

The True Witness.

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, DEC. 6, 1861.

TO OUR READERS.

Mr. Gillies, of the TRUE WITNESS office, is now on a collecting and canvassing tour through Canada West. He has full authority to receive all monies due to this office, to give receipts, and to make such arrangements as he shall deem most convenient. We would respectfully bespeak for him a good reception from our numerous, delinquent subscribers.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

OUR readers will find much to inspire them with hope and confidence in the news from Italy which we publish on our sixth page. General Borgeas is at the head of a very respectable force of Neapolitan patriots, and has inflicted several very decided thrashings upon the Piedmontese invaders. The cruelties of Cialdini—the "butcher" as he is appropriately styled—have thoroughly aroused the latent hostility of the Neapolitans against the alien rule attempted to be imposed upon them; and a struggle as desperate as that which the brave Spaniards engaged in, when the first Napoleon tried to force his brother upon them as a King, is now raging in the south of the Italian Peninsula. Borgeas is himself a Spaniard, and greatly distinguished himself in the civil wars of the Christians and Carlists in his native country. Every Catholic, every friend of liberty and justice will pray that God will be pleased to bless his arms, and enable him to purge the soil of Naples of its foreign invaders. Until the Kingdom of Naples be thoroughly conquered, and its brave patriots exterminated, or reduced to subjection, the Kingdom of Italy cannot be regarded as *un fait accompli*; and it is only as the capital of such a Kingdom that Rome is of supreme political importance to Victor Emmanuel. It is not therefore so much from a desire to see the Bourbons reinstated on the throne of Naples, as from the desire to keep Victor Emmanuel out of Rome, that we interest ourselves in behalf of the oppressed Neapolitans. The latter, fighting for national independence, are at the same time fighting the battle of the entire Church.

Up to the time of going to press, the hourly expected steamer had not been telegraphed; we cannot therefore say how the tidings of the piratical searching of the *Trent*, and the capture of Messrs. Sidel and Mason, have been received by the British Government.

In the orations given to Capt. Wilkes by his countrymen, and by several of the most important municipalities of the Northern States, it is impossible to avoid recognising the manifestation of a spirit of bitter and determined hostility towards Great Britain; a spirit of hostility none the less bitter, because unprovoked by any act of aggression on the part of the British authorities; none the less determined, because it is generally and firmly believed that, no matter what the provocation, Great Britain will not fight. The "*Lion*" is said to be aged and toothless; therefore every petty Mayor believes he can insult the decrepit animal with impunity, and is pot-valorous accordingly.

There is nothing very brilliant in Captain Wilkes' exploit, considered in itself; and we know of no people, except our neighbors, who would attach much value to the bogus heroism displayed by the American man of war, in stopping, and searching an unarmed vessel, and capturing therefrom two unarmed and helpless men. If the American navy had no brighter deeds than this to boast of, its annals would be scarcely worth perusal.

It is therefore rather as an insult to Great Britain that the conduct of Captain Wilkes is valued, and approved by a large body of his fellow-countrymen, than as a feat of arms calculated to shed additional lustre upon Yankee laurels. It is in this light that we view the orations with which he has been welcomed; and viewed in this light, these orations are of grave national importance. They mean that an insult offered by an American naval officer to the British flag, is so grateful to the feelings, and so perfectly in harmony with the sentiments, of the people of the Northern States, as to entitle its perpetrator to honors which other and less enlightened communities reserve for the conqueror in the hard fought field.

Such being the feelings of our neighbors, and

such their sentiments towards Great Britain, it is difficult to feel very sanguine with regard to our international relations. Much as every Christian must deprecate war, ardently as he must pray for the preservation of peace, it is not easy to believe in the realization of those cherished aspirations. You can always find a stick when you want to beat a dog; says the proverb; and so with those who, like our neighbors, seem intent upon provoking a quarrel; if determined to fight, they will be at no loss for a *casus belli*.

