

The True Witness

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1897

EX-FINANCE MINISTER FOSTER'S NEW ATTITUDE.

From the first THE TRUE WITNESS has insisted that the school question was essentially unpolitical and that it was much to be deplored that some of our public men had forced it into the political arena. That it should continue to be bandied to and fro like a shuttlecock in the same of party was out of keeping with the reason and the conscience of honest men. And happily there is a sufficiency of that type of humanity—a type of humanity which a great Catholic poet pronounced "the noblest work of God"—in this Dominion of ours to rescue it from that false position and place it, where alone it can be dealt with on its proper merits, *in foro conscientiarum*. That, because a man has, in the course of events, become identified with one or other of the great parties that represent political opinion in Canada, he should be expected to undergo a modification of his religious convictions, is a conclusion that "shocks all common sense." No man who hoped or cared to retain the esteem of right-thinking people would adduce such a reason for any alteration of his theological views. A Catholic would deem it an outrage if one were to estimate the steadfastness of his faith by the political designation which he chose to assume, or if, when he passed from one party to another, he were taken for granted that he was *ipso facto* more or less sincere or determined in his allegiance to his Church. Yet, strange to say, such charges, such estimates, such comparisons, have been made again and again, not in the case of individuals merely, but wholesale, and as though it were a matter that admitted of no doubt whatever, during the last few years and especially during the last eight months.

To what are we to attribute this utterly illogical assumption—an assumption that savors of some strange epidemic of simony—some unpoisoned confusion of the things of the spirit with the things of the world and the flesh? If there is anything of the certainty of which there can be no shadow of doubt, it is that the great commission of Christ to his apostles and their successors was a commission to teach. *Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes . . . docentes eas servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis.* That command is as enduring as it is comprehensive. There is no exception of class or sex or age. To the Prince of the Apostles had come already the special command, *Pasce oves meas!* This was a command of direction and its peculiar obligation was impressed on St. Peter by the exceptional solemnity of its delivery by his risen Lord. To make the question a merely political or, worse still, a party question, is revolting to the holiest feelings of which a true Catholic can be conscious. Nor is the offence less heinous because it seems to be common and has been committed with apparent impunity.

The most subtle sophistry, the most vigorous eloquence, all the graces of the accomplished orator, cannot efface from the mind of the faithful Catholic the sense of the wrong that is committed by robbing the Episcopate even in theory or by implication of its charge over the lambs of Christ's flock. Catholics may call themselves what they please, but until they cease to call themselves Catholics or forfeit the right to be so called, they can hold but one opinion on the school question and accept but one settlement as legitimate and final.

There is another point on which there seems to be a certain haziness in some quarters. Men who fought valiantly in defence of the rights of the Manitoba minority before the elections of last June, have spoken or written as if the

result of these elections absolved them from the duty of further conflict and transformed them from champions in *defensam*.

This is a view of the matter which, in our judgment, casts a lurid light on the motives of those ex-champions.

Surely a righteous cause is not rendered indifferent because the many, in their blindness, have underestimated its importance.

The cause of which this school question is an integral part was as divine when all the world, but a little company of peasants and fishermen, was against it as it was afterwards when emperors and kings did homage to Christ's vicar. We cannot understand how any public man, and much less a great political leader, could avow that on such a question he had become a mere bystander, simply because his opponents had triumphed for the time being, and could with complacency regard the remaining stages of the conflict.

Surely it must have been through a momentary access of self-oblivion that so able and sincere a statesman as the Hon. G. E. Foster, Finance Minister in so many administrations, permitted himself to profess adhesion to such a doctrine.

We admit, of course, that the principles on which the Protestant upholds the system of separate schools may differ in some points from those on which the Catholic bases his support of it. But, religious convictions apart, they both hold that the system is the fairest, the freest and the most advantageous to the country at large.

The true Catholic cannot accept the "settlement" compromise and send his children to the common school. He is forced, therefore, to pay for two systems. The conscientious man is punished: the reckless man is favored. The Romans of old were charged by a brave old Celt with making a solitude and calling it peace. The present government condemns integrity to disabilities, and the valiant champion of true liberty smugly assents, because, forsooth, it is no longer his business! But Mr. Foster well knows that he cannot thus deaden the sense of justice or stifle the voice of duty in his heart. Principles are eternal and remain in force, to whatever side the majority may sway.

BEWARE.

