

[WRITTEN FOR THE TRUE WITNESS.]

"THE MARK OF THE BEAST."

An Able Dissertation in Answer to Prof. X. of Montreal—Something Worth Careful Reading.

The old interpretations of the passages concerning the "Scarlet Lady," the "Beast," "Antichrist," etc., which—when no better excuse could be found for expelling the House of Stuart from the throne of England,—were, for political purposes, blasphemously quoted against the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, have lately, and singularly enough, now that the political purposes whose turn they were then made to serve exist no longer, been revived by some of our Protestant neighbors of the good city of Montreal, and notably so by Prof. X. Whether impelled by curiosity, or whether urged by that taste for the absurd which forms so leading a trait in the character of our own times, large crowds have formed the audiences on those occasions, as we read in the newspapers, and have listened with morbid relish, as their plaudits sufficiently show, to the worn out old profanities which the heat of party feelings, if not also religious animosities, might once, if not have excused, at least have accounted for. But now that the doctrines of the Catholic Church are so well-known; that her system of education is so well appreciated; that her labors in the noble cause of civilization are so universally acknowledged; that the morality of life which she inculcates is so generally felt as a social blessing, it does seem strange that these old follies should have the hardihood to show their faces once more. It may perhaps be the last flicker of the uprising torch. Let us hope it is.

There is one blessing, however, that we have not happily seen revived: It is that which stigmatized the Loving Cross of Lord Jesus Christ as the "Mark of the Beast." Scarcely, when every edifice calling itself a Christian temple—even though it be of the most Puritanical stamp—is now surmounted by the Blessed Sign, could the most hardened of the hardened have dared to trample on the universally-revered symbol of Christianity. Our preachers of the class of the Joseph Cooke and company must sacrifice the consistency of their blasphemies to the needs of popularity, at least, to this extent.

As to the "Mark of the Beast" itself, it is pretty clear what it is, at least in the moral order. We call a drunkard a *beast*, not, indeed, as it has been wittily remarked, because beasts are addicted to the use of spirituous liquors; but because such indulgence dethrones that reason which alone, in the intellectual order, elevates man above the brute: his actions are no longer those of the man: he wills to walk straight, but he staggers in spite of himself; he wills to speak coherently, but his speech is thick and disordered. These involuntary actions resemble those of an animal; not because an animal is disorderly in his gait, or in the sounds it emits, but because they are not the actions of that free will which constitutes man a human person. They are the "mark of the beast" that is in us. So every passion—violent or gentle—has its appropriate mark: anger has its frenzy, its foaming and its pallor. Sloth, its yawning and its nodding; and we may notice here that there are "marks of the beast" in all *involuntary bodily convulsions*. We use the word *involuntary*, not because we believe that the soul can never, even after years of self-control, obtain such mastery over the body as to be supreme mistress of all the actions of the latter; but because, although this is the true destiny of man, yet so few attain to it, that even though distinguished for the opposite virtue, and united to the Divinity of His grace, the marks of involuntary passion still perturb the body generally until the end of life. So it is related that a gallant officer in the Revolutionary war never could go into an engagement without excessive trembling. "Why, you're afraid, Colonel!" exclaimed an impertinent young subaltern. "Yes, sir," was the reply, "and if you were half as much afraid as I am, you would run away." The man was most brave and courageous, and had been so for many years; but *the beast* was still strong enough in him to make him tremble, although not to make him run away.

Perfect men are they, and truly admirable, though few indeed in number—in all our lives did we ever meet with one?—where reason has established her-

self supreme ruler over all the faculties which the great Creator has formed for her use, whose personality is concerned in the lifting of a finger, or the blinking of an eye. It is a perfection which makes us tremble from its very sublimity; and yet it is not an impossibility. It is what we must all aspire to who have heard the words: "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect," or who have trembled (and who among the reflecting have not!) at the "strict account" to be given, one day, for "every idle word." It is what some men—the Saints—have actually reached!

The mark of the beast in the purely moral order being *convulsive and involuntary bodily action*, why should we look for any other mark in the religious order? We find, by a little attentive examination, that it is the mark of all false religions. To begin with paganism; in what do we find religious exercises among the heathens chiefly to consist? In the consultation of the divinity by means of oracles, and in the celebration of mysteries, such as the Eleusinian, etc. In both of these we find the mark of the beast. The oracles given by Apollo at Delphi were conveyed to mortals, as is well known, by the instrumentality of a woman in a furious state of convulsion. A mere allusion to the Pithia, so well known to every classical student, is sufficient here; we need only remark that all oracular responses partook of the general character. Even the gentle *Aeneas*, inquiring the future of the yet more gentle *Heleus* found himself "*multo suspensum numine*;" and the frenzy of the *vatis* was something more than the mere imaginative excitement of the Roman poet.

