

# The True Witness



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## THE TRUE WITNESS AND CATHOLIC CHRONICLE

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### EPISCOPAL APPROBATION.

"If the English-speaking Catholics of Montreal and of this Province consulted their best interests, they would soon make of the 'True Witness' one of the most prosperous and general Catholic papers in this country. I heartily bless those who endeavor to do this excellent work."  
—PAUL, Archbishop of Montreal.

## NOTES OF THE WEEK.

**CHICAGO CATASTROPHE.**—It seems almost late to comment upon the fatal fire in the Iroquois Theatre, Chicago, which on the 30th December last, made over six hundred victims. Yet it is one of those colossal disasters, the memory of which pass not away, like the smoke that enveloped their victims. In reading the fearful details of that awful event we were struck with two considerations, the one concerning the dangers to which people who frequent theatres are exposed, the other regarding some of the most heart-rending incidents in the course of that special tragedy.

In the first place, a theatre is always exposed to fire. A theatre is more or less crowded on every public occasion. The danger generally comes from the stage, where the inflammable scenery, the lighting appliances, and all the paraphernalia needed for the exhibition present a perpetual menace. The stage section is not sufficiently cut off from the body of the hall. In the theatre proper there are not sufficient exits, nor are the passages or aisles sufficiently large. A thousand or more people are crowded into a space that seats them very comfortably, as long as they remain seated; but the moment they rise to go out, even at the close of a performance, they are crushed and pushed in a most disagreeable manner. Then in the majority of theatres there are not two in every ten people present who know where the exits are. Not only should there be large doors at the front, but equally large ones on each side, and they should be so numerous that on opening them all the largest audience could disperse in three or four minutes. There should be no wood-work at all. The time has gone past when such inflammable material could be tolerated. It was the gas formerly, now it is the electricity that threatens fire. In fact, there is absolutely no security in the vast majority of our theatres. While a thousand people can easily go in quietly take seats, it is impossible for them to come out in the same order; not even when there is no panic.

We have laws and regulations regarding the safety of public buildings; but as a rule, it is only when some terrific event like the Chicago catastrophe startles people into life that any attention is paid to those laws and regulations. We have no mission to dictate to our own civic authorities what course they should adopt in regard to like institutions; but we cannot allow such a striking lesson to exist without calling upon them to study it well and to reflect upon the possible consequences of negligence in such a vital matter.

That which affected us the most in the story of the fearful death list on that fatal afternoon in Chicago, was the inhumanity of the strong whom we have pictured as crushing the weak and trampling down even the infant in a mad fury to escape impending death. There is much heroism in the world, and we glory in it; but there is also much brutality, cowardice, and selfishness. Discipline alone is conducive to practical heroism; when a panic occurs, when men, like sheep, are stampeded, when the sense of fear predominates, it would seem as if all the more noble and God-given characteristics of manhood were trampled under foot, and that the brute instinct of self-preservation swayed the human being. This did spectators behold strong people jumping upon the fallen bodies of children in a blind endeavor to reach a point of safety. There was no consideration for others, no pity, no mercy, no humanity. The more

awful the danger the more significant the unbridled fury of the fear-stricken people. It is thus that we see our human nature in its darkest aspect. On the field of battle, and in many scenes of great disasters, men are cool, they calculate, they shield the weak with their greater strength, they display that courage which dignifies humanity. But in the hour of sudden misfortune when their higher sentiments are deadened by an all-absorbing fear, they trample upon that which they would have, under other circumstances, bent to raise.

Happily this does not apply generally; in fact, we are told of many acts of true heroism performed, and of many a noble self-sacrifice made in that hour of trial. But since panic has such a demoralizing effect on human beings, and since discipline has always produced heroic men, we would advise, as one of the most important elements of education, that of a practical, almost military discipline. In the course of life the occasions are many when it comes in useful and necessary.

No more sublime picture than that of the priests standing in the midst of the dead and the dying, and pronouncing over those whose eyes were closing to this world, the consoling words of the absolution. It is difficult to imagine anything grander than that spectacle. It is one of those events in life that may well inspire us with a great and true Faith. The last, and may be the most important, lesson to be drawn from that awe-inspiring event, is that which speaks of life's uncertainties—*"In the midst of life we are in death."* This truthful saying was never more powerfully illustrated. Just think about thirteen hundred people—principally children and women—meeting for an afternoon of pleasure, assembled to enjoy the delights of a fairy tale, and, in the full swing of the drama, in the full activity of the mimic world on the stage, to be summoned, through the portals of an awful death, into the presence of God. And not one, or ten, or fifty; but six or seven hundred of them. There are occasions, such as this, or such as the destruction of St. Pierre, Martinique, when we behold clearly our own insignificance in the presence of the Almighty Power, and when we learn—in a book more eloquent even than that of a Kempis—the terrible truth of this life's vanity. May God have mercy on the souls of all the victims, and may His Mercy spare, for generations to come, the world from such like catastrophes.