In noticing the Appendix to the Report of the Commissioner of Public Works some time ago, we seized the opportunity to emphasize some of the risks of fire in city and country and how they may be guarded against. The same subject is again brought before the public by the last Annual Report of the joint fire Commissioners of the city. It covers the work done by the Commissioners, and Mr. Emond, the Secretary, who compiled the Report.

We find that 196 private dwellings fell a prey, partially or wholly, to the flames, which caused a loss of \$194,445. The insurance on these houses amounted to \$251,670. The following figures show the distribution of disaster by fire among the different branches of business: general offices, \$69,644; glassware and crockery stores, \$80,300; dry goods stores, \$40,167; clothing, \$10,950; brass and copper manufacturers, \$10,721; auctioneers, \$13,000; groceries, \$17,491; hardware stores, \$35,000; but and fur stores, \$15,000; hotels and restaurants, \$23,570; jute company store, \$17,500; laundries, \$43,000; manufacturers' agents' store, \$27,350; provision stores, \$13,416; sheds and stables, \$16,631; silk stores, \$13,000; steamer, \$5,000; varnish and paint manufacturers, \$3,273; warehouse and wire stores, \$17,317.

The most instructive portion of the Report is that which deals with the causes and alleged or conjectured causes of the fires. The largest item comes under the head of carelessness or preventable accident, to which are assigned 122 fires. To warn people against carelessness is too general a kind of admonition to give ground for the hope of good results. But there are other entries that offer scope for practical warning. Among these are the 80 fires attributed to accidents connected with coal oil lamps and stoves; the 40 to overheated stoves and pipes; the 28 to rats and matches; the 28 to foul chimneys; the 19 to cigarettes and pipes; the 11 to hot ashes; and the 51 to the imprudent use of matches in the hands of children. The danger from this last cause has been impressed on the minds of parents and others who have charge of children by repeated disasters, sometimes attended with loss of life. Yet children are still allowed access to those small destructive agencies which have such a fascination for them. Fifty-one fires in the year is a large number to be assigned to such a cause, and it suggests the necessity of some stringent law to protect the public from such casualties. The worst of such outbreaks is that the most careful and provident may be exposed to constant peril owing to the thoughtlessness of their neighbors.

The same is true, to a less extent, in the cases suggested by the rest of this enumeration. Of course, accidents from unforeseen causes are always likely to

happen, and even where there may be a measure of blame, few care to add reproach to the other troubles of those who are involved, with their neighbors, in a common calamity. All the more reason is there for enforcing the proverbial truth that prevention is better than cure, and if it could be enforced by a recognized legal provision, the known existence of the latter would tend to make the adoption of safeguards more general and habitual. During the year 458 fires were investigated and 487 witnesses examined. The Police Force and Fire Brigades are credited with having satisfactorily discharged their duties, in so far as they came under the supervision of the Commissioners.

POLICE AND FIRE BRIGADE.

All enlightened Canadians look forward to a time when appointments to office—Federal, Provincial and Municipal—will be made without regard to the origin or the creed of the candidate, and solely with respect to their qualifications for the duties they will have to discharge. But even the most fervent and large minded patriot, however impatient he may be of the system of compromise that is still in vogue, must concede, on reflection, that at our actual stage of development, our only hope of safety lies in an honest determination to carry out faithfully the arrangements to which we have all agreed.

In our civic administration the performance of such engagements with scrupulous precision is the only way to hasten the more generous policy of regarding all officials and all candidates for office as Canadians. It is the breach of solemn agreements that impresses the popular mind with a sense of the hopelessness of fair play if all such restrictions were removed.

Some years ago it was decided by resolution in the City Council that in filling up the quota of the Police Force and Fire Brigades the French Canadian element should be just equal to the sum total of the three English speaking nationalities—Irish, English and Scotch. How long the arrangement was adhered to we are not aware, but that for a considerable time it has been lost sight of will be evident to any one who reads the following figures:

In the Fire Brigade there are 125, and in the Police 85 French Canadians, in excess of the number fixed by resolution of the Council, as being their proportion relatively to the other nationalities.

Now it is not from any prejudice against the favored nationality that we call attention to the violation of the contract. Neither do we bring any charge of inefficiency against the majority in the Force on the ground of any facts or rumors that have reached us. We simply complain because in every selection of a French Canadian in excess of the proportion allotted by the agreement, injustice is done to the British, especially to the Irish, element in our population. And, apart from the fact of such injustice, which, at a time when so many are out of work, is a very real and a very hard fact, it is not wise to allow such incidents of civic management or mismanagement to ripen into causes of dissension. There are, unhappily, occasions for division and strife in more than abundance without provoking controversy by defiantly ignoring stipulations which, if observed, would promote harmony and good will. The English-speaking representatives in the Council should demand an investigation into this matter and see that justice is done.

