

# THE TRUE WITNESS

AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT

No. 761, Craig Street Montreal, Canada

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All correspondence, business and otherwise, to be addressed to the Editor.

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

Country.....\$1 00  
City..... 1 50  
If not paid in advance: \$1.50 (Country) and \$2 (City) will be charged.

Subscribers, Newfoundland, \$1.50 a year in advance.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 3, 1894

## IMPORTANT NOTICE.

In order to prevent any further delay in correspondence, and to facilitate matters in general, we would respectfully request that no further communications intended for the TRUE WITNESS be addressed to the former proprietor.

### THE EPIPHANY.

The sixth of January is the feast of the Epiphany, the commemoration of the adoration of the Infant Saviour, by the Magi, or Wise Men of the East. The blackness of night hangs over space; the gray of the breaking day intrudes upon the darkness, and in the Eastern sky a solitary star, more glorious than all its twinkling companions, grows pale in the flush of the dawn that flings its crimson and gold along the horizon and fringes the robes of departing Night. Soon the herald rays of an approaching day shoot their glories high into the heavens, and as the great round sun wheels its red disk above the line between earth and sky, the morning star disappears in the vault above, its sheen is lost in the resplendent beams of the day-god. It is thus in the natural order, it is so in the spiritual sphere, and in the wonderful harmony of the religious domain the same phenomena are apparent.

The clouds of paganism had hung over the world, the dark night of infidelity, barbarism and ignorance had lasted four thousand years. Like planets upon the night sky of antiquity the prophets, the patriarchs, and the chosen leaders of God's people shed a faint and distant gleam. But the time was rapidly approaching when a new dispensation was to commence. The gray dawn of approaching Salvation was giving way to the first flash of Redemption's day, when the Star of the Morning of Truth appeared in the Orient and pointed with its beams toward the little village of Judea over which the glorious Orb of Divinity was about rise.

"We beheld His Star in the East and have come to adore Him," said the Kings, these wise men, from the different ends of the earth. They represented in their three different races all the human family. The one was the descendant of Chem, the second of Ham, and the third of Japheth. They were of the white, the yellow and black divisions of the family of man. They came from different lands, and they were the exponents of all that the old world had of great and of good. They were kings or leaders in their respective countries; they were wealthy beyond all their fellow-countrymen; they were virtuous to a most remarkable degree; they were humble as the lowliest. One came from the classic shores of Greece, where art and science had adorned the civilization of the world and left models for the imitation and examples for the practice of untold generations yet to be. A second hailed from

the home of the Mongolian, where laws as old as the memory of man had taught of a Supreme Being and the duties of the creature to the Creator. And a third came forth from that dark and mysterious continent whose burning heart throbs still in its fevered breast, far away from the reach of human progress, but on whose confines stand the imperishable monuments, "from the summit of which forty centuries look down" upon the world and tell to the beings of our day that they were old when yet the race was in its infancy and the mists of fable surrounded its existence.

Thus were not only the different branches of the human family, but also the three known continents, represented in that most glorious of all pilgrimages to the shrine of the Divine Infant. The wealth, the wisdom, the power, the goodness of this world travelled with them to pay homage to the Son of God made man for the universal redemption of His creatures.

On the confines of a burning desert they met and immediately the Star of the Saviour appeared above the horizon and glittered upon their path. Forward they moved into the wilderness of sand, and they dreaded not the trip for their faith was unshaken and they knew that the light before them—like the fiery pillar of captive Israel—would infallibly conduct them to the land of promise, to the most sacred spot on earth's broad face, the place where the Expected of nations was to be born King of the Jews. It mattered not that miles of dreary, sky-bound wastes extended between one oasis and another, it mattered not that the dread simoon might at any moment sweep down upon them and bury them in the ocean of sand, it mattered not that the fitful and deceptive mirage might arise at any point to lead them astray: the Star shone before them and they followed. And great was their reward, for they crossed the desert in safety, they avoided all the perils of such a wonderful journey, and, at the proper time, they descended the road that leads to Jerusalem. Yonder, beyond the blue hills and jagged rocks that rise from out the valley of the Jordan, lay the city of David, and toward it moved the Star that they had seen in the East. Still inspired by an inextinguishable faith they followed the luminary. At last, over the cave where the Messiah lay, the orb of miraculous splendor paused, and drawing in all its diverging rays, it concentrated them upon the place where the King of Heaven reposed.

It was only then that the Magi knew that they had found the One for whom they sought. Going in they adored; and, after returning thanks to God, they presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold representing the wealth of earth, which all belongs to Him, and which men should ever lay at His feet as a token of their submission to His holy will; frankincense representing sacrifice, as a mark of their faith in His Divinity, which alone can claim such adoration from man; myrrh representing sufferings, such as He was about to undergo, and the sufferings of humanity that are ever sanctified by being placed at the feet of the Saviour. Thus was it that these three men, in their nationalities, their countries, their races, their journey, their adoration and their gifts stand forth upon the background of the past and serve as models whereby all future generations should act, in order that the Founder of Christianity may receive the meed that is His and which each of His creatures owes Him.

