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The True Witness.

MONTREAL, FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 1857.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

THE approaching dissolution, and the probable results of the consequent general election, are the chief topics of interest discussed in the English papers received by the last English mail, which arrived in town on Tuesday last. The Royal proclamation for the dissolution of the present, and the summoning of another Parliament, was expected to appear about the 25th of March; when the country would be called upon to sanction or condemn the foreign policy of the Palmerston administration. That the present Ministry will be able to secure a slight majority, seems to be the general opinion in English political circles; and already some of the chief cities of the Empire, have expressed their confidence in, and approval of its policy.

In the meantime active preparations are going on in all the dockyards and arsenals for the vigorous prosecution of hostilities in China, and for reinforcing our army and navy in that remote quarter. Ships are fitting out rapidly at Portsmouth for the transport of troops: several regiments and companies of Artillery, are ordered to hold themselves in readiness; and it is said that a large squadron of gun-boats, besides several steamers, will accompany the expedition. It is also confidently asserted that the French Government intends to co-operate with the British in its hostilities with the Celestials; to whom however it is intended still to extend the olive branch by the hands of a Plenipotentiary, who is about to proceed to Peking, if possible; and who will endeavor to open amicable communications with the Chinese Emperor.

The terms of the Treaty with Persia, though not as yet officially published, have been made known to the world through the medium of the French papers, and are approved of by the press at home. "They are" says the Times "honorable to ourselves, without being gratuitously humiliating to the Persian Government. Persia restores Herat, and promises to respect the independence of the Afghan Principalities. England is placed on the footing of the most favored nations, and establishes Consulates wherever any other Power possesses them. We give up the demand for the dismissal of the Prime Minister of Persia; but on the other hand, Mr. Murray, will return to Teheran, and be received with full honors. Commercial stations will be established at the mouth of the Euphrates, and at two points in the Persian Gulf."

The news from Continental Europe is of little interest. The Paris Conference on the Neuchatel Question still drags its slow length along, and threatens to be interminable. No fears however seem to be entertained that the peace of Europe will be again menaced, from that quarter. The British Squadron in the Bosphorus had received orders to proceed to Malta; so that by the middle of March the Turkish waters would be entirely evacuated.

In our Provincial Parliament, the proceedings have been, if possible, more than usually uninteresting; duller than an assemblage of Methodists, more stupid than a protracted meeting. Our readers will therefore feel grateful to us for not inflicting them, on them. On Wednesday, Col. Prince moved in the Legislative Council an address to Her Majesty, begging of her to protect the rights of her loyal subjects in Newfoundland. This was opposed by the Hon. Mr. Vaukoughnet, who argued that, as the recent Convention must be inoperative without the consent of the Newfoundland Legislature, and as that consent had been withheld, it—the Convention on the Fisheries—had fallen to the ground. Hereupon Col. Prince agreed to withdraw his motion.

THE "DENOMINATIONAL" AND "VOLUNTARY" SYSTEMS.

Of the various schemes that have from time to time been proposed, for settling in an equitable and satisfactory manner the long vexed "School Question," two only merit any serious consideration. These are—1. the "Denominational System;" 2. the "Voluntary System."

To the adoption of the second of these two plans, no one who admits the sufficiency of the "Voluntary Principle" in religion, can object.—If the Church can be supported by—if the interests of religion may be safely left to—the "Voluntary System," it is absurd, it is inconsistent—and inconsistency is the highest conceivable power to which absurdity can be raised—to contend that the School can not be supported by the same "Voluntary System;" or that the interests of secular education may not be safely committed to its workings.

Men, there can be no doubt of it, are in ge-

neral more easily moved to make provision for the things of this world, than for those of the next. Men, in general, care more for the body than they do for the soul; for the affairs of time than for those of eternity. And if so, there can be no doubt that, in general, men would be far more likely to make provision for that secular training which will tend to ensure their worldly welfare, and the material prosperity of their children—than for that religious, or spiritual training, which neither enriches them, nor holds out, even, any prospect of temporal advantage to its recipient. No one, indeed, can deny that it is characteristic of the vast majority of mankind to look for anything, and everything, before seeking for the Kingdom of God and His Justice. As far, therefore, as the individual is concerned, there can be no doubt that it is, at least, as prudent to trust the interests of the School, and of secular instruction, as those of the Church and spiritual training, to the workings of the "Voluntary System."