AMERICAN EPISCOPALIANS AND DIVORCE.

A marked and a welcome change is coming over the spirit in which the members of the Protestant Episcopalians of New York have so long regarded the subject of divorce.

The "Church Club," an association composed of the most prominent members of the Protestant Episcopal Church of that city have passed a resolution demanding the amendment of the canon of their church which permits divorce for the sole cause of conjugal infidelity. It also allows the innocent party to the divorce—the "respondent"—to marry again. But the permission of divorce for any cause whatsoever is so obviously wrong that the Church Club advocates the adoption of the "Catholic doctrine of the indissolubility of the marriage tie when the sacramental bond has been validly contracted."

The question is to be brought up at the Episcopal General Convention next year; and if the agitation which at present exists is kept up till then it is probable that the advocates of the sanctity of matrimony will secure the prohibition by their church of the scandalous practice of divorce.

If Irish Catholics are retrograding in Montreal they are forcing themselves to the front elsewhere in Canada. Mr. Daniel Downey, boot and shoe manufacturer, and a prominent member of the C.M.B.A., has been elected Mayor of Brockville, Ont. He is a staunch Catholic, and has won his way to such a high public distinction by sheer energy and ability.

BOOKS FOR CATHOLIC READERS.

Our worthy correspondent Babbette has indicated very clearly some of the obstacles to the dissemination of Catholic literature.

The question is, in our judgment, one of the utmost importance to Catholic society, and on its happy and fairly prompt solution the character of our immediate posterity must depend. The spread of education during the last half century has imposed fresh obligations, the existence and nature of which have never been recognized as their urgency deserves. It is a patent fact to all of us that the proportion of readers to the population at large has conspicuously augmented during the last two or three generations. What the exact ratio of increase may have been in each succeeding decade since, say, 1847, we could doubtless ascertain. But it may suffice for the present to know that, if we contrast the condition, lettered or unlettered, of the young people under twenty to day with the same class twenty, thirty or forty years ago, we become aware of what is little less than a social revolution.

All who are lettered—who have acquired the rudiments of education—are not, it is true, habitual readers. Even the leaders in the busy industrial, mercantile and professional ranks of society are, as a rule, but little disposed for any reading that is not exacted by their special arts or crafts, or demanded by the necessity of knowing what goes on in the world. The number of persons who regularly devote a portion of their time to diligent study for the development of their minds is still comparatively small. It is possibly less than an inquirer would have found it fifty, seventy-five or a hundred years ago.

The tumultuous hurry and wild competition of modern business life leave less time and less desire for communion with the great minds of the past or the present in books.

Nevertheless, the opportunities at the disposal of well-to-do readers are larger and more diverse than at any former period. Both individuals and households can allow themselves the privilege of daily access to the standard works of their own and other languages at moderate prices. For new publications they must, of course, pay a good deal more, though some publishers have made it a rule to cater intellectually to the many rather than the few.

Such publishers are, indeed, the exception. The prospect of paying sales, in the issue of any work addressed to the general reader, seems more assured if it be brought out in a style adapted to the means of the wealthier classes. What is sacrificed in the custom of persons of more modest means is expected to be made up by the largest figure of the smaller sales. That this expectation is not always fulfilled publishers know too well. Rich people are not always fond of good reading than those less blest with this world's goods; neither are they always more disposed to pay high prices for what they read. A new book by a popular author, sold at \$1, \$1.25 or \$1.50, will be purchased with a readiness or reluctance not always proportioned to the means of the buyers, and among those who refuse to buy it on account of the high price there will be rich people as well as people of very moderate means.

The success of those publishers who have trusted the reading public sufficiently to venture on the issue of large editions of cheap good books has been due to the patronage of all classes of buyers. Of course it is not enough for a book to be cheap: it must be tastefully and durably got up. It is a matter of calculation as much as of speculation, and, as sometimes happens on the battle field, the most courageous are the most cool-headed and matter of fact.