**JANUARY INTENTION.**—"Confidence in God" is "the general intention for January named and blessed by the Sovereign Pontiff." What a magnificent intention for our prayers during this first month of the year. "Confidence in God." We all have Faith, we all have Hope, we all have Charity; but do we not all, from time to time, lack adequate confidence? We pray, and we believe that our prayers are heard, and we have a hope that they will be answered; but not always have we an entire and child-like confidence that God will grant, if it be for our good, whatsoever we may ask Him with our hearts. If despair be the sin that counteracts Hope, and if Presumption be equally an enemy of that sublime virtue, certainly confidence is its handmaid, its auxiliary. It is Presumption to believe that God will show us mercy no matter what our dispositions and no matter how determinedly we may continue to offend Him; but, while we must avoid Presumption as a snare, we must also have entire confidence in

God's Love. If we are confident, in the proper sense, we cannot be presumptuous—for the terms are contradictory.

Each month of the year has its special intentions, and these are selected with wisdom by the Church, and, if we study them carefully, we will find that they take in all the most important phases of our individual lives, as well as all the most important needs of God's Church on earth. In this age of a peculiar infidelity, when the social structure rocks at every breath of the atheist, the free-thinker, the agnostic, when men are taught to forget God and women to ignore the most elementary principles of Christian morality, when the divorce court is tearing to shreds the veil of purity that hides the sanctuary of the marriage-tie, and the blatant materialist is flaunting the blatant materialist is flaunting in the eyes of wavering humanity; in this age the Church not only requires that the Faith be spread abroad, that new Hope be instilled into the human heart, and that Charity, or Love of God, be kindled at every fire-side; she also requires that men should return to the simplicity of childhood and innocence, and that Confidence in God should be restored throughout the entire world. It is that confidence which wins the heart of God, draws down His benedictions, and prepares the avenue to happiness, both in this world and in the next.

Hence it is that we begin the year's intentions with that of "Confidence in God."

**A PLEA FOR FIREMEN.**—Proverbially fire and water are antagonistic, and both are looked upon as great enemies of life and property. But we have a third element which, combined with fire and water, plays particular havoc—we mean frost. When the thermometer hangs for a few days between 10 and 25 degrees below zero, it is wonderful how numerous are the fires that spring into existence, how difficult it is to secure water to extinguish them, and how dangerous to human life is the combination of the three elements. During the first days of this year the cold has been exceptionally severe, and it has lasted much longer than at any period for several years past. It would seem as if the element of fire had selected that very time to play its destructive game. During one lapse of twenty-four hours the firemen had over thirty calls. It would seem as if the intense cold caused people to over-heat their stoves and furnaces, and thus bring about fires that otherwise would not have occurred. Amongst other important fires was that of the Mount Royal Club, which unfortunately caused the loss of two lives and the maiming of several others.

When such periods come, we awaken in the morning to read accounts of the fearful struggles between the firemen and the devouring element, we begin to vaguely appreciate the labors, sacrifices, risks, and devotedness to duty of those men. And yet there are citizens who grumble if firemen ask for some slight increase in pay; there are aldermen who frown whenever there is question of improving conditions for the members of that service. Just think of the situation. Pause for a moment, reflect calmly. Take last Monday night, for example. The cold was so intense, that no ordinary citizen could resist more than a few minutes on the street.

Thousands sat by their warm fires, or were rolled in their comfortable blankets; at that very hour flames were devouring buildings, and their own homes were exposed to similar risks. In all that cold, firemen were riding of reels through the streets, handling icy hoses, climbing dizzy ladders, swinging axes on roofs, facing flames that were death-dealing, and even meeting grim death itself, amidst the three awful elements of fire, water and frost. What money can compensate for such services? And when you find a man like the late fireman Hutt, who was the sole support of a widowed mother, falling at the post of duty, giving up his life for the protection of the lives and property of others, we cannot but feel that the heroism of duty has not died out amongst men, and that a generous-hearted community should feel a proportionate gratitude towards men whose services are of such a character. The soldier marches to battle to the notes of inspiring mu-

sic; and he is stimulated to action by the consciousness of a glory that will be his. The fireman faces just as certain and as tragic a death, and the only music to inspire him is the hissing of flames, and the only glory is a brief mention in a death-column. Let no false and sordid economy ever stint the fireman.