If, granting that fury was naturally the characteristic of the orgies of Bacchus, drunkenness cannot be pleaded as the cause of the disorders perpetrated by the votaries of Ceres, on what was called the "Torch-day" of the Eleusinian Mysteries. In fact, all the mysteries of whatever divinity—Isis, Mithras, Cybele, Hecate—had convulsions as a part of the initiation ceremonies. Less classic paganism bore the same character, and yet Baal answered them not.

Modern paganism, among the races of Asia, Africa and America, places also its religious act in bodily perturbation. Witness the votaries of the loathsome gods of Hindoostan, dancing with skewers stuck through the muscular portions of their limbs. See the fetish worshippers of Africa executing the antics of insanity in honor of the bundle of sticks which they suppose to be the residence of the Supreme power. Observe the similar performances of the Medicine-men of the North American Indians. Consider all, then, and say whether the *convulsive state* is not the constant and essential mark of heathen-worship.

Witchcraft, which is, indeed, only paganism in a blacker and more occult shape, a more direct and explicit worship of demons—bears the same mark in a more prominent form. From the witch of Endor, the witches of New England in the colonial times, to the spiritual mediums of modern times, convulsion is the *sine qua non* of divination.

Mahometanism has neither priests nor altars. It is rather the service of the world and the flesh than of any object of religious worship; but it has its devotees, though they be few. The accounts we have of the dancing dervishes do not permit us to doubt that the extraordinary, and oftentimes astounding and revolting, phenomena they exhibit are those of pure bodily convulsion caused, in all cases, by excessive mental perturbation.

And now we have come to a delicate part of our essay. What if our fellow-citizens in Protestant communities should find in some of the religions prevalent among them the indisputable mark of the beast? Our liberal friends of the various Protestant persuasions—with very few exceptions—have often expressed themselves so much ashamed of the epithets hurled against the Catholic Church by their forefathers of a few generations past, that it is hardly polite to show them where the mark really is. Politeness generally ranks herself under the amiable banner of charity; but when charity requires that truth should be told, and politeness rebels against the requisition, must we follow the rebel? Besides, the late most unwarranted and odious attacks made by the Rev. Joseph Cook, in Boston, Professor X., in Montreal, and the redoubtable Cole, editor of the Cleveland Leader, in his own paper, remove our scruples on that point. Protestantism, in itself, is a

negation rather than a religion; but since the human heart must have a religion, Protestantism has, in several instances, stooped to pick up the fragments of what she has destroyed, and put them together in some strange and novel form to gratify the religious instinct of the nations whom she has deceived. And whenever we find any form of positive religion among Protestants, there also do we find the *convulsive state*.

Some, as the Shakers and Quakers, derive their very name from this bodily perturbation. Others are only spasmodic on occasions—at revivals, camp-meetings, etc.; but all agree in blasphemously attributing those irregular, involuntary, unseemly, *unholy* nervous twitchings and gaspings to the influence of Him whom the True Church invokes as the "Spirit Creator," the Holy Ghost—the God of calmness, serenity and peace. If they blasphemed once in calling the cross of Christ the mark of the beast, is their present blasphemy less in calling these the *real marks of the beast*, the workings of the Holy Spirit?

Reason is the legitimate governing power—the Viceroy, we may say, appointed by the Supreme Ruler to hold in check the passions and the animal man. When these become too strong for her authority, and rebel, what should the Viceroy do? Seek aid from the Supreme Ruler. And what will the Supreme Ruler do? Will He descend into the province for the purpose of giving His faithful Viceroy up to her rebellious subjects, to be led captive, maltreated and put in chains? Yet that is how our separated brethren represent the action of the Holy Ghost, who, they say, descends into the human soul for the purpose of dethroning reason, throwing the faculties into disorder, turning the princely power of speech into inarticulate howlings, and subjecting the body to the contortions of insanity.

But far different is the true action of the Creating Spirit. When He descends into His creation all is harmony and grace. That order, which is said to be "heaven's first law," is re-established; reason is re-instated in her legitimate authority—the passions lie prostrate at her feet. The tongue is her faithful servant, and sings in serene, holy and ennobling strains the praises of the Creator. The body is composed and decorous in all its postures; a sanctity clothes the human personality well described by America's favorite poet, Longfellow, in his portrait of Evangeline, the Acadian sweetest maid:

"But a celestial brightness, a more ethereal beauty
Shone on her face, and encircled her form,
When, after confession,
Homeward serenely she walked with God's benediction upon her."