Still more is this the case with the State, or Society; the stability and well being of which depend far more on the moral than on the intellectual proficiency of its members; and which is menaced far more seriously by their immorality and Godlessness, than by their mere secular ignorance. In so far as the State, or Society, is concerned, it is far more important, of far more pressing necessity, that it should make provision for the religious, than for the secular training of its members—that it should establish the Church than found the School; and there can be no doubt that if, in either case, it does violate the principles of the "Voluntary System," the State is bound, both by self interest and duty, to make compulsory provision for the support of religion, the Church, and teaching God's Commandments, even if it allows secular education, the School, and the Multiplication Table, to take care of themselves. He must indeed be either a fool or a knave, who, asserting the sufficiency of the "Voluntary System" for the religious wants of Society, pretends that that system is not sufficient to provide for all its intellectual requirements.

Nor can the justice and reasonableness of the "Voluntary System" for education be impugned, if we admit the same system to be just and reasonable in religion. No man has any more right to claim that his children shall be taught their alphabet at the expense of his neighbor, than he has to demand that the latter shall aid him to build his place of worship, to defray the salary of his minister, or help him to teach his child its catechism. Nothing can be more reasonable than that every man should be at liberty to feed, clothe, and educate his own children, without being called upon to pay for the feeding, clothing, or educating of any other man's children; and that, upon the parents who beget them, should devolve the sole charge of administering to their little ones' wants both of mind and body, of teaching them their letters, and of giving them their castor-oil in due season. No honest man, we say again, no consistent man—and an inconsistent man, or one who hesitates to carry out his principles to their extreme consequences is about the most contemptible creature that crawls on the face of the earth—who contends for the sufficiency of the "Voluntary System," as applied to the Church, or religion, can deny its sufficiency as applied to the School, or secular education.—The misfortune for Catholics is, that in their warfare with Protestants, they have, for the most part, to deal with men who are neither honest nor consistent.

For, if our opponents were honest, they would do unto us, even as they desire that we should do unto them. If they were consistent, they would treat the "School Question" as they have treated the Church question—when—as in the case of the Clergy Reserves Bill—it has been brought before them; and would therefore recognise the expediency of abolishing all semblance of connection between State and School, as well as between State and Church; and of entrusting the support both of Church and School to the Voluntary efforts of the people.

But we, as Catholics, are not upholders of the "Voluntary System" *par excellence*, either for the Church, or the School. As Catholics, we admit the right, we assert the duty, of the Christian State to make material provision for the support of both—with these two restrictions: that it shall do so in such a manner as to avoid doing violence to the conscientious convictions of any, even of the humblest and poorest of its subjects; 2—that it shall not, because of the material, or pecuniary aid by it given, pretend to control either Church or School; or to dictate to its subjects how they shall worship God, or how their children shall be educated. In a word, whilst contending that the Christian State should make material provision for both religion and education, we assert the fundamental principles of "Freedom of Religion" and of "Freedom of Education."

Now, these conditions—of State support, together with perfect "Freedom of Religion and Education"—are possible only under the "Denominational" system; or that system which, recognising the right of every individual, as against the State, to worship God, and to educate his children as he pleases, is content to furnish material or pecuniary aid for these important objects to

all denominations, impartially; without striving after an impracticable uniformity—which, however beautiful in theory, can only be carried into execution by trampling under foot the rights of conscience, and the liberties of the individual.—In our mixed society, neither a "Common Church" nor a "Common School" system is possible, or compatible with "Freedom," either of "Religion" or of "Education."

