of twenty he was converted and baptized by Prince Cardinal Schwarzenberg."

The Howards are, as all well-read people know, of an ancient Catholic stock. In order to point out the absurdity of these malicious remarks,—the more so when made about the dead,—we will quote what the London Universe says upon the career of the lamented prelate:—"His Eminence, the late Cardinal Howard, was third on the list of Cardinal Bishops, the Princes of the Church taking precedence of him being La Valetta and Santo Stefano. There is now no English member of the Sacred College. Edward Howard was born at Hainton, in the diocese of Nottingham on the 13th February, 1829, was created and proclaimed by Pius IX. on the 12th of March, 1877, was Bishop of Frascati, Archpriest of the Patriarchal Vatican Basilica, and Prefect of the Holy Congregation of the Reverend Fabric of St. Peter. His diocese of Frascati has long been administered for him by Mgr. Stonor, who will be in all probability the next English Cardinal. The title of the deceased was of SS. John and Paul."