



CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

VOL. IV.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JUNE 9, 1854.

NO. 43.

THE AGGREGATE MEETING.

The aggregate meeting of the Catholics of Ireland, convened to petition and protest against the insulting measures introduced into the legislature with respect to Catholic convents, took place on Monday the 15th ult., in the Rotundo, Dublin. As an energetic and manly declaration of Catholic feeling and Catholic determination, it was in numbers, spirit, and the tone which pervaded it, all that could be desired. The requisition on which it was convened was not second to any that ever preceded it in this country for the number, influence, and position of those whose signatures it bore. It was signed by thirty-one Prelates, ten peers, and sons of peers, thirty-four members of parliament, by the Catholic Clergy throughout the country, and by hundreds of thousands of laymen of every class.

The meeting was called for twelve o'clock, but long before that hour large numbers of persons had collected about the Rotundo and the neighborhood. Immediately after the doors were thrown open, the spacious Round Room became densely thronged in every part, and after it was filled to its utmost extent, the approaches to it and the space about the doors of the building continued to be occupied till the close of the proceedings by immense crowds, for whom there was no room inside. The spacious platform and reserved seats were crowded by influential Clergymen and laymen from every part of the country; the professional, mercantile, trading, and every other class in the community were well and numerously represented.

A large number of ladies occupied places in the reserved seats, and evinced the natural interest they felt in a meeting assembled to protest against the attempt to subject to indignity and insult perhaps many of their friends and relatives, who have devoted themselves to a life of charity and good works. If the fanatics, whose bigoted proceedings have elicited this expression of Catholic feeling, witnessed the spirit which animated the thousands who attended the meeting, they must have been taught that the people of this country are firmly resolved, as one man, not to submit to any infringement of the rights of conscience, more especially when the persecution is directed against the sanctified ladies whose services in the cause of religion and charity should have shielded them from such base and unmanly attacks.

In consequence of a resolution which was adopted by the "Protestant Association," stating that members of that body would attend that meeting, or present themselves for admission, in order to "protest" against it, or, in other words, to create a disturbance, parties of police were stationed in the neighborhood of the Rotundo to preserve the peace, if necessary. But the valiant members of the Protestant Association thought better of it, and did not venture to carry out their boasted resolution to present themselves at the meeting or disturb its proceedings. It must be admitted that they acted the wiser part, for the people were not in a temper to tolerate any such attempt.

At half-past twelve o'clock, on the motion of the Hon. Thomas Preston, seconded by John Lentaigne, Esq., the chair was taken, amid loud cheering, by the Rt. Hon. the Lord Mayor of Dublin.

Richard Deasy, Q.C., Mr. James Burke, and Mr. Myles O'Reilly, were appointed honorary secretaries to the meeting.

Mr. James Burke read the requisition, which he said was signed by thirty-one Archbishops and Bishops, ten peers and sons of peers, thirty-four members of parliament, and a very large number of the Second Order of Clergy, and more than 100,000 of the laity.

Several Prelates sent letters of apology for their non-attendance, being engaged at the Synod of Drogheda. Their letters were read.

Letters of apology were also read from Mr. D. O'Connell, M.P.; Mr. W. H. F. Cogan, M.P.; Mr. J. Ball, M.P.; Mr. V. Scully, M.P., &c.

Mr. Burke then announced the receipt of a petition from Belfast against Mr. Chambers's bill, signed by 4,700 persons. (Cheers.)

The Hon. Thomas Preston proposed the first resolution. He said—My Lord Mayor and gentlemen, this appears to me to be a most extraordinary time for people to choose to bring forward this persecuting measure against the Catholics of these countries—a time when good feeling ought peculiarly to exist between Catholic and Protestant—(cheers)—a time when we have already entered into war with one of the greatest powers of the earth. (Hear, hear.) One would imagine such a time would be the worst to choose for exciting ill will between them. Well, indeed, might the Emperor of the French ask, when he read the declaration, "Are the Catholics allowed to serve in the British army and navy?" (Cheers.) I will not do further than read the resolution, as follows:—

"That we desire to testify our deep and grateful veneration for the members of our Religious Orders, and our unanimous resolve to defend them with all our power against the unprovoked aggression of the enemies of our faith."