The Message of the President of the N. States to the Congress which opened on the 2nd inst. is not reassuring. It is, considered grammatically, a villainous document, slip-slop in style, weak in argument, and remarkable only for its turbidity, reminding one of those Speeches from the Throne which Lord Castlereagh had the credit of composing, and which Cobbett so unmercifully criticised. Mr. Lincoln recommends his Congress to turn its attention towards the "great lakes and rivers," and suggests the propriety of forming thereon depots of arms and ammunition, at certain selected spots. As the Northern States can have no cause to apprehend an invasion from Canada, these preparations are manifestly aggressive, and seem to point to a premeditated attack upon British North America.

There are certain people who are popularly said to "rush in, where angels fear to tread," and without the most remote intention of comparing our contemporary, the *Montreal Witness*, to "an angel of light," we cannot but feel that, in his presumptuous intrusion upon ground from which the *Witness* prudently keeps aloof, the *Toronto Christian Guardian* betrays some striking points of similarity to "the other party;" that is to say, to those who popularly and profanely are spoken of as "fools." For instance, the *Witness* has always observed a most discreet silence whenever by us challenged to give a full, concise, clear, and exhaustive definition of the terms "*Protestant*," and "*Protestant Faith*;" the latter, or *Christian Guardian*, however, not having the fear of the Dictionary before his eyes, rushes impetuously to the rescue of his evangelical brother, and thus attempts to meet our challenge:—

"The only definition of a Protestant is—Every one who protests against Popery on the ground that the Holy Scriptures are the only authority in matters of doctrine, and that we are justified only by faith in Christ."—*Christian Guardian*, 13th inst.

Our cotemporary adds:—
"Will the *True Witness* please in future construct his arguments against Protestants in harmony with this, which is the only true signification of the word."—*Id.*

To this request we give a most unqualified denial. We can conceive, indeed, of no reason, based upon history or theology, upon grammar or etymology, why the *Christian Guardian* should make such a demand upon us; and guided always by the light of history, and by the principles of etymology, we reject *in toto* the definition of the word "*Protestant*" assigned to it by our Methodist cotemporary.

In its origin, the term Protestant signified every one who joined in the "Protest" made in the Sitting of the 19th of April 1529, by the minority of the Diet of Spires, against the decree of the majority of the same assembly, which virtually repealed or annulled the decision of 1526; in virtue of which a large amount of freedom in the choice of religion had been, in spite of the Edict of Worms, secured to the dissentient States and Cities of the Empire.—This "*Protest*" was based upon political, rather than upon religious grounds; and was defended rather by appeals to the public law of the Empire, than by appeals to Scripture. As *Ranke*, the Protestant German historian, tells us, in his "*History of the Reformation in Germany*," "They"—the Protesters—"especially insisted on the fundamental principles of the law of the Empire"—and declared that "they could not be obliged, without their consent, to give up the privileges secured to them by the Recess lately drawn up at Spires." In short, it was against the invasion of their civil rights, as members of the Empire, that the first Protestants protested; and in the words of the Protestant historian writer by us above quoted:—

"The discussions of the Diet of 1529 turned rather on a question of public law, than on any point of doctrine."—*Ranke's Hist. of Reformation in Germany* lib. v. c. vi.

The definition of the word "*Protestant*," given by the *Christian Guardian* is therefore historically false; it is also repugnant to sound etymology.

Applied in a general religious sense, instead of in the earlier political, and politically restricted sense in which it was first applied, to denote those who adhered to the Protest against the invasion upon the civil rights, or autonomy of the members of the Empire—of which invasion the majority of the Diet of 1529 was accused by the protesting minority—the word "*Protestant*" implies simply one who protests—irrespective both of the reasons for that protest, and of the particular opinions upon religious matters which he who so protests may chance to entertain; and it is in this sense, and in this sense alone, that we employ it—restricting its use however to those who by Baptism have been

made members of the Catholic Church, and Christian community. It is for the *Christian Guardian*, and he impugns the propriety of this employment of the word in question, to show from historical, theological, and etymological considerations, how, and wherein we are in error.