Over the face of the world is the

human family scattered, and the Son of God became man for the redemption of all, without exception. The different races of men are all bound to turn their steps in the direction of Bethlehem. The wealthy and the gifted as well as the indigent and the lowly are upon an equal footing in presence of the Divine. Standing on the confines of the great desert of life we all are obliged to start out and to face the countless dangers that surround the path we must follow. There may be, here and there, a resting place along the way, but it is uncertain, and under its shade trees and beside its fountains we are not allowed to tarry. The simoons of passion and sin sweep in endless cyclones over the surface of the years before us; it is almost impossible to escape them. There is no map upon the face of the desert, and no landmarks to guide our footsteps. But, as for the Magi of old, the Star of Faith shines brightly upon the horizon before us. By following it through all the perils of that journey, it will most certainly conduct us to the land of our promise, to the gates of the "celestial Jerusalem," to the Bethlehem of our existence—the place where the loving Saviour awaits us all.

But there is another lesson to be drawn from the Wise Men. We must come with gifts, according to our Faith. We must lay at His feet all the prosperity, the joy, the health, the happiness, and the wealth that He has bestowed upon us—for all belongs to Him, and tomorrow he can take what to-day He gives; we must place before Him all our offerings in the way of a tribute to His Divinity, and constantly immolate ourselves at his shrine in a sacrifice that cannot be other than acceptable; we must deposit at His Crib the burden of our sorrows, our sufferings, our poverty, our privations, our crosses and our miseries, in order that He may direct the Recording Angel to mark them to our credit in the indelible Book of Life. Such is the way in which we should celebrate the Feast of Saturday, the 6th instant, the grand Festival of the Epiphany.

At the very dawning of the New Year we find the Infant God giving the first evidence of His mission—"not to destroy the law but to fulfil it"—as He submits to the customs and enactments of the State. He who is above all law was the first to preach obedience to legal authority, by performing, to the last letter, the code of the people. Taking this grand lesson to heart and properly reflecting upon the significance of the "Adoration of the Magi," it must necessarily follow that our future lives will be governed by their precepts and examples, and the consequence must be that the Star which we beheld, upon our path, at the beginning of our years, shall conduct us securely to the Adored of all ages.

### A PHILISTINE.

Perhaps no city in the world, in proportion to its size and population, has as many churches—and such beautiful ones—as Montreal. At this season of the year our Catholic temples are especially imposing and gorgeous. Lamartine once wrote: "There is nothing so inspiring as a temple; therein everything speaks, everything preaches, everything tells of God, of peace, of Heaven. The resume of human history is a temple—when properly understood." The other day, in glancing over Mr. S. E. Dawson's admirable "Hand-Book of the Dominion of Canada," we came upon some really eloquent passages in which the author does full justice to our glorious Catholic places of worship in this city. Referring to Notre Dame de Lourdes and its paintings, Mr. Dawson says: "It is like an

illuminated Missal, which to a Protestant has interest as a work of art, and to a Catholic has the superadded interest as a work of devotion." In speaking of the Parish Church of Notre Dame, the author quotes from Mr. W. D. Howells descriptions of Montreal seen from the towers of that superb edifice. The author of "Venetian Life" and "Italian Journeys" pays a high tribute to the splendors of scenery that nature has lavished upon the St. Lawrence, and he grows enthusiastic when drawing pen pictures of Montreal.

An author very often displays his tact and judgment as much in the portions of a quotation that he omits as in those that he reproduces. To Mr. Dawson's great credit be it said that he just gave his readers enough of Mr. Howells' remarks to please everyone, to avoid touching the most delicate feelings of anyone, and to leave all who may peruse his volume, with grander ideas of our country and with a good opinion of Mr. W. D. Howells—an opinion which he by no means deserves. While doing justice to Mr. Dawson for this fine and delicate sense of what is due to his readers, and his desire to please all and hurt none, we cannot but let our readers know that this Mr. Howells—a clever man, an able writer, and a pronounced authority on certain matters—is possessed of a most prejudiced mind, and is so blinded, not by ignorance, but by bigotry, that he is entirely unfit to give an opinion upon any subject that verges upon religion. The other day a very dear friend sent us an extract from the Catholic Weekly Review, of October 19, 1889, in which are a few quotations from Mr. Howells' volume, "Their Wedding Journey." These are too good to let pass. They will suffice to show how generous Mr. Dawson was, and how much he desired to avoid anything offensive, when he omitted these remarks of the over-estimated traveller from his "Hand-Book."

In referring to Mr. Howells, the Review said that he, "belongs to 'the mob of gentlemen who write with ease,' but the general effect of his book could scarcely be more unpleasant. It abounds in sneers at Canadians, their sentiments, their manners and political status; while it bristles with offensive references to the Religion held in so much love by the Lower Canadians. Indeed, he goes, as we think, to very unnecessary length to make it understood that his superior intelligence rejects the Faith of Catholics as a fetish and a superstition."

Just read the following extract; it should suffice to give our readers an idea of Mr. Howells' broad-mindedness!

"It was rapture," we read, "to take a carriage and drive, not to the cemetery, not to the public library, not to the rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association, or the grain elevators, or the new park just tricked out with rock-work and sprigs of evergreen,—not to any of the charming resorts of our own cities, but as in Europe to the churches, the churches of a pitiless superstition, the churches with their atrocious pictures and statues, their lingering smell of the morning incense, their confessionals, their fee-taking sacristans, their worshippers dropped here and there upon their knees about the aisles and saying their prayers with shut or wandering eyes, according as they were old women or young! I do not define the feeble sentimentality—call it wickedness if you like—but I understand it, and I forgive it from my soul!"

What a genuine, loving Christian soul is that of Mr. Howells! We are grateful for his magnanimous forgiveness! It is thus he speaks of the Cathedral; we have no comment to make:

"At the cathedral therefore, perhaps, the worst paintings in the world, and the massive pine board pillars are unscrupulously smoked to look like mar-