Mr. M. O'Reilly seconded the resolution. He said he felt confident that it was the answer—complete and entire—to the attempted legislation against them. (Hear, hear.) That attempted legislation had been introduced by those who were strangers and aliens to them—(hear, hear)—aliens in blood, in feelings, in religion, and he believed in the common feelings of gentlemen and honest men. (Hear.) The pretext for this legislation was justice, and called for interference; but even Mr. Chambers himself—(hisses)—in his opening speech, began by avowing his uncompromising and unreasoning hostility to their whole faith and to every one of their institutions. His summing up was, that in Protestant England they would seek to exterminate Catholicism; that was Chambers's true object, and he for one was glad it had been avowed. (Cheers.) But in England, and wherever the free institutions of those countries existed, even a prisoner who was put on his trial was, by the ancient laws of England, tried by those who knew him best, and when the accused was asked by whom he would be tried, his answer was—"By God and my country," and then the officer of the court, turning round to the jury, said—"And that country, gentlemen, you are." (Cheers.) And, in like manner, so he would then say—the appeal of the Religious was to the country who knew them—(loud cheers)—and that great meeting was there that day as that country to give that answer and that verdict. (Cheers.) He needed not to urge on that meeting the evidence; it rested with themselves. (Loud cheers.) They who had seen those ladies ministering to the poor, the sick, and the afflicted—teaching the young, reforming the fallen, watching by the bedside of sickness, smoothing the passage of the soul from this world to another and a brighter sphere, "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest"—(cheers)—they would urge the best evidence, and to them the Religious appealed to testify their deep and grateful veneration for those services. (Cheers.) It had been said, indeed, that if there were not something wrong, why not fling open the monasteries and convents to this inquiry? His answer was, that such inquiry was an insult and a wrong. (Loud cheers.) He believed that the great mass of the people of England, if they were excited against the Religious, were so from ignorance—the leaders, indeed, were not in ignorance—they were malicious. He well knew that in the few towns in England where the Religious were settled, and their good works and benevolent acts known, a strong feeling was beginning to prevail in their favor—in fact they only required to be known in order to be beloved and respected. It only required that the principles of true piety and charity which marked the lives of the Religious should be known to secure for them respect and protection. But now from the other side of the Channel these devoted beings looked to the people of Ireland for that protection and defence which they had accorded to them for centuries, and they should not look in vain. (Cheers.) He could speak of the many virtues which distinguished our Religious, but all he could say would not feebly do justice to their lives and actions. (Cheers.) It was once said of a celebrated hero that "to know him was to praise him." Now he (Mr. O'Reilly) could say of those pious ladies, that to know them was to love and respect them. (Loud cheers.)

The resolution was put from the chair, and carried with acclamation.

Mr. Pentony O'Kelly proposed the next resolution. He considered that every man, no matter how humble his position or abilities, or how retiring his habits, was bound to come forward on such an occasion as this, and to declare that neither he nor his fellow-countrymen would put up with the insulting and base measure now attempted to be inflicted on a pious and amiable section of the community, and through them upon the entire Catholic people—(loud cheers)—yes, and to assert at the same time that whilst they (the Catholic people) contended that their religious feelings should be respected, they only sought that which they were willing and prepared to concede to others, and to all their fellow-subjects; and that whilst they were ready to fight in defence of England's honor, to shed their blood before Odessa or Cronstadt, as they had done before at Waterloo, they still proclaimed that they possessed the right to expect that their dearest and most sacred religious feelings should not be trampled upon. (Loud cheering.) He would read the resolution, which was—

"That claiming, as rights which we can never compromise or abandon, complete religious freedom and full equality with our fellow-subjects, we protest against the exceptional legislation by which an intolerant party, under the false pretence of a regard for

liberty, aims at destroying the most sacred institutions of our Church and people."

Mr. Michael Dunne, M.P., seconded the resolution.

