

The True Witness.

AND
CATHOLIC CHRONICLE,
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G. E. OLBERG, Editor.

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MONTEAL, FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 1869.

ECCLIASTICAL CALENDAR.

MARCH—1869.

Friday, 12—Precious Blood.
Saturday, 13—St. Gregory, P. D.
Sunday, 14—Passion Sunday.
Monday, 15—Of the Feris.
Tuesday, 16—Of the Feris.
Wednesday, 17—St. Patrick's Day.
Thursday, 18—St. Gabriel Arch.

REGULATIONS FOR LENT—All days of Lent Sundays excepted, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Saturday included, are days of fasting and abstinence.

The use of flesh meat at every meal is permitted on all the Sundays of Lent, with the exception of Palm Sunday.

The use of flesh meat is also by special indulgences allowed at the one repast on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays of every week from the first Sunday after Lent, to Palm Sunday.—On the first four days of Lent, as well as every day in Holy Week, the use of flesh meat is prohibited.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The names of the Fenian prisoners who have received the mercy of the Crown are forwarded by telegram, but are not easily deciphered because of the capricious mode of spelling employed. Two Burkes are mentioned, Mackay, Chas. Kickham, O'Connor, Stark, and O'Keefe. Petitions praying for the release of other Fenian prisoners have been presented to the Queen, and leniency seems to be the order of the day.

If the Queen did not open Parliament in person, the cause is said to be Her Majesty's state of health, which renders all excitement dangerous. Disease of the heart is hinted at, but we hope that there is here exaggeration. The Continental news is of little interest; but the cold, not to say insulting, reception that Victor Emmanuel met with at Naples the other day, is indicative of the hatred which Neapolitans of all ranks entertain towards the Piedmontese conquerors, and of their design to throw off, at no distant day, the alien yoke.

The Carnival at Rome, which is usually a season for the display of political feeling, was dull this year. A novel feature, as we learn from a private letter, was introduced, to the great astonishment of the Romans: Eight of our Canadian Zouaves, having at their head Sub-Lieutenant Taillefer, and the Chevalier Larocque, had contrived a regular Indian canoe, complete in all its equipments. Six of them were in the costume of male, two in that of female Iroquois, and in the guise they presented themselves on Shrove Tuesday on the Corso, where they created quite a sensation. The Marquis of Dute had the honor of receiving, on the day after Ash Wednesday, the Sacrament of Confirmation by the hands of the Holy Father. The young convert made an offering of £1,200 to the fund of the Peter's Pence. The canard about the death of the Pope has been contradicted.

THE CONVENT CASE.—Our readers will have seen allusions to a trial just concluded in England, and which has created much sensation. The facts, as elicited during a lengthy trial in the Court of Queen's Bench, that lasted about two weeks, are these:—

Miss Saurin, a young lady of a very respectable Irish Catholic family had been, under the name of Sister Scholastica, a member of a community of religious Ladies, of whom Mrs. Starr was the Superior. For some time she seems to have lived happily enough with her Sisters: but some years ago, fault was found with her on several occasions, for neglect of duty, and violation of the strict rules of conventual life. The usual penances for such conduct were imposed, but seem to have produced no amelioration in the conduct of the erring nun. Indeed it soon became clear that she had no true vocation for the religious life: nor by this, do we intend any imputation upon Miss Saurin's moral character. A young lady may be a very excellent person, and a decent Christian, and yet be restless under the strict discipline which life in a convent necessarily imposes upon all who enter the religious state. There are rules, very necessary indeed,

but apparently trivial, to be observed, such as keeping silence during certain hours, attendance at the services of the community &c., &c., which to many are irksome: but which for obvious reasons are obligatory upon all who, of their own free will, have engaged to submit themselves to the clock-like regularity of conventual life. Well! Miss Saurin could not, or would not obey rules: constant quarrels with the Superior and other Sisters ensued: and at last, for the sake of restoring peace to the community, the Bishop of the diocese was appealed to: and he, having carefully investigated the case, decided to release Miss Saurin from her vows, and to give her leave to return to the world.

