

The True Witness

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, NOV. 29, 1861.

TO OUR READERS.

Mr. Gillies, of the TRUE WITNESS office, is now on a collecting and canvassing tour through Canada West. He has full authority to receive all monies due to this office, to give receipts, and to make such arrangements as he shall deem most convenient.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The enormous armaments of France have long excited not only the anxiety, but the wonder of Europe. Whilst they were a standing menace to other and pacifically disposed countries, they seemed to the statesman to offer a financial phenomenon; and men asked one another "how does Louis Napoleon contrive to pay for all these things?"

From Italy the tidings are most encouraging. Every where, in the North as in the South, there is springing up a general and intense disgust against the rule of Piedmont. In the Kingdom of Naples it is not only amongst the partisans of Francis II. that this feeling displays itself; for thousands who were by no means friendly to the Bourbon dynasty are actively hostile as towards the intrusive Government of Victor Emmanuel.

From one end of the Peninsula to the other, and across the straits from the Island of Sicily, the outcry against the rule of Victor Emmanuel rises up to heaven; and now that Cavour has gone to his account, there seems to be no man capable of coping with the difficulty.

The rupture betwixt Austria and Hungary is complete. The Constitution of the latter has been suspended, and superseded by martial law. The condition of Poland is still the same, and an appeal to arms to decide betwixt the oppressed and their oppressors cannot, to all appearances, be very remote.

The cotton famine is telling seriously upon the artisans of England, even as the failure in the potato crop is spreading desolation amongst the peasantry in many districts of Ireland.

The capture of Messrs. Slidell and Mason on board of an English mail steamer by the U. States ship San Jacinto forms the chief topic of discussion amongst our republican neighbors. Musty styles of newspapers are diligently ransacked for precedents to justify the act; and if no precedents can be found, then are they boldly invented.

This question will no doubt be discussed calmly and in good faith by the representatives of the two countries interested therein; and by the result of that discussion we are well content to abide, trusting that it may terminate honorably and amicably. War is one of the greatest of earthly calamities, and there is scarce any sacrifice which should not be made to avert so great an evil.

6th. Reduction of the Army. 7th. Evacuation of Rome. 8th. That, on taking office, he should be the intermediary of all communications between Ministers and the Emperor.

The Piedmontese Government announces a levy of 80,000 men; Cialdini has resigned. The King of Portugal is dead, and the Duke of Oporto is proclaimed as his successor.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BOARD OF INSPECTORS FOR ASYLUMS, PRISONS, &c., FOR 1861. We have to return thanks for a copy of this very instructive and carefully compiled document published by order of the Provincial Government.

The question of secondary punishments is one of the most difficult, and at the same time the most important, with which the Statesman of the XIX. century has to deal. That it has, hitherto, been thoroughly exhausted, is more than any one who is moderately conversant with gaol statistics, or who has made social pathology his study, will pretend; but the publication of carefully prepared statistics will furnish us with facts, from which by means of a cautious generalisation we may in time hope to arrive at a satisfactory answer to the great question, daily forcing itself more importunately upon the attention of society.

Our prisons are threefold. They may be classed as simply places of detention—as reformatories—and as penitentiaries or places of punishment. It is with the latter only that we propose to deal; and the statistics furnished by the Report before us with reference to those Penitentiaries are interesting and instructive.

Nothing can be more unjust and more illogical than, from a comparison of the criminal statistics of communities existing under widely different social, material, and political conditions, to attempt to deduce conclusions as to the comparative morality of the communities themselves, and thence of the comparative merits of their respective religious systems.

an infallible receipt for the outrages, or offences against the property and the persons of the intrusive minority. Scotch Protestants of Western Whigs, in the days of the last Stuarts, showed as little mercy towards the ministers forced upon them by Claverhouse and his dragoons, as did the Irish Catholic peasant of a quarter of a century back, to the Protestant tithe collectors, and other myrmidons who in the name of the law, and the Gospel according to Act of Parliament, confiscated his pig, and consigned him, his wife, and little ones to the long protracted agonies of famine.

Instead therefore of comparing the criminal statistics of Ireland, the victim of the above mentioned monstrous or abnormal social and political conditions, with the criminal statistics of Great Britain, where no such conditions exist, or exist only under a modified, and very mitigated form—as a test of the comparative moral influences of the respective religious systems of the above-named countries, let us, as is both just and logical, direct our attention to the criminal statistics of Canada. Let us compare the criminality of Catholic Lower Canada, with that of Protestant Upper Canada; let us question the Records of our Jails and Penitentiaries; and these shall give us, in clear unambiguous and infallible tones, an answer to the question at issue—"Is Catholicity or Protestantism the more favorable to the growth of morality, and the repression of crime?"