We have hitherto been considering the entire book market, both as to the books and the buyers. The circumstances are of course changed when we come face to face with the question of Catholic literature or literature for Catholics and those for whom it is intended. There is a sense, it is true, in which literature knows no creed. The poets who have written in English, for instance, have not all or always a definite Catholic or non-Catholic mark. Southwell, Crashaw, Habington, Dryden, Pope, De Vere, Faber, Newman, Father Prout, Moore, Austin, and others that we might mention—though some of them were saints as well as poets—did not all make their Catholicity conspicuous. Some of the Protestant poets have on the other hand a distinctly Catholic note. In the best literature, indeed, it is the exception when anything offensive to Catholic taste is inserted, but there are undoubtedly many books, clever enough in their way, in which the enmity to the faith takes the form of hints and allusions rather than of open statements. These are the most insidiously dangerous snares that beset the unwary Catholic reader. In fact, it is no slight task to weed the vast field of modern literature in such a way as to give Catholics only what is good and true and whole-

some, while at the same time depriving them of no real masterpiece in any department of literature.

But that is just what the Catholic publisher has to do, and when he has completed the process of elimination—not sparing error on account of a great name and ignoring no deserving Catholic writer—then, let him begin issuing cheap editions—not of mere piles of ungainly rubbish—but of comely bound volumes, "neat but not gaudy" and durable enough for family reading. Such a "library" of Catholic literature, purged of evil and yet comprehensive, would sell amazingly, and in a short time the choice of pabulum, delicious, wholesome and nutritive, would be so full and varied that there would be no temptation to stray into forbidden pastures. In offering this suggestion, we need scarcely say that we are not forgetful of the benefits that Catholic publishers and booksellers have conferred on past generations of Canadian Catholics. Nor need we apologize for giving so much space to the subject.

THE NATIONALISTS OF ULSTER.

It has in recent years become the fashion to separate Ulster from the rest of Ireland as though it were altogether alienated from the Nationalist movement. By dint of repetition it is possible to give a certain plausibility to any fiction, however unfounded. Those who have followed in the pages of Irish history the course of the northern province in all the great patriotic movements of the last three hundred years and more, must often have been puzzled regarding the prevailing impression as to the un- Irish trend of Ulster's sympathies. They must often have asked themselves whether there was any true ground for the sweeping assumptions which have made Ulster in the minds of many outsiders rather an offshoot of the larger island than a true daughter of Erin.

In a recent contribution to the Dublin Weekly Freeman Mr. Joseph Devlin has cast some interesting light on this subject, showing the small measure of tact and the large substratum of invention by which the theory of an English Ulster is supported. Mr. Devlin attributes the change in the popular estimate of Ulster's leanings very largely to the growth of the spirit of dissension among the old patriots of Belfast.

The part played by that city in the rising of '98 is well known. It was the "head centre and chief dependence of the patriots." But when the insurrection proved disastrous to the patriot cause, Belfast underwent a transformation which proved more and more calamitous as the century advanced. Where formerly the utmost unity had prevailed there was now not merely division, but division into hostile factions—the Orangemen on the one side, and the O'Connellites on the other. Sectarianism grew more and more intense. At one time a plot was laid to assassinate the Liberator and he escaped by taking a different route from that which he had intended to follow. O'Connell had a strong hold on the Nationalists, and after the secession of the Young Irelanders, they showed their fidelity to their hero.

Thomas Francis Meagher dared not address a meeting even after O'Connell's death, being assailed with cries of "You killed O'Connell! You killed him!"

Mr. Devlin having thus brought the record of Irish patriotism in Belfast to its lowest point—for what is more hopeless than to see advocates of the same cause engaged in deadly strife—presents the Freeman's readers with a more cheering picture. He dates the dawn of the new day from 1884, when the Nationalists first ventured to organize for the return of their party as member for West Belfast. In 1886 the triumph was complete.

Mr. Devlin gives an enthusiastic account of Mr. Sexton's first speech to the electorate in St. Mary's Hall. In five minutes he had won the hearts of all present. The joy of Belfast was shared by Dublin and Cork. That victory was the most effective refutation of the claim that Ulster was anti-Nationalist, and ever since fresh proof of the baselessness of the pretension have continued to multiply. Belfast stood up for Mr. Farrell until his own action had rendered him impossible as a leader. It then approved of Mr. Sexton's course. It has steadily maintained the principle of majority rule. The Belfast branch of the Irish National Federation receives Mr. Devlin's warmest commendations. With the single exception of Cork no other county or town in Ireland has raised so much money for the Irish party. To-day it is united and solid, presenting a barrier to the aggressions of faction and commanding the esteem of all true Nationalists. And "where Belfast leads the Nationalists of Ulster are prepared to follow."