The resolution was put from the chair and carried amidst repeated cheering.

Mr. Christopher Fitzsimon came forward amidst cheering to propose the next resolution, which was—

"That there is no justification in proof or fact for legislative inquiry into the condition of our convents, and that we indignantly repudiate the proposal for that purpose made in parliament, under the pretence of vindicating the personal liberty of the inmates, which has never been restrained, and of which we are the natural protectors."

Mr. W. Gernon, barrister, supported the resolution in a speech of some length.

The resolution was then put from the chair and carried.

The Rev. Dr. Marshall, on coming forward to move the next resolution was received with the most enthusiastic demonstrations of applause, the whole meeting rising *en masse*, and cheering for several minutes. The Rev. gentleman said—My Lord Mayor and gentlemen, I have most humbly and heartily to thank you for those cheers. They may not lead to my attainment of the virtue of humility; they shall, however, encourage me in the continuance of the efforts that I have made to deserve the popularity with which you have greeted me (cheers.) With your kind permission I will speak a few short words in proposing for your consideration and adoption the resolution which I hold in my hands. I will be brief, for I am afflicted with a sore throat, and people have not added to my patience by telling me that the name of that peculiar affection is called a Parson's sore throat—(laughter and cheers.) In endeavoring to be brief I will also attempt to be calm and temperate—(hear, hear)—and in doing that I assure you I have to make an effort—(loud cheers.) My hot English blood boils a little too fast for the temperature of this country. It is necessary in these times, I am continually told, to be more moderate, and more mild, and more gentle, if I am to act in unison with the leaders of the present times—(laughter and cheers.) There is another reason, for though it is a step towards perfection to bear an injury with meekness, and not to resent a blow, there are some circumstances in the matter that have assembled us here to-day which will enable us to consider it under another point of view. If I were struck I would endeavor to bear it—I would endeavor to forget and forgive the injury—I would esteem it a duty to do so, and if I happily succeeded I should know that I should receive the esteem of all good and honorable men—(cheers.) Yes; strike me, and I will do that—but, strike a woman!—(loud cheers.) Strike a woman—insult her purity—bring the blush to her cheek—and by the God who made me I would resent that injury. (Tremendous applause.) And that is the state of the case at the present time. These strong, and mighty, and valorous champions of their so-called faith makes war always on the weak. A few years ago they assailed, as the object of their wrath, meek, mild, and venerable old men; and, beaten and defeated there by your spirit, your union, and your noble combination, they now return to their attack, and take the purest, gentlest of our daughters to hold them up to ridicule and scorn. (Great groaning.)—It is hard to account for it, and but that we are told by the Divine Founder of our holy religion that we must expect persecution—and had not the history of the entire Church proved that these words were not intended to apply only to the Apostles, but to the end of time—it would be indeed difficult to understand it. It is from the enemy of Almighty God—from the enemy of the souls of men—that doughty enemy of our faith and religion, who has never ceased to persecute our holy religion, and to frighten its professors from their attachment to its creed. (Loud cheers.) But are we going to let them? (Tremendous cheering.) If they have singled out our Nuns—and who is there that knows those Nuns that does not revere them—who is there who has seen the very meanest of their works of mercy and charity, who would not esteem it an honor to come forward in their defence when they are attacked? (Cheers.) They have been the lustre of the Catholic religion, and more especially in this country, where St. Patrick taught the Faith. (Cheers.) This day is a festival (St. Dymphna) in Christ's Church of one who was martyred by her royal father because she clung to her virgin vows. This very day the whole Church is reminded of the double crown she has received by the blood she shed in keeping those vows; and at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass this morning, as I thought of that, I asked of God the favor to give me the strength to shed my blood in defence of those Nuns. (Immense cheering.) I have seen religion in other lands, and I know it by experience in this—for I have been through every portion of your green island, and I have seen