Now the first thing that strikes us upon turning over the leaves of the Report of the Prison Inspectors, is the enormous, but constant disparity betwixt the criminal records of Upper and Lower Canada—of the Catholic and Protestant sections of our mixed community, respectively. The following figures are more eloquent than words; and arithmetic furnishes us with argument which no amount of declamation or sophistry can destroy.

Of these Penal Institutions the chief is the Kingston Penitentiary, which is the common sewer, or receptacle of the moral guilt of both sections of the Province. Now with respect to this institution, we find that on the 31st of December last, the Protestant convicts therein confined were to the Catholic convicts in the ratio of more than two to one—the numbers being:

Table with 2 columns: Protestant (599), Catholic (254)

During the course of the year 1860, two hundred and fifty-five convicts in all, had been struck off the roll of the inmates of the Penitentiary; of these some had died, a few had been transferred to Reformatories or to Lunatic Asylums, but the majority had been discharged, in virtue either of a pardon, or of the expiration of their sentences. Now of these 255 convicts thus got rid of during the year, there were:

Table with 2 columns: Protestant (161), Catholic (94)

These figures are conclusive as to the morality of Catholics and Protestants, whose numbers in Canada, are very nearly equal. We will now examine into the Provincial origin of Canadian criminality.

There were, on the 31st December last, 784 convicts in the Penitentiary; of whom,—

Table with 2 columns: Upper or Protestant Canada furnished (586), Lower or Popish Canada (198)

Have we not then abundant reason to say that, whatever may be the case in the Legislative Assembly, Upper Canada has fully its fair share of representation in the Provincial Penitentiary? We should add that according to the Official Report, "the districts of Gaspé, Kamouraska, Three Rivers and Ottawa with a population greatly exceeding 200,000 souls, have not furnished a single convict to the Penitentiary."

Now is this disparity betwixt the criminality of the two sections of the Province, exceptional, or we find the same phenomenon repeated during

a series of years; as appears from the following Table of the number of "Convicts Received in the Provincial Penitentiary," from 1856 to 1860, published at p. 7.

Table with 3 columns: Year, Upper Canada, Lower Canada

In other words, during a series of years, Protestant Upper Canada has upon the average furnished annually upwards of Two Hundred convicts to the Provincial Penitentiary—Catholic Lower Canada not quite Fifty-eight. These facts, furnished by official statistics, require no comment.

Another very important or significant fact is implied in the returns of the number of prisoners from Upper and Lower Canada, respectively undergoing a first imprisonment. Of these there are from,—

Table with 3 columns: Upper Canada (4,184), Lower Canada (1,861), Total (6,045)

Here then we have a series of figures, which establish the facts, that in proportion to its numbers the Protestant element in our community furnishes the immense preponderance of serious crime; and that the average criminality of Upper Canada is far greater than that of the Lower section of the Province. For this phenomenon there must be a cause. That cause cannot be found in the different political conditions of the two communities—for in this respect there is no difference betwixt them. Neither can it be found in any unfortunate material or physical condition to which Upper Canada is exclusively subject—for in this respect the advantage is on the side of that section of the Province which enjoys a milder climate, and can boast of possessing a more fertile soil than have fallen to the lot of Lower Canada.

A second considerator is this—That the same difference which statistics reveal as obtaining betwixt Upper Canadian and Lower Canadian criminality, obtains also betwixt the criminality of Catholics and that of Protestants; the latter furnishing more than two-thirds of the total number of convicts sentenced to the Penitentiary. According, therefore, to every rule of sound induction, it is to the religious and not to the ethnological differences betwixt the two sections of the Province, that the constant difference betwixt the respective amounts of their contributions to the great receptacle of Canadian crime must be attributed.

A CHEERING PROSPECT—OVERTHROW OF THE CHRISTIAN SUPERSTITION.—We copy from the European correspondent of the Montreal Herald of the 16th ult.:

Among the "signs of the times" most interesting to friends of Italy from a distance is the widespread movement of revolt going on here against the principle of ecclesiastical authority which is the basis of the Roman hierarchy. This revolt against spiritual absolutism is the natural and inevitable complement of the political struggle through which Italy has been passing; and from the moment in which this reaction is successfully inaugurated among a people, the doom of the so-called "Catholic" Church is sealed.

We do not contest the truth of the Herald's premises, nor will we attempt to impugn the validity of his conclusions. There is taking place in Italy in 1861, an intellectual, moral, and religious re-orientation, the very counterpart of that which occurred in France, and shook Eu-