Considered theologically, the *Christian Guardian's* definition is worthless, because imperfect and ambiguous. It consists of two parts. The first is simply the negation of any authority in the religious or supernatural order besides that of the "Holy Scriptures," but it does not logically imply the recognition of the doctrinal or supernatural authority of those Scriptures, as an essential condition of Protestantism. Every man—even according to this part of our cotemporary's definition—who rejects the doctrinal authority of the Papal Church is *ipso facto* a Protestant; because he "protests against Popery on the ground that the Holy Scriptures are the only authority in matters of doctrine"—though the person so protesting need not necessarily recognise those Scriptures as of any great doctrinal authority at all. The second part of the definition is ambiguous; for it is impossible to tell whether it exacts as an essential condition of Protestantism, the recognition of the truth of the old Lutheran formula, that "man is justified by faith alone"—that is, by a faith unaccompanied by good works, and formed or vivified by charity; or whether the faith whereof a justifying efficacy is therein predicated, is identical with that faith which, according to the teachings of the Papal Church justifies—that is to say, a faith vivified and working by charity.

Besides, the *Christian Guardian* assigns—suggests even—no means by which his Protestant is to ascertain what "Scriptures" fall within the category of "Holy." This is a point of doctrine which every man must settle for himself; for if he accept the doctrinal authority, or inspiration, of certain scriptures upon the authority of history, tradition, or any authority whatsoever, extrinsic to those writings, he recognises that the "Holy Scriptures are not the only authority in matters of doctrine. If, however, he reject all authority in the supernatural or doctrinal order, extrinsic to the scriptures, he must claim for himself "a verifying faculty," or intuitive capacity for testing the truth of any pretended revelation—the possession of which faculty would render all revelation, *ad extra*—whether by means of a book, or of a Church—superfluous. In practise however, most Protestants do, and must assert, the existence both of a doctrinal authority extrinsic to the scriptures, whereby they learn of what writings the "Holy Scriptures" consist; and of a "verifying faculty," or inward light, whereby they discover the hidden meaning of those Scriptures. When the Protestant asserts the sole authority of the Bible, he really means the Bible as interpreted by his private judgment.

We understand, however, the *Christian Guardian's* meaning; for it is the custom of the little clique to which he belongs to restrict the employment of the generic term "*Protestant*," to that section of the Protestant world which calls itself "*evangelical*" and "*orthodox*;" and to refuse it to that other and far more important—numerically and intellectually—section which is generally known as "*Liberal*;" and which always rejecting Calvinism, embraces within its ranks, Arians, Socinians, Unitarians, Universalists, Swedenborgians, &c., &c. This assumption on the part of the "*evangelicals*" is untenable, for if submitted to, it would un-Protestantise the most illustrious of Protestants. For instance, the great Protestant poet Milton was an Arian; and an Arian or semi-Arian Christology is necessarily accompanied by an anthropology more or less Pelagian; which again, however modified, is incompatible with the doctrine of "justification by faith alone." So too with most of the great writers and thinkers of Protestantism, whether in England or on the Continent. They were in their several generations, and are for the most part to-day, Arians or Unitarians; and if the *Christian Guardian* insist upon our using the term Protestant in harmony with his definition—he must be prepared to renounce all Protestant partnership with Milton, Locke, Newton, and hosts of others, of whom hitherto the Protestant world has been accustomed to boast, as of its brightest ornaments. Even Luther must be renounced; for Luther was not a Protestant in the sense of admitting the "doctrinal authority" of the book which the *Christian Guardian* reveres as the "Holy Scriptures." Luther rejected not only the Apocalypse, but the Epistle attributed to St. James; and therefore, if belief in the doctrinal authority of the entire book which the *Christian Guardian* calls the Bible, be an essential condition of Protestantism, Luther was not a Protestant, because he denounced that book as containing much that was apocryphal, and much that was certainly false, and an "*epistle of straw*."

For these reasons we reject the definition, which, without a show of argument the *Christian Guardian* desires to impose upon us; and shall still continue to use that definition which alone is complete, clear, concise, and exhaustive—viz. "A Protestant is any baptized person who protests against the authority of the Papal Church."