Compare this portrait,—no mere creation of poetic fancy, for Longfellow saw it realized, more than once, if his steps ever led him past the portals of a parish church on a Saturday evening,—compare this portrait, I say, with that of a howling Redfield, or Sankay or Moody, and say in which do you see the fruit of the Spirit, which are manifest: "charity, joy, peace, patience, longanimity, goodness, benignity, mildness, modesty," and the rest. But let us take a more perfect picture of a more perfect character. Let us hear what St. Bernard tells us of one of Erin's greatest and loveliest saints, St. Malachy: "For to be silent about his inner character, the beauty, fortitude and purity of which were sufficiently shown by his manners and life, he governed his exterior always in one and the same way, and that most modest and becoming; so that nothing whatever appeared in him which could offend or startle the beholders. . . ." But in Malachy, what man ever watching him very narrowly, could perceive, I will not say merely an idle word, but even an idle gesture?—When was he ever seen to move hand or foot without a purpose? When was aught disedifying seen in his gait, his aspect, his manner, or his countenance? Everything in him was under discipline, everything was the very criterion of virtue, the very form of perfection.

Such are the effects of the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in a soul not only passively submissive to His inspirations, but actively co-operating with His grace, and succeeding at last in absolutely effacing the mark of the heart; so that not the faintest trace of it remains. Such is the Christian perfection to which we ought to aspire—the fulfilment of our true and sole destiny—including the "*mens sana in corpore sano*," with much more superadded, of which the ancient

philosophers, with their boasted equanimity of soul, could never have dreamed in their mild speculations on the possibilities of human perfection—bare metaphysical possibilities to them but made moral possibilities and glorious realities by the all-sufficient and all-efficient grace of God, flowing through its established channels in the Holy Catholic Church.

One objection remains to be answered: Do we not find the saints canonized by the Catholic Church, often represented as carried away by ecstasies, raptures, trances, in which the functions of reason and speech are suspended, and which are, therefore, comparable to the paroxysms just mentioned as found in other denominations? We answer that these ecstasies and raptures neither destroy the empire reason over the other faculties, nor suspend its functions. The reason is occupied, at these times, in acts of praise and adoration—conscious acts, meritorious acts; and consequently, acts of the free will. If it appears dead to external things, it is because it has an opportunity of absorbing itself in the contemplation of things far more worthy of its attention. In this, it makes a reasonable preference—it shows itself by its action. As for the lower faculties, they are still under its dominion—never more so. The body may be lifted into the air; but far from any indecorum in its postures, and still further from the nervous twitchings and convulsions which we have called the marks of the heart, its dignity and beauty are wonderfully increased. A holy calm reigns upon the countenance; joy beams from the eyes; and if the functions of the tongue are exercised it is not howlings or in incoherent words, but in the sweet and harmoniously modulated praises of the Spirit who "fortiter, suaviterque disponens omnia." Nor are the exterior virtues forgotten or neglected, much less discarded: if a vow of obedience binds the subject of these ecstasies, the command of a Superior is sufficient to call it instantly from the most absorbing rapture to the performance of some, perhaps menial, duty, as has been shown by numerous examples. Who, understanding rightly the character of these raptures, could, for a moment, consider the comparison of them with the yellings and the contortions of false religions as anything but profane, to say the least?

Let me conclude, young gentlemen, by summing up my thesis concerning the true mark of the beast in a few words:—

1. The mark of the beast consists in those outward bodily signs by which the animal nature of man shows itself in opposition to reason.
2. The mark is found naturally in all men by reason of original sin.
3. It is fostered and intensified into the convulsive state by false religions, of which this intense form of it properly becomes the distinguishing mark.
4. It is effaced by divine grace entering the soul by channels established in the Holy Catholic Church.
5. It may be completely obliterated by the constant and sedulous co-operation of the soul with divine grace in the state of Evangelical perfection.
6. It is permitted, by Divine Providence, to appear more manifest in some than in others; as, for instance, when it is said "God set a mark upon Cain," which mark, according to the universal tradition of the Jews, and the opinion of the Christian commentators of the Holy Scriptures, was a convulsive trembling of the body.

It is, perhaps, made more manifest in those forms of hurry which are most seductive to the intellectual man, that their true character may be revealed; hence the amazing convulsions which followed the adherents of Jansenism and its outbreak.

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TESTING HIS HONESTY.

Your druggist is honest, if, when you ask him for a bottle of Scott's Emulsion, he gives you just what you ask for. He knows this is the best form in which to take Cod Liver Oil.

"Your visits remind me of the growth of a successful newspaper," said Uncle Jabez, leaning his chin on his cane and glancing at William Henry, who was sweet on Angelica. "Why so?" inquired William Henry. "Well, they commenced as a weekly, grew to be a tri-weekly, and have now become daily, with a Sunday supplement."