But Miss Saurin would not leave the Convent. She insisted upon remaining, despite of the wishes of her Sisters who longed to be rid of her, and of the injunctions of the Bishops. The Superior thereupon it seems took her ring from her, and so treated her, in order to induce her to leave the Convent—from whence they could not well turn her out by brute force—that Miss Saurin deemed herself the victim of a conspiracy; and having at length by the means indicated, been got rid of, she brought an action for damages laid at £5,000, against Miss Starr and the Community.

The trial was long and tedious, full of the most trivial details:—as to how, on one occasion, the Superior had given the complainant a brass thimble which hurt her finger: how, on another occasion, the Superior put a duster on her head: and how she had been set to work to scrub floors with a brush deficient in bristles. These, and similar acts of persecution, were sworn to on the part of the complainant, who also deposed to cold boiled mutton having been set before her.

For the defence it was proved that Miss Saurin was very unruly, untidy, and unpunctual: that she would persist in writing letters to the world outside, in glaring violation of one of the fundamental rules of the Community: that she was constantly late at choir: that she was in the habit of speaking with strangers who visited the institution: that she was harsh to the children who attended the Convent school: and that she was in the habit of appropriating and secreting things—trifles indeed—not belonging to her, and would often abstract, and eat the food of the little scholars who attended the school. These, and a number of other similar irregularities were clearly established against the complainant; and by these facts the defendants sought to justify their action towards her: in that they complained of her conduct to the Bishop; and afterwards endeavored to compel her to leave their Community. The verdict was, of course, against the Convent, and damages £500 were awarded.

Without expressing any opinion as to the wisdom of the course of petty annoyances—the dusters, bad thimbles, cold mutton, and deficient bristles in her brush, of which Miss Saurin complained—we would remark that this trial has signally disappointed all the lovers of scandal in England. They expected, of course, when first they heard that a "Convent Case" was to be tried in one of their Courts, that a terrible revelation of the immoralities of Convent life was about to be made: and that at last one clear case of the forcible detention of a nun would be made out, for the detection of a Protestant world. And yet what did the trial bring to light? Nothing worse than this: that even in a Convent, quarrels such as occur between ladies in the world, may occasionally break out: and that nuns are far more anxious to get rid of, than to forcibly detain, a Sister whose conduct does not please them. The business, pitiable as it is in many respects, has for ever given the lie to the scandalous tales about nuns being imprisoned in convent vaults: and it has also shown that, if not exempt from human defects, any tendency to carnal indulgence, to luxury, and to bodily ease, are not amongst the frailties with which nuns can be reproached. It is their too great asceticism, and their over strict discipline, that scandalises the Protestant community.

For scandalised they are: and though the Miss Saurin exposures have only exposed in glaring light the falsity of the ordinary calumnies on nuns and convents, they will still continue their war against the religious life, and make of this case a pretext for trying to subject convents to inquisitorial processes, commonly spoken of as "Smelling Committees." Thus we see that a correspondent of the Montreal Herald draws the conclusion that such "smelling committees" should be organised—"because it is very evident that many of the inmates (of convents) may be detained against their will:" the fact being, that Miss Saurin's complaint was, not that she was detained in a convent against her will: but that she was not allowed to remain in a Convent against the will of the Superior, and of the other Sisters, and contrary to the instructions of the Bishop. A more striking instance of what is called the non sequitur we do not remember to have met with even in Protestant logic. Because—(allowing that Miss Saurin's case was fully made out)—because the means employed to get rid of a refractory Sister, and induce her to

leave the Convent were carried to unjustifiable lengths, therefore "it is very evident," concludes the writer in the Herald, "that many of the inmates may be detained against their will." So if the Herald's editor were roughly to kick an impertinent intruder into his drawing room, out of doors, it would be a logical deduction that he had a lot of British subjects confined under lock and key, in his cellar.