A VERY SILLY QUESTION.—We find in the *Montreal Herald* of the 28th ult. a very silly argument against the right of the Southern States to secede, couched in the following (Socratic) terms:—"Suppose it were Lancashire seceding from England instead of the South from the Northern States; might not any foreign friend use precisely the same argument of expediency as the *Times* now tenders to the North Americans? Would not the shortest way to peace be to let Lancashire go? And yet what Englishman would say so? Nay, more, if not Lancashire only, but several counties were to secede, and that in such force as to make it doubtful how long the struggle would last, or whether the old or the new kingdom would in the end be successful, would any Englishman for one moment say that at all hazards the unity of the realm must not be maintained?"

Yes! certainly. For in the case of a Lancashire secession, or the secession of any county in England, the argument used to justify the action of the Southern seceding States would be palpably inapplicable; because betwixt the relation in which Lancashire stands to the British Empire, and to the Imperial Government, and that in which the several States of the Union stand to the Federal authority, there is not any, even the most remote, analogy. Even in the Legislative Union of the several once independent States which now compose the British Empire, it is absurd to look for the most distant analogy with that Union that binds together the still Sovereign States of this Continent. The one is a Legislative, the other a Federal Union; and these two kinds of Union are radically or essentially different, indeed incompatible, the one with the other; and no one but a nincompoop would attempt to compare them, because they differ, not in degree but in kind.

The several States of which the American Union consists, and till lately consisted, are, and were, in theory and in fact, Sovereign and Independent States, with regard to one another; each having its own independent Legislature and Executive, with supreme or sovereign powers within its borders—and that power, not a delegated power or authority, as in the case of a British Colony, whose right of self-government is derived from the central authority—but inherent and inalienable. It existed in its plenitude before the Union; it was not lost or taken away by the Union; and no action of the Federal Government can in any wise impair or even modify it. The essential condition of the American Union, its form, or vital principle, consists in this—that it is a Federation of *Sovereign* and *Independent* States; each member thereof retaining all of its sovereignty and independence, which, by the Act of Union, it has not explicitly consented to waive, as the condition of being admitted within that Union.

It is therefore childish, worse than childish, to argue against the right of the Sovereign and Independent State of South Carolina to secede from a Federal Union into which it entered as an independent State, from the admitted illegality of an English county, which never was either Sovereign or Independent—and which as such never entered into a Federal Treaty, either with the other counties of England or with the Imperial Government at Westminster—to "secede from England." The local authorities of Lancashire for instance, derive all their legitimate power from the Imperial Government; the Governor and Legislature of South Carolina do not derive their authority from the Federal Government; the former, therefore, has, and can have, no right to secede; the right of the latter to take such a step may also be contested, but upon entirely different grounds, from those taken up by the *Montreal Herald*.

We must admit, however, that the argument of the *Herald* in behalf of his Yankee friends, vicious though that argument be, is not his own, and that therefore, he is not exclusively responsible for its absurdity. It is an argument which, in substance, underlies all the pleas put forward by the Northerners for maintaining the Union by force of arms; and its constant recurrence is a convincing proof how completely the political principles of the founders of the Union are either forgotten, or deliberately trampled under foot, by its self-styled "arrested defenders." The course which the latter are pursuing is certain, if successfully followed out, to destroy that Union, or form of political government, which the great statesmen of the last century established, because it runs counter to all their principles, and political axioms. Never did Washington, never did any of the brave and wise who fought by his side, and sat in council with him, dream of such a Union as that which the Northerners are now seeking to impose upon a conquered South—a Union, the counterpart of that which the Jacobins succeeded in imposing upon France; and certainly the fathers of American Independence little imagined that they were fighting for a centralised despotism—for a public "one and indivisible," in which the several Sovereign and Independent States to which they belonged should subside into the condition of English counties. If the defenders of the Union are but giving utterance to their real sentiments when they advocate their cause in language such as that which their friend the *Montreal Herald* employs in their behalf; if the precedents of an English county are indeed to be made applicable to the political status of the Sovereign States of which