For these reasons we ask for a "Denominational," as opposed to a "Common" school system. Our demand is based upon the principle that the State has no right to tax any one of its members, for a Church or for a School, for the support of a system of religion or of education, to which he is conscientiously opposed. The pure, or consistent upholder of the "Voluntary Principle" goes farther; and maintains that the State has no right to tax any of its members for religious or educational purposes, at all. Here is where we are at variance with the latter; for we, Catholics, taking our principles from the Church, assert the right and duty of the State—under certain restrictions—to make provision for both religion and education; and whilst mindful of its very subordinate sphere, so to legislate, as to promote the spiritual and material interests of its subjects. For man, whether in his individual or legislative capacity—both as a statesman and as a private citizen—is bound, first and above all things, to seek the honor and glory of God his Creator.

We are thus particular, in order to anticipate an accusation that might otherwise be brought against us—that we were admirers of the "Voluntary System," *per se*. We are not admirers of that system; we do not seek for its introduction here, and would avert it, if possible. But we do confess, that, upon the principle that of two evils we should always choose the less—if there were no alternative betwixt the "Common School System" or "State-Schoolism," and the "Voluntary System," we would infinitely prefer the latter, as by far the less evil of the two; as far less fraught with danger to our Catholic population, than the "foreign element" of "Common Schoolism," which the Rev. Mr. Ryerson and his friends have imported from the United States; and which they would fain thrust down our throats, repugnant as it is to us as Christians, and as British subjects.

The "Common School" system is, we repeat, essentially a "foreign element." It is unknown to Englishmen; would not be tolerated in Great Britain—where the "Denominational" not the "Common" school system obtains; and is as alien to our habits as British subjects, and as repugnant to all our traditions, as are the "revolvers" and "bow-knives" which, no less than their "Common Schools" combine to form the most striking feature of Yankee civilization, Yankee morality, and Yankee progress, in the XIX century. If any man, if any set of men, are justly obnoxious to the reproach of seeking to introduce a "foreign element" into our Canadian institutions, it is the Rev. Mr. Ryerson, and his half-Yankeeified colleagues of the conventicle. The less then that these gentry talk about the introduction of a "foreign element," the better; for if *foreignism* be a sin, and its introduction an offence—they, and they only, who have endeavored to force upon us the "foreign element" of Massachusetts growth, known as the "Common School System," are the guilty parties. Dr. Ryerson should remember the advice given in the old proverb to all dwellers in glass houses, about throwing stones.

Instead then of this Yankee "foreign element," we advocate the introduction, and permanent establishment amongst us, of the home grown "Denominational" school system; as the system most in accordance with our habits and traditions as British subjects; and as alone compatible with our rights as freemen, and as Catholics. This of course implies the entire abandonment of the "foreign" or Yankee "Common School system;" nor need we be either ashamed or afraid to avow it. Neither for that system, nor for its supporters, have we any reasons to feel, or to feign respect. It is not only anti-Catholic, but it is essentially anti-British; and both as Catholics, and as British subjects, we do well in rejecting it with loathing. This has been the openly avowed policy of the TRUE WITNESS from the beginning; and though at first our plain speaking may have seemed to some of our timid friends as somewhat imprudent and premature, we are likely to have the assistance of our French Canadian contemporaries in our efforts to eliminate the "foreign element" from our School system. The *Courrier du Canada*, for instance, in its issue of Saturday last, boldly declares its conviction—that the "Common School system has had its day; and must disappear, to give way to something more rational, more just, and more moral." Yes! yield it must to our assaults, if only vigorously pursued; and make place, for the "Denominational" system we hope—but, if not, for the "Voluntary System," as the only other alternative practicable. Anyhow—"Delenda est Carthago;" the "Common" or Yankee School system must come down.

A correspondent, forwarding to us a slip from a city cotemporary, containing a brief report of a lecture on the "Early British Church," delivered a few weeks ago by the Rev. Mr. Gilson, of the Church of England—expresses his surprise that we have allowed the strange perversions of facts by, and the still stranger logic of, the reverend gentleman to pass unnoticed; and hopes that we will yet give the subject that notice which in his opinion it deserves. We will endeavor briefly to meet our correspondent's views.