MR. GLADSTONE'S BILL.—As will be seen under our British items, Mr. Gladstone has brought forward his measure for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Irish Church.—The very meagre details furnished by the electric telegraph, make it scarce possible to form an adequate conception of its merits; but it does seem to us to be deficient in some most important points. It does not show clearly how the revenues of the disendowed Establishment are to be appropriated; neither does it fully establish perfect religious equality in Ireland.

Some eleven or twelve cathedrals, we are told, are to be supported out of the public funds, on the grounds that they are national property; but if national property, then certainly as much, to say the least, the property of Catholics as of Protestants, and therefore no longer to be used for the exclusive benefit of the latter. If they are to be supported out of the public funds, then Catholics must be allowed to use them for their worship; but if, as it is to be feared, they are to be devoted exclusively to Protestant religious purposes, the evil principle of religious inequality and of Protestant Ascendancy, will still be retained. If Protestants be unable, or unwilling, out of their own pockets to keep up in good repair the old ecclesiastical buildings of which, at the era of the Reformation, they robbed the Catholic Church, the best plan would be to put the latter in possession of them, when, we vouch for it, they would be well taken care of, without aid of any kind from the State.

There have been disturbances at the Lake of Two Mountains amongst the Indians. Some have been arrested on a charge of threatening to destroy the property of the Sulpicians, to whom the Seignory belongs. The misguided men have, it is to be feared, been excited to these crimes by some scoundrels of another race, who will escape the punishment that they deserve, far more than do the Indians, whom, by their falsehoods, and attacks upon the Sulpicians, they have excited to a violation of the laws, and an outrage upon their benefactors, the gentlemen of the Seminary.

HOMAGE TO IRELAND'S PATRON SAINT.—FEAST OF ST. PATRICK, 1869.—The Church marks the solemn season of Lent with special offices, in order to remind us of the sorrows and sufferings of our Saviour during the forty days which preceded His glorious triumph over sin and death—in the Resurrection.

Our Divine Lord invites us Himself to that spirit of prayer and mortification which the numberless Saints have endeavored to practice both in the solitude and in the "Crusade." All had in view—one great object, the salvation of their fellowmen; and in forwarding this one object, they were using a powerful means of securing their own eternal salvation.

Their respective lives tell us of their wonderful control, through the simple means of grace, over the inclinations of men; and while we admire the eminent virtue of each in his own peculiar sphere—we marvel at the indomitable perseverance of a Xavier in India—the ardor of a St. Denis of France—and to speak of one in particular—the burning zeal of a St. Patrick of Ireland.

Commissioned by the See of Rome to preach the Faith to an unsettled people, we are astonished when we consider the many difficulties with which he was surrounded, and how nobly St. Patrick fulfilled the arduous task imposed upon him. The great Apostle took up with vigor his humble mission, and spoke to the hearts of the Irish people that faith which each succeeding generation inherited as a legacy from its true and noble-minded forefathers. If there be a bright spot upon the pages of the History of Ireland, it is that which records the preservation of the Catholic faith amidst ceaseless tyranny and persecutions; and we can point with pride to the appearance of St. Patrick—as the luminary that first enlightened and opened the minds of the Irish people to the truths of religion—that led them on from paganism to Christianity—and caused the scene of his labors to merit in future years, that rare, but deserving title of the Island of Saints.

His was a life of toil—of forbearance—of self-sacrifice to the spiritual interests of His cherished flock.

If we wish to have an idea of the extent or of the result of his lifelong labors—where can we find it better exemplified than in the firm attachment of millions of his Celtic people—gathered together under the shield of the Cross—to pay to his thrice happy memory—their humble tributes of honor and veneration.

And as he was endeared to our ancestors in

life, "so is he to us in death;" and while many have signalized this anniversary before us—the Church has marked it in her holy offices to recall him to our remembrance—while Carolan, of old played his sacred deeds to the music of the Irish Harp—O'Connell mingled the faith with his magic eloquence—and the bard in sweet, but solemn strains—sings his soul to rest.