the American Union has hitherto been composed—then are the Secessionists fairly entitled to the admiration and sympathies of every honest man, and intelligent lover of freedom—of every one who believes that defensive war is legitimate, and who has sufficiently profited by the lessons of history to know that centralisation invariably means ruthless, intolerable despotism. The *Herald* generously furnishes the seceding States with an argument which is unanswerable. "We are fighting," they may now say, "in order that we may preserve our autonomy, and that sovereignty and independence which the original Union professed to secure to us; we are fighting that we may not become mere Provinces or municipalities; and in so fighting, we are doing battle in the cause of true freedom, and of true Conservatism."

We do not presume to dogmatise; nor will we assert that according to the letter and the spirit of the original Treaty or Act of Union, any one State, or party thereunto, has the right to secede from the Union, or to retract its consent to that Treaty, contrary to the wishes of the other contracting parties. Much we believe may be said on both sides; and whilst history furnishes us with no precedents by which to examine the value of the respective pleas; and whilst there is no tribunal competent to pronounce a decision in the case, we think it more prudent to abstain from expressing any very decided opinion upon the subject in dispute. In the case of the United States the *contract social* is a reality, and not the idle dream of a social visionary, or rather political charlatan. The Act of Union is an Act of partnership betwixt several sovereign and mutually independent States, voluntarily entered into, for certain defined objects, and upon certain specified conditions. It would seem therefore that, like an act of partnership, contracted betwixt individuals similarly situated with regard to one another, and under analogous circumstances—the Act of Union is conditional, and liable to be cancelled, either by the mutual consent of the contracting parties, or by the failure of one party thereunto faithfully to fulfil its terms, and to carry out the objects for which it was designed. This position may be taken up, and logically maintained; and from it, no doubt, the lawyer may be able to show—according as his Northern or Southern proclivities predominate—that the Southern States have, or that they have not, the right to secede; and that secession involves, or does not involve, a breach of contract. But to argue from the stand point occupied by the *Herald* is absurd, or rather amounts in substance to conceding the right of the South to take up arms against the North; because it implies that the latter claims the same rights of sovereignty over South Carolina, as those which the Government of Queen Victoria claims over Lancashire; and because the assertion of such a claim is the negation of the fundamental or formal principle of the American Union, which is based upon the inherent inalienable sovereignty of the several States of which it is composed. Destroy, or seriously weaken, that principle, and there may remain no doubt an American Republic; but it will no longer be, or bear any resemblance to, that Republic which Washington founded, and which has hitherto been paraded before the world as the *chef d'œuvre* of political wisdom.

THE MACMANUS OBSEQUES.—The honors lately paid in Ireland to the mortal remains of Terence Bellew MacManus have, of course, provoked many comments from the press. The *Morning Star's* remarks upon the subject are, if not altogether, unexceptionable, at all events in much better taste than are those of the majority of its Protestant contemporaries, and for this reason we transfer them to our columns. Its reflections upon the origin of the Protestant Establishment, and the effects of that hated institution upon the minds of the Catholics of Ireland are worthy of attentive consideration.

For it cannot be denied that there exists amongst the majority of the Irish Catholics a feeling of strong, deep-seated disaffection with the British Government; and that this feeling is the natural result of long generations of misgovernment, of which the Protestant Establishment of to-day is a standing memorial. In a spiritual point of view, the Parliament Church has, indeed, done but little harm; it may be doubted even whether it has been the instrument, or cause of the apostasy of a single Catholic; and perhaps it is not too much to say, that tepid or indifferent Papists have been established in the faith by the very sentiment of hostility to Protestantism which the sight of that Church could not fail to elicit. As a political grievance however, the existence of such a monstrous anomaly as a Protestant Church, "By Law Established" for a people of whom the overwhelming majority are, as they ever have been, Catholic and intensely Catholic, can scarcely be exaggerated; and to its perpetuation the British Government owes that ill-will of which it undoubtedly is the object, and of which the late "MacManus Obsequies" were the outward and visible sign to assure it thereof. The British Statesmen who