The object of the lecturer was to show—1.—That the "Early British Church" was an independent church: that is, that it was unconnected with Rome, and did not recognise the doctrine of the "Supremacy of the Bishop of Rome" as successor of St. Peter; 2d.—That "the Reformed Church" now existing in England "is the same Church as that which was set up" in Britain in the first centuries of the Christian era.—If he has failed in establishing either one or the other of these propositions, of course, the whole of his argument falls to the ground.

But that he has failed in proving both, or indeed either of his propositions, will we think be evident from the following considerations.

1. Granting, for the sake of argument, that the "Early British Church" was independent of, and unconnected with, Rome—and did not recognise the supremacy of the Pope—this concession does not, in any manner, improve the position of the actually existing "Church of England as by Law Established;" or justify its hostile attitude towards the Papal See at the present day—and for this reason.

The Anglican Church does not even pretend to derive its Orders, its jurisdiction, or to trace its descent, from the "Early British Church;" but from the Church established in England amongst the Saxons, by St. Augustin. Now, whatever may have been the case with the "Early British Church," with which the present "Church of England," has no more connection than has the Hierarchy lately established by the present Pope, with the Parliamentary Hierarchy of the Established Church—it is certain that the Church planted by St. Augustin in England—and from which alone the Anglican Establishment can pretend to derive its Orders and Mission—was in communion with Rome; and did recognise, to the fullest extent, the supreme authority of the Bishop of that city, as the legitimate successor of St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles. Upon this point we would refer the lecturer to the Protestant historian, Neander; who, though he denies the Roman origin of the British Church, remarks that "the later Anglo-Saxons were uniformly disposed to trace back the establishment of the Church to a Roman origin."—*Church History, Sect. I.*

2d. Though cotemporary documents are very rare, we have still abundance of proof that the "Early British Church" was in connection with Rome; did recognise the Papal Supremacy; and that both in discipline and doctrine it was essentially different from that body which now calls itself the Church of England.

We find, for instance, in indubitable records, that Bishops of the "Early British Church" assisted at, and assented to, the decrees of several of the Councils held in the early days of Christianity. At Nice, at the Council of Arles, and at Sardica, the "Early British Church" was represented by her Bishops; who took part in the proceedings of those Synods, and gave their adhesion to the Decrees therein enacted.—Now, we know that in all these assemblages of Bishops, from all parts of Christendom, the "Supremacy of the Bishop of Rome," as successor of St. Peter was fully recognised. At Nice, the Council was presided over by Osius, the Papal Legate, assisted by Vito and Vincentius, two simple priests; but who, as representing the Sovereign Pontiff, took precedence of, and signed the Decrees before, the Patriarchs of the East. At Arles, by the consent of the assembled Fathers, including the Bishops of the "Early British Church," a letter to Pope Sylvester, in which the Supremacy of the See of Rome—"where the Apostles daily continued to sit"—was plainly put forth, was unanimously agreed to; nor is this to be wondered at, considering that the said Council was convened by the sole authority of the Pope, which authority of course was recognised by all, who, by assisting at the Council, recognised the right of the Pope to convene it. And so at Sardica, whereat British Bishops likewise assisted, the Pope was styled the "head;" and his See "the Seat of Peter, the Apostle," to which, in difficult questions, the Bishops of every Province should refer. Again, when the "Early British Church" was distracted by the heresies of Pelagius, we find a Pope—Celestine—sending a Legate—Germanus of Auxerre—to Britain, with authority to heal the wounds which the heresiarch had inflicted.

We do not allude to the tradition which assigns the introduction of Christianity in Britain to the missionaries of Pope Eleutherius, at the earnest request of the British King Lucius, or Llewel Mawr—though it is handed down to us