Many were the characteristics of the life of St. Patrick; but surely of his many virtues—his generosity and his courage—both springing from the same fountain of faith—neither have been lost to the people of Ireland; and long may they cherish the lessons of his edifying life—long may his memory be enshrined in the hearts of the Celtic people.—Com.

MERRIE ENGLAND.

[COMMUNICATED.]

The Reformation made poverty a crime—at least we are forced to so conclude from the treatment of paupers in countries blest with that evangelical paragon—an open Bible. We do not for a moment deny that strenuous efforts may have been made by thousands of philanthropic individuals—in England especially—to remedy the evil, but hitherto these efforts have been quite ineffectual. Private charity can only influence a circumscribed space; it requires a well organized system to do real good.

It is in vain for political economists to indulge in fine-spun arguments and philosophic reflections upon the true principles of government, and the necessary relations of cause and effect. All the philosophy in the world cannot withstand the stern logic of facts. Profound thinkers may point out the evil and the remedy, but if things remain in the same condition for all that, then we must seek a salvation of the problem upon other grounds. A superabundance of population is a favorite hobby of those would-be cobblers of the social order, but we fail to understand the meaning of such an argument. Wide-spread pauperism is an evil of comparatively modern origin. To assert that there are too many people in this or that particular locality may or may not be true. Still, it is very probable that the same objection might have been used five hundred years ago, if the same state of things existed.

If Englishmen, of patriotism and impartiality, can look back to the social condition of their native land before the Reformation, and compare its status now with its state then, without sighing for a return of the beneficent spirit of Catholic days, then, indeed, they are to be pitied. Why, from the accounts we have received from medieval writers, it is very certain the serf, villain or by whatever other name was expressed the feudal relations of the lower classes to the higher, was vastly superior—in everything that constitutes the pleasures of existence, to the "middle" and lower orders of our age. There was less sense of dependence, although, nominally, a hasty glance at the times might exhibit to us a state of society somewhat resembling Russian Serfdom, and the slavery which the late struggle in America abolished. Let us remember moreover, that the inferior classes of olden times were never a burden upon the State. They might have had less of that queer privilege which moderns call "liberty." They may not have possessed the noble prerogative of being periodically drummed up to the polls to vote for the driver who whipped them on. They could not read; but then they had this advantage: they had faith, which comes by hearing: they had morality which is born of a living faith: they had contentment, which, alone, virtue can bestow. It would be well for our age, if the lower classes could exchange their perverted knowledge for the blessed ignorance of the same order of the Middle Ages. Now a-days, they know just enough to be excited and made discontented by the exaggeration of their wrongs, which a venal press is ever ready to lay before their eyes. And this exaggerated cry over grievances is the principal cause of that subtle spirit of democracy which is slowly but surely undermining the most ancient thrones of Europe.

Of what use is political liberty without bread? Let the most ardent admirer of our times ask the semi-brutalized, starving, over-worked peasantry of England whether they would prefer their present unhappy condition to the well-fed contentment of their order in the Middle Ages. Who can doubt the answer they would give? Stately workhouses grew out of the ruins of the monasteries, but the Catholic charity which dignified honest poverty in the latter is altogether unknown in the former. The poor Englishman would rather see the sun set upon the dead bodies of his starved offspring, than expose them to the pompous rigidity called State alms. The poor of the Catholic age never felt that honest poverty was a disgrace, simply, because they were never made to feel that it was such. In this age, and in England especially, poverty is looked upon as a crime—nay, worse than a crime—for, while the criminal is warmly clad, well fed and housed, the deserving pauper is handed over to the tender mercies of those awful creatures the parish officers, of whom Mr. Bumble was a sample.