In the bereavement which Mr. Justice Curran has sustained through the death of his gifted brother, Brother Noah, he may rest assured that he has the sympathy of the Irish Catholics, not merely of Montreal, but of the whole Dominion.

THE EMIGRANTS TO BRAZIL.

Many who have read in the daily papers the harrowing stories, told by those of the recent emigrants from this Province to Brazil who have been enabled to return, must have felt inclined to make the brief comment: "Served them right."

Nor is such a comment too severe. The people who were induced to emigrate to that southern country where they have suffered so much hardship—where many of them have died from the fever peculiar to that very unhealthy climate—were sufficiently forewarned of the foolishness of the step they were about to take. But they persisted in their fatuous course. Now they realize their folly with bitter regret.

The most astonishing aspect of this San Paolo emigration business is that so many people should have been so ready to go to cast their lot in a far-off country of which they knew nothing, and as to the unfavorable conditions of which they were duly warned by the press, while there were millions of acres of good land in their own Province, within easy reach, that they could cultivate and live and thrive upon with less physical labor than they were obliged to perform in Brazil for a bare miserable subsistence in an unhealthy climate and amidst uncongenial and undesirable surroundings.

SMASHING CONFEDERATION.

We find the following editorial paragraph in The Globe, of Toronto:

"The Catholic Register says that if the Canadian Parliament were to make war upon the endowments of the Catholic Church in Quebec, the bond of federation would immediately be broken. Without disputing the assertion for the present, we would like to ask what, in that event, would become of the claim of the Quebec Bishops to regulate the educational system of Manitoba?"

We did not notice in the Catholic Register the statement attributed to it by The Globe, and should not be at all surprised if the quotation were found to have been garbled by The Globe to suit its own purposes, in the same way that other assertions have been distorted by the leading organ of anti-Catholic bigotry in Ontario.

Be this as it may, we regard this frequent allusion to the possibility of this Catholic Province of Quebec "smashing Confederation" as highly reprehensible. Since the days of George Brown, The Globe has never lost an opportunity of hinting at it. Catholic Quebec has no desire at all to smash Confederation. On the contrary, she is resolved to stand by it, as she has ever done, and to perpetuate the great work by remedying whatever defects may be found in it.

If the Catholic Register did really make the statement mentioned it was a blunder and an error.

ANCIENT ORDER OF HIBERNIANS.

The Irish American says:—

A reunion of the two wings of the Ancient Order of Hibernians of New York City and County has been effected; and the united body will henceforth form, as in the past, a harmonious and powerful organization. The basis on which the reunion of the Ancient Order has been mainly effected is the plan of erection, in this city, of the proposed "Hibernian Hall," in which all the Divisions of the organization are interested.

The project was initiated several years ago, when the "Hibernian Hall Association" was incorporated, for the purpose of erecting the building, and a fund amounting to over twenty thousand dollars was raised, and placed in bank, under trustees, for the purpose. Some months ago an action was begun to have a receiver appointed for the Building Fund, and have the Board of Trustees having charge of it dissolved. This brought together all those who were anxious to see the hall built. A meeting of the original incorporators was called and an agreement was signed to discontinue legal proceedings.

Negotiations were then commenced looking to a union of the two wings of the Ancient Order, in New York City and County. A Conference Committee of eight was appointed from each wing, and they came to an understanding; and from now on there will only be one body of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in this city and county. The names of "Board of Erin" and "American Board," which distinguished them heretofore, will be abolished.

A great joint parade of the Order will be held on next St. Patrick's Day, and work will at once be begun to raise funds for the erection of the proposed "Hibernian Hall."

The old organization of the "Ancient Order," which adhered to the "Board of Erin," in New York City and County, has always had a large membership, dating as it does, for over half a century back; and there is also a very large membership adhering to the more modern "American Board." When united they can make the largest display of any Civic organization in New York.

It is expected that the branches of the Ancient Order throughout the country will follow the example of New York and will unite on the same basis.

Driving through Dublin, one day on an outside car, the wretched appearance of the horse struck the visitor. He said: "Fat, you ought to be taken up for cruelty to animals, driving such an old screw as that." "Begor, sir," was the screw's reply, "let me tell ye that if I didn't drive that I'd be taken up for cruelty to a wife and six children."