

THE TRUE WITNESS

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

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WEDNESDAY.....MARCH 1, 1893

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES.

There is one point in connection with the Parliamentary proceedings at Ottawa, to which we wish to call special attention. It is well known that a good deal of the most important work of each session finds its accomplishment in the labors of the different standing committees, appointed by both Houses for the purpose of examining into, and reporting upon, the various knotty and tangled questions relating to legislation and the public service, that, from time to time, crop up. Of these useful bodies, there is none whose duties are of a more responsible nature, or whose actions more nearly concern the vital interests of the country, than that having charge of the public accounts. We cannot but remember how, two sessions ago, this committee, roused to abnormal activity, through the representations of the press and the charges made by members of the House, was the means of unearthing irregularities and abuses among government officials, that by their magnitude and number, the wide-spread venality and corruption in high places they revealed, struck the community with consternation and horror, causing honest and patriotic Canadians to hang their heads in shame, and tremble for the safety, the stability of their institutions. Whatever disposition might exist, in some quarters, to screen the offenders, there was but one feeling, one universal wish expressed by the people and the press of the country, that the work of detection and excision should go on until a thorough reformation had been effected. This laudable wish, however, has unfortunately not been realized. The sudden energy displayed in ferretting out and prosecuting the offenders, proved to be spasmodic and transitory—subsiding as rapidly as it had been called into existence. What was the cause of this regrettable result? The epidemic of feverish, puritanic zeal that at that time had seized the Parliamentary committees, having expended itself—in the reactionary languor that followed, they were led delusively to dream that all the cases requiring their attention had been exhausted; or that, having made "examples" of a few of the unmasked delinquents, these would be sufficient to deter others, for all time to come, from venturing on similar courses? If so, we can assure them that in both cases, they were egregiously mistaken. Not only were all the actual malefactors not discovered; but on others, who as yet could boast a blameless record, the effect of the disclosures made and the

punishments inflicted was, there is reason to fear, anything but a deterrent one. In any large body, constituted as is the Civil Service at Ottawa, there must always be a number, greater or smaller, of potential characters, who, if they have not lapsed from the paths of rectitude, have been prevented from doing so only by the absence of temptation or opportunity, the lack of ingenuity to devise and the courage to put into effect ways and means, for the indulgence of their lawless propensities. To such the revelations made of the methods pursued by so many plunderers of the public treasury, would furnish the very hints they required for putting their own evil designs into practice; while the light penalty inflicted on those of the misdemeanants who had been punished at all, and the complete immunity enjoyed by others—especially the higher officials—from any punishment whatever, would still embolden them to imitate examples they were naturally so much inclined to follow. Indeed, from what has come to our knowledge, we are forced to the conclusion that some of these novices, in the arts of over-reaching and double-dealing, have succeeded not only in faithfully copying their models, but in several cases have even gone beyond them.

It is possible, however, that the committee investigations have been interrupted because of some other means or agencies the Government and Parliament may have in contemplation for regulating and supervising the public service. In point of fact, a Civil Service Commission was appointed, which, after making some inquiries and submitting a report, disappeared from the scene,—and that, as far as we are aware, has been the end of the matter. And now a bill is before the House, providing for the creation of a supervisor of the service, who would certainly require to be Argus-eyed and Balaireus-armed to exercise all the vigilance and discharge all the duties, that the position, with its Herculean tasks and responsibilities, must demand of him. Meantime, the reprehensible practices that had been going on for years, unsuspected by the country, and that, perhaps, would never have been brought to light without the inquisitions of Parliamentary committees, are flourishing as rampantly as ever. That we do not exaggerate the matter, the following few statements of facts will serve to show:

In a certain department an extra employee does work to the amount of \$150. He is requested by his superior officer to make out an account, and also a receipt, for that amount, in duplicate. Both accounts are paid—the proceeds of one going into the pocket of the superior officer, those of the other being received by the subordinate, whose name appears in the published returns for two sums of \$150 each—entered, however, under two different votes, in different sections of the blue book, in order the better to cover up the fraud. The poor employee in all probability never learns to what "base uses" his name has been applied—the study of blue books not being in his knowledge, he carefully refrains from making any allusion to it—fearing the wrath of his superior, and the inevitable dismissal which would follow.

Again, an item in the Public Accounts represents a party of the name, say of J. Smith, as an employee in the department, receiving pay at the rate of \$2.00 a day. No such person exists; no work has ever been done for the money paid. A relative of the Deputy Minister, however, under this fictitious name, for

fictitious services, regularly appropriates the cash—the only real thing about the whole rascally transaction.

And most of all—because, in this case, the blackest inhumanity is joined to the meanest chicanery—a poor woman, the deserving widow of a worthy civil servant, who died in harness, is refused pay for work actually done, on the plea that, not having passed the examination, she is not entitled to it. The money is nevertheless, drawn and safely deposited in the yawning pocket of the ogreish deputy head of the department. This may seem incredible, but the fact can be vouched for.