Now, why does such a state of things exist in England, with her power, her wealth, her resources? All the political economy of Smith or Mills or any other thinker, cannot explain the anomaly. Theories are well enough upon paper. They attack—they please—people give them a few days notice, but, after all, pauperism increases and legislation is as powerless as ever. No one can doubt the generous intentions of the English government and people in their efforts to apply a remedy to this unhappy condition of the social system. But, nevertheless, when disappointment follows its most strenuous efforts, it is not too much to say that though the deed be present, the spirit, which alone could make it efficacious, is absent. The spirit of the Catholic Church is the mighty agent that is wanting. Without it, the wisest plans fail to accomplish the slightest lasting good. Every principle which has gone to the consolidation of England's magnificent empire was born of the Catholic spirit: the one great enemy to the welfare of that empire, pauperism, is the baleful child of the Reformation.

Some may be inclined to sneer at this assertion, as arguing a great ignorance of pre-Reformation times. We are fully aware that poverty—not pauperism—existed then as well as now. "The poor ye have always with you," said the Divine Redeemer. But there is a vast difference between the two cases. The poor man of the Catholic period was a person who was to be treated as a suffering member of Jesus Christ: the pauper of Protestantism is an incubraunce to be got rid of—the product of that irreligion, infidelity and gross materialism which constitute modern non-Catholic civilisation.

The Catholic spirit entered largely into the rank and file of that great movement which, led by the barons, obtained for Englishmen the charter of their liberties. When John was bearded at Runnymede, it was not rebellion but justice that made him submit. When thus humbled and temporarily shorn of his power, why did not the triumphant party give way to that madness and cruelty which afterwards, proved so disastrous to the less tyrannical Charles I.? Was, it not because the spirit of the Catholic Church held the unruly passions of the commonalty in check, and thus protected the rights of authority by restricting the lawless will of the monarch on the one side, and the excessive exactions of the people on the other. Look, again, at the example France affords us. Though grievously oppressed for a long period, it was only when the principles of Voltaire—that most consistent of Reformers—became, to a certain extent, prevalent among the poor of the larger cities, that truth, obedience and humanity were cast to the winds, and the world stood aghast at the monster which infidelity had evoked. The tattered rags of the sans culottes sat upon the throne of Saint Louis, and the beggar of the Faubourg St. Antoine danced about the royal corpse of the descendant of a hundred Kings.

It is a serious thing for a nation when its pauperism begins to excite anxiety and alarm. The spiritual authority which alone could influence the heaving mass of discontent has been rejected by those very nations which now stand helpless in the presence of the great danger. The step from irreligion to Revolution is very short.—Moral considerations alone, can withhold the impatient, heated, untutored elements which exist to day in England. They want that moral antidote, but Protestantism cannot furnish it.—Catholicity to England was like health to the body. Its good was not appreciated until lost. According as the wild passions which bred the Reformation die away, the eyes of impartial Englishmen are becoming more open to this great truth.

There is another thing they may understand also:—spoliation of the Catholic Church has ever been essentially followed by poverty, both national and individual. The tyrant's pander, Thomas Cromwell, founded English pauperism upon the desecrated remains of shrines and abbeys which he robbed. Would it not be a very just action to give back to the Catholic Church a portion, at least, of that property which was so necessary for the maintenance of the helpless and poor? In a short time we should see the immense sums, which England pays for a solution of this great question, diminish gradually, and the poor become once more the children of religion—not the whipped slaves of the State. Poverty requires the maternal touch of the Catholic Church, not the rude grasp of cold State craft. Until she gain once more the upper hand, pauperism—as produced by the pseudo-Reformation will continue to perplex England. To talk about numbers, to divide, subtract, cut up into fractional percentages—to prose learnedly about "life rates," "climatic influences," "average prolificness," &c.,—may be very well for those who understand the rationalistic jargon: but it will never succeed in effecting the slightest good. All this theorizing comes from not understanding the question. It is not numbers that we speak of so much as the condition of those numbers.—That condition has been brought about by causes which had their origin in Reformation principles. Until those principles cease to influence the governing classes of England, pauperism will retain its present hideous peculiarities—will be a rock ahead threatening destruction—a sword of Damocles, suspended over her devoted head—a problem impossible of solution.

J. M. J. G.

Mr. O'Farrell of Quebec publishes a certificate from Whalen, exonerating him from any complicity in the murder of Mr. McGee.