## A CHAT WITH THE CRITICS.

(Contributed by An Old Journalist.)

The world is full of critics—no literary critics, but professional fault-finders. If you were to stand for a few hours on the street and listen to the conversations going on about you, I am sure you would wonder at the number of odd and wise people that the world contains, and at the apparent usefulness of the majority of people for their special avocations. You would find that eight out of every ten persons are everlastingly finding fault with others, pointing out the mistakes made by those they criticize, and telling aloud how they would do things if only they had a chance. The other day, for example, I heard a man criticizing a teamster. The latter was trying to back a heavy load into a narrow gateway. It was no easy task, and it demanded great calculation. Yet the critic told us what that driver should do, how he went wrong, when he went right, and finally what he would do, himself, had he the reins in his hands. I learned, a few moments later, that this critic had never driven a span of horses in his life. Just imagine the fun it would have been for that teamster to have seen his critic trying to back a pair of bob-sleighs into a gateway. I have only mentioned this case as an illustration of my thought. The man on the street can always explain his views and tell all within hearing should do; but in ninety cases out of a hundred the man on the street knows nothing at all about the work, and would not know how to commence to perform it himself. Yet, to hear him talk, you would imagine that he had lost his vocation and that the world suffered on account of the incapacity of the workman compared to the ability of the critic. And this is the case an exaggerated one; I meet with them by the score every week. Possibly it would be no harm were I to give a few examples.

**THE FIRE CRITIC.**—Did you ever go to a fire? If not, make it a point the next time that you hear an alarm, to run after the reels and become a spectator. Stand at a reasonable distance from the fire, watch the unreeling and laying of the hose, the operations of the men on the ladders, the forcing of entrances through walls or roof, the carrying out of furniture, the tearing down of walls to prevent the spreading of the flames, and all the various endeavors of the firemen to master the devouring element. And while you are thus observing what is being done, listen to any of those who are around you, and very probably you will enjoy a series of free criticism. You will hear your neighbor telling what should be done, how it should be done, what he would do. "Why don't they put on a stream up there?" "What is that fellow on that roof doing?" "Why don't they hurry that other reel?" "Some one should run a ladder up to that window." "Look at the fools, they don't see that corner over there." "Where is the Chief?" "What's the use of such men, any way?" And thus runs on the rapid fire of questions and ejaculations, from some individual who stands with his hands in his pockets, unfit to do any good himself, and unwilling or too lazy to do it if he had the capacity. And when the fire is over, that self-constituted critic will probably go down town telling every one he meets about the ignorance, the uselessness, the incompe-

tence of the men who had been doing their dangerous duty. Then he will run across some reporter who is in quest of anything and everything that could be used to fill up a corner in the local news columns. The reporter "catches on," and the press informs the public, that evening, all about the mistakes made by the firemen, their lack of knowledge in matters pertaining to fires, the want of capability on the part of their chiefs, and the abominable bungling of which they have been guilty. Very possibly, that night, the critic may sit at his own table, reads out for his family the opinions of the reporter, and proudly informs an admiring circle that "them's my ideas."