how, in spite of every effort to ruin and destroy you, God has still poured down His choicest blessings on this country—I have seen the deep attachment of the people to their faith; I have seen the zealous labors of your Clergy, and I have rejoiced in the honor of being admitted to their sacred ranks. (Hear, hear.) There is scarcely a convent where I have not offered up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; and I do not hesitate to say that if your people are good, and your Clergy excellent, your Nuns are perfect. (Hear, hear, and loud cheering.) It is because of their perfection—it is because of the services they render to religion—the care they take of little children in keeping the lamb from the wolf that is thirsting for their blood—[cheers]—it is because they care the sick and tender, and enable them to resist those infamous apostles of the Devil—[cheers]—who go about—now that the cannon and bayonet have failed—with the soup-tub and the meal-bag in their phase [laughter and cheers]—yes; it is because of their virtues, because of their purity, that obscene men now calumniate them. [Cheers.] It is because of their strong attachment to religion, that our enemies are combining together to make an effort to frighten those holy children of the Cross from us. [Loud cheers.] We may imagine that the danger is past, seeing that a large number of members of parliament sat a little too long after dinner on a certain occasion, and the house was counted out when the measure of Mr. Chambers—[hisses]—was to be brought forward, that our Nuns will remain safe—we may imagine that because one who is known to be the sworn enemy of our holy religion, who made an effort to persecute us in times past, who is now in the councils of her Majesty—I mean Lord John Russell—[hisses]—we may imagine that because Lord John Russell may have given a hint to a certain briefless barrister, that it was a little out of time and season that this measure should be brought forward, now that the country is at war—we may imagine that because a hint was dropped from the imperial lips of Louis Napoleon—[loud cheers]—that the allies of that sceptre and that nation had sufficient influence to keep off for a time the threatened danger—[loud cheers]—but let me remind you that this time last year we made the self-same work. We had a meeting; and we went forth with a magnanimous resolution that we would defend the Nuns from injury. The danger disappeared, and we began to say—"Why are we so angry and so excited?—our Nuns are safe, after all." But the danger has come round again. The enemy has returned. There is danger now, not that I believe Mr. Chambers might get his committee, or Mr. Whiteside pass his bill. [Hisses.] That danger may pass by—that shell may burst before it reaches its intended mark—that partial and temporary hazard may pass away—but the bitterness, the rancor which has been stirred up against the Catholic people by designing men for the purpose of gaining a base popularity amongst the bigoted and ignorant of their countrymen, through the medium of ministering to that ignorance and bigotry, that rancorous spirit will still remain, and it must be met manfully, and with spirit and determination, on the part of the Catholic people. [Loud cheers.] I have said that danger now exists, and I will prove how. [Hear, hear.]—I am not given to blushing. I cannot call up the delicate tinge coming under that name to my cheek—[hear, hear]—but I feel that I ought to blush for my countrymen, the English, when I see them imbued with such deadly enmity towards the Catholic people and Clergy. But it is not altogether amongst the people of England that the danger lies. It was to be looked for in higher quarters. [Hear, hear.] The danger is to be apprehended from the crown itself. [Loud cries of "Hear!"] I hold in my hand a report which has been published in the newspapers of proceedings at a dinner given in London, on an occasion which was dignified by the title of "The festival of the sons of the Clergy." [Laughter and hisses.] The sons of the Clergy! Well, I suppose I need not tell you that it is not the Catholic Clergy which is here meant. [Cheers and laughter.] There were at that dinner or festival present a number of Archbishops, and their wives. [Loud laughter.]—There was the Most Reverend Doctor This, and the Venerable Mrs. So-and-so—[roars of laughter]—and the principal guest of the evening, and who seems to have made the speech of the night, was his Royal Highness Prince Albert. [Groans and hisses.]

The Lord Mayor here rose and interposed. His lordship said—Really I cannot see the use of these allusions to Prince Albert; neither do I see the propriety of thus begetting feelings of angry excitement. [Cries of "Read," and cheers for Dr. Marshall.]

The Rev. Mr. Marshall—If I am declared out of order, I shall submit.

The Lord Mayor, who still continued standing, essayed to speak; but the cheering and excitement that prevailed prevented a word being heard.