* Pelagius protested against the doctrine of purgatory; a proof that in his day the doctrine of purgatory was taught.—*Vide Neander Eccl. Hist.*

on the authority of the Venerable Bede, and of Geoffrey of Monmouth, who also cites a work of Gildas in confirmation of the truth of the tradition—because there are no cotemporary records of the "Early British Church," in existence; these having been almost all destroyed by the Saxon barbarians, as Gildas himself complains. But there seems to be no reason to doubt that, before the date assigned for the Pope's—(Eleutherius)—mission to Britain—about the year 180—there were no Bishops in the island; and that the Hierarchy of the "Early British Church," as did that of the Anglo-Saxon Church, derived its Orders and its Mission from the See of Peter.—That this was the opinion of the Bishops of the "Early British Church," is pretty clear from the fact recited by Gotelinus, that, in their controversy with St. Augustin, they defended their peculiar observances "by the authority of Pope Eleutherius their first founder." The theory of "independent churches" had not been invented in the days of St. Augustin. In those days Christians believed in "One Catholic and Apostolic Church."

Why then, it may be asked, did the Abbot Dinooth, and several of the British Bishops, oppose St. Augustin's pretensions, and refuse to acknowledge him as their Archbishop? They themselves tell us why: and the reason which they assign is—not the "independence of the British Church," not the novelty and unreasonableness of the claims of Supremacy put forth by the Roman Pontiff—but simply their personal aversion to St. Augustin himself. He, as history tells us, did not rise to receive the representatives of the "Early British Church;" and acting, it is said, upon the advice tendered to them by a celebrated hermit, they attributed this conduct of St. Augustin to a stern and haughty temper; and for that reason, and for that reason only, refused to submit to him. Wherein, doctrinally, the "Early British Church" differed from Rome, it is not difficult to ascertain, from the well authenticated accounts of the chief points in dispute betwixt the British Bishops and St. Augustin. The most important of these related to the time of keeping Easter, wherein the British Church differed from Rome; but, as the present Anglican church observes the Paschal Festival at the same time as does the Roman Church, it is clear that, upon this point, the "Church, as by Law Established," condemns Dinooth and his associates; and recognises the propriety of the demands made upon them by St. Augustin.

One other point only in the Rev. Mr. Gilson's lecture is worthy of notice. He says that the "Early British Church" was "one in government, and in doctrine with the undivided Primitive Church in the East and West." This is no doubt true; and is a conclusive proof of essential difference betwixt the "Early British Church" and the present "Church of England as by Law Established," which neither in discipline nor in doctrine agrees, either with the Roman Catholic Church, or any of the Oriental schismatic communities. On all points, in every particular, wherein the present Church of England differs from the Roman Church, or is distinctively Protestant, it differs from all the Oriental Christian communities—orthodox or schismatic; which upon all points at issue betwixt Catholics and Protestants—(with the exception of the Papal Supremacy)—are at one with the Church of Rome: and upon all doctrinal points—(with the same solitary exception)—wherein the schismatic Orientals differ from Rome, the Anglican Church agrees with the latter. Thus the Anglican Church retains the "Filioque" in the Creed—which some Orientals reject—and therein agrees with Rome; whilst on the other hand, if it protests against the doctrine of the Mass, as a true propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead, and consequently against the doctrine of the "Real Presence" or "Transubstantiation"—it protests against doctrines common to the Church of Rome with all the Oriental communities which, in the course of centuries, have separated themselves from the centre of Christian Unity. This simple fact—of the truth of which any one who will take the trouble of examining any of the Orientals Liturgies can easily satisfy himself—at once disposes of the Rev. Mr. Gilson's assertion, that the "Law Established" Church of England, with its Royal Supremacy, and Calvinistic Articles, is at the present day "one in government and in doctrine with the undivided primitive Church in the East and West."

These considerations are amply sufficient to show that the Church, as by Act of Parliament existing in Great Britain, is not "the same church as that which was set up in the land of our forefathers in the times of the beginning of Christianity;" and that it has no "claims upon the affections or allegiance of any man." Indeed the idea of a "national," as distinguished from the Catholic, Church, is an absurdity; for it is absurd to suppose that God recognises "national" truths, or takes pleasure in "national" religions. No Church or religious organisation, can have a claim upon any man's allegiance, unless it holds from God Himself; and that Church which, holding from God, has a legitimate claim upon the spiritual allegiance of any one man, has an equally legitimate claim upon the allegiance of every man upon the face of the earth; no matter where