**JOURNALISTIC CRITICS.**—These are not critics who are journalists; quite the contrary. Did you ever meet a man who could not tell you how to "run a newspaper?" About the only person, who will not offer you advice on the subject, or profess to be able to make a success of your paper, is a trained journalist. The newspaper-man, who has worked up from the case to the management of an important organ, and who has experience of the business in its every branch and every detail, will rarely tell you what he could do. He knows exactly too much about the business not to be aware that the qualifications needed to attain success are so varied and numerous that no one man can honestly claim to possess them. And no one man can make a success of an enterprise that gives occupation to half a score, at least, of men, each with his particular trade or profession. Yet there are so many people who tell you that they know what should be done to make a newspaper succeed. This is about the most amusing, as far as I am concerned, of all the crazy criticisms of the character in question. I do not pretend to know all, nor anything like all about a newspaper. I have put in over twenty-six years in newspaper offices, in one capacity or another. I wrote the editorials and did the local work, as well as read the proofs, on a daily paper from 1878 to 1881. From 1880 to 1885 I was in an office where I set type, ran the press, made up forms, corrected proof, and wrote almost all the articles, as well as the contents of the advertising columns, for a country weekly. I went through every grade on the editorial staff, save that of managing editor, on one of the largest, if not the largest daily in Canada. I edited, alone, a large city weekly for five years. I ran a weekly publication of another character, doing all the business as well as literary parts of the work. During all those years I never was a month without some connection with the more important publications of the continent. And with all that experience, running over a quarter of a century, I would not dare pretend to dictate how a newspaper should be run to make it a success. I have seen so many experiments fail, so many systems miss, so many accidents control the success of organs, that I would gladly give a friend the benefit of any little experience I have had; but I would not presume to lay down a cast iron rule for him, nor would I have the presumption to guarantee him success. You can, then imagine how amused I do be when I am told, almost every day, by men who never spent an hour of actual work inside a newspaper establishment, how such and such a paper should be conducted, in what the managers are lacking, and all that they, the critics, could do, if only they had a paper under their control. A dry goods merchant told me the other day, that if he had only six thousand dollars he could start a daily paper, and "make it hum." I did not contradict him. There was no use in dispelling his dream. I knew that he would never have the six thousand to spare; and if ever he did have the sum he was too wise to throw it away in a mad-cap journalistic venture. In the next place, I saw that he was happy in his harmless occupation of building aerial castles of a journalistic kind, and there was nothing to be gained by making him unhappy. I felt, however, like telling him that if ever I could get possession of sixty dollars that I would start a dry goods store and would make it a "howling success." As far as any knowledge of the business is concerned I have never had any; I never bought a dol-

lar's worth, nor sold a cent's worth dry goods in my life; I would not know how to go about purchasing a single line of his wares, much less would I be able to retail any of them. But that does not matter. Just give me sixty dollars, over and above all debts, and you will see a departmental store that will cast the finest on St. Catherine street into the shade. My sixty dollars will go just as far in the establishment and running of that business, as would his six thousand in the equipping, managing and carrying on of a daily paper. And there would be very little advantage on either side, for I would know about as much concerning dry goods he would about journalism—and not a whit more. The great pity of it is that some of these would-be journalists do not get a fair chance to try their hands at the \* task. The result might cure them of their malady, although the example would probably be powerless to make others refrain from like follies.

## RECENT DEATHS.

**MR. FRANCIS McENTEE.**—Time is unrelenting, and in its constant passage from the realms of the Past towards the domain of the Future, it effaces landmark after landmark with an impartiality that is remarkable. On Saturday last another of the familiar figures, that association made apparently inseparable from the life of our city, disappeared from the scene. In the death of Mr. Francis McEntee; which sad event took place at the residence of his son-in-law, Mr. T. O'Connell, of St. Ann's parish, the Irish Catholic community, has lost one of its oldest and most respected members. Although Mr. McEntee, at the time of his death, had only reached the age of sixty-five years, not an extremely advanced age as we count by years, still for over half a century his life was connected with the rise, progress and development of Irish Catholic institutions in our city. A native of the County Cavan, Ireland, he came to this country when but a little boy, and the whole of his active life has been spent in the Eastern section of Montreal. He worshipped in all the churches and chapels from the days of the old Recollet Church, down through the period when the St. Mary's and St. Bridget's of today, were part of St. Patrick's, and until the organization of the several Irish parishes that at present constitute the ecclesiastical field of our people in Montreal. For over twenty years he had been in the employ of the well known firm of Gurd & Co.

He leaves to mourn his loss a widowed five children—three sons and two daughters. To them and to all his relatives we tender the sincere expression of our sympathy and join them in a fervent prayer for the repose of his soul.

The funeral will take place to-day to St. Ann's Church and Cote des Neiges Cemetery.

**BROTHER CYRILLE.**—This week we have the painful duty of recording the death of an esteemed and widely-known member of the Christian Brothers' community, in the person of the late Brother Cyrille. The end of a useful and holy life came in New Year's Day in this city.

It was given him to die on the first day of the New Year, and amidst the very scenes of his life's devotedness. If it be sad to leave the world when a year is dawning, it is equally glorious to spend the new year in heaven—and certainly, if a life of sacrifice, obedience and humility is a guarantee of an eternal reward, surely the soul of Brother Cyrille enjoyed the glory of Heaven on the first day of 1904. May he rest in peace.

Man often shows the hard side of his disposition to mark more strongly the generous shades.

What fortunes are wasted by men and women who are struggling to know those who are hardly worth knowing!

There is not much use in asking God to bless the whole world as long as we are not willing to stand our share of the expense.