We pause here, though not by any means at the end of our list. This last outrage should of itself be sufficient to arouse the authorities to immediate and vigorous action. If the dark recesses, the crooked labyrinths of the Civil Service at Ottawa, come to be explored, many such acts of cruelty, oppression, injustice and fraud, now carefully covered up, would be revealed. The Government and Parliament owe it to themselves and the people of whose interests they are guardians, to the respectable, upright and faithful members of the service—and we are glad to know there are many such—in maintenance of their self-respect, in vindication of their rights as men and their privileges as free-born citizens, to see that an effectual stop is put to such disgraceful proceedings, and the possibility of having them repeated, forever removed. This at present can be done only through the action of the Public Accounts and other Parliamentary Committees. Let the work of investigation, that was so unwisely and unwarrantedly discontinued, be at once resumed, and all who have charges to make, be encouraged to make them, free from intimidation and without fear of consequences; let these charges be considered carefully and judged impartially, and let swift and condign punishment be meted out to the guilty, without regard to the position of the offender, his race, religion, political influence or party services. Such a course alone can satisfy the demands of justice and the requirements of the public service.

JOHN KNOX.

There is no more classic city in the British Isles than old Edinburgh; there is no more picturesque city in the world. The sixteenth century seems to stare at the nineteenth across the High Street, and the modern improvements of our electric age stare back at the relics of medievalism in every quarter of the town from the Cowgate to the Castle. In presence of Arthur's Seat, and commanding a prospect the equal of which is not in Europe, both for natural variety and historic memories, the Scotch Capital resembles a huge turtle. Its head is the Castle: its back bone is the High street, and all the ribs run down from it, on either side, in the form of allies or wynds. The history of Edinburgh is rich and romantic. It has witnessed many a scene that history has forgotten but which lives in the traditions of good "Auld Reekie." Scott has immortalized many a spot in and around the Capital. What tragedies have been enacted upon that stage: what persecutions have been witnessed from those ancient windows; what royalty and beauty; what poverty and rags; what pageants of princes and tartaned chieftains; what border forays; what highland and lowland feuds; what deeds of blood and acts of mad fanaticism; how many blows struck "by the saints of God;" what frenzied enthusiasm of misguided covenanters; what scenes in Holyrood! But of all the spots

in Edinburgh to which traditions cling and of which stories are told, the most conspicuous and most memorable is that house on the High Street, from the window of which John Knox thundered forth his curses upon the Catholic Faith, or that place in the Canongate where he incited his frantic followers to all kinds of outrage and religious persecution.

It appears that the fervid Protestants of Bonnie Scotland are seriously thinking of erecting a grand monument, in some conspicuous place in Edinburgh, to the memory of John Knox. This is not at all wonderful, and will probably be carried into execution during the course of the coming summer. At first sight we might be led to suppose that the building of a monument to the memory of the great Papist-killer of the sixteenth century would be a menace to the good Catholics of Edinburgh, and an insult to their Faith. It might be so intended; but it would fail in both objects. We agree with the *Liverpool Catholic Times* when it expresses the opinion that such a tribute to John Knox might serve a very good purpose.

Had the Roman, or Italian, anticlericals and infidels never erected a statue to that monster of immorality and apostate of the worst order, Giordano Bruno, perhaps not one in five thousand would have ever inquired into the life of the man, or asked who he was. But the enemies of the Church, in order to insult the Vicar of Christ, rescued Bruno's name from the oblivion into which it had sunk, merely to hold it up to the contemplation and criticism of the world, therefore to a thorough examination into the life and works of that idol of the sectaries. As a result the character of Bruno was revealed in all its deformity and blackness, and the monument intended to perpetuate his fame has become a lasting memorial of his iniquities and corruption.

So it is with that of John Knox. Let the good and enthusiastic Protestants of Edinburgh, or of all Scotland, undertake to immortalize, in marble, the founder of the most intolerant of all heresies, and the moment their work commences, the Catholics, as well as Protestants of other denominations, will be stimulated to study the history of the fire-brand preacher of the days of old. Decidedly the Catholics of Scotland are amongst the most fervent and steadfast children of the Church; they have suffered countless persecutions for their Faith, and they have been silent upon the subject; they have travelled a *via dolorosa* of affliction for the sake of the truth within them; and they have passed through a fiery furnace, protected by the angel of God that watches over the destinies of the Church in Scotland. This movement on the part of their bitter opponents may stimulate them to study well the life and works—public and private—of John Knox, and then to awaken, even in Protestants, a desire to read up the true history of this hero of the hour. "It would be the first step to the conversion of the Scottish people that they should be induced to carefully learn the history of John Knox and his times, and revise their traditional ideas as to the rebellion of that era." This remark is taken from the *Catholic Times*.

Not only might the movement in question lead to some more light being cast upon the darkness of Knox's story and the blackness of that age's history, but the good Catholics of Edinburgh might be prompted to outdo their fellow-citizens of Protestant persuasion, and to erect a fitting monument to the martyred Queen Mary. "Catholics have everything to gain and nothing to lose from a comparison of the characters, principles and aims of Scotch Catholics