

The True Witness.

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MONTREAL, FRIDAY, JUNE 26, 1863.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

EUROPEAN dates are to the 14th inst. There is nothing of importance to notice since our last.

France is reinforcing her Mexican army.—Prince William of Denmark has formally accepted the Greek Crown. The "depressed condition" of Ireland has been debated in the House of Commons on motion to appoint a Committee to inquire into its cause.

Affairs in the States seem to be drawing to a head. The telegraphic Government despatches give glowing details of the encouraging state of affairs at Vicksburg and Port Hudson; but the *N. Y. World* of the 21st states that the Federals were defeated at Port Hudson on the 12th in a desperate engagement, in which the Confederates left their entrenchments, charged the enemy, drove him from his fortifications, and spiked his siege guns, taking 4,000 prisoners.

At the time of penning our last summary, the Federals were in all the ecstasies of one of their periodical panics, caused by some cavalry raid into Pennsylvania and Maryland. Since then, they recovered from their fears and become insolent again, as the Confederate cavalry retired, but at the present moment of writing, matters have assumed the most serious aspect. Lee is very evidently passing the Potomac and advancing in force; the Confederates are fortifying Majorstown, Maryland, and hold the country between that place and Williamsburg. They are moving on to the Northern Central Railroad, their ultimate object being evidently Baltimore and Washington City. A large force estimated at from 25,000 to 40,000 men is also advancing upon Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The despatches are very meagre, but of these facts there seems to be no doubt. The next few weeks will probably be the crisis of the campaign. Gen. Lee seems to be determined to force the fighting and bring about engagements which threaten to decide the war. In the interest of civilization it is to be hoped that the issue of the approaching fights, may not be doubtful.

The draft is being very seriously resisted in many of the Western States. In parts of Ohio, the people have gathered together in camps, fortified themselves and thrown out pickets to resist the draft.

THE FRENCH CANADIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY'S CATECHISM.—All heretics by their daily practice give the lie to the vaunt that their is essentially a scriptural religion, and that the Bible is the source of their faith. Oral or catechetical, must always precede scriptural or written education. It was so with Christianity, whose Founder preached, but did not write, and whose doctrines were first propagated, not by means of written documents, but by the oral instructions of the Apostles, and of those to whom the latter imparted authority to teach. Every child at the present day in like manner obtains his knowledge of Christianity from an oral, not from a scriptural source, no matter whether his parents be Protestant or Catholic; and when at a more advanced age, the Bible, or collection of writings to which the Church has assigned the pre-eminent title of "sacred," is put into his hands, his religious opinions are already formed; and he reads the Bible, not to learn for the first time what Christian doctrines are, but to find texts to prove the truth of those doctrines which by his parents and masters he has already been taught to believe. No man ever derived his first knowledge of Christianity from the scriptures; no non-Catholic sect, no matter how loudly or how glibly it may prate about the Bible alone being the religion of Protestants, dispenses with catechetical and oral instruction; and there is, we believe, no Christian father who takes an interest in the spiritual welfare of his children, who contents himself with putting the Bible into their hands, and telling them—"There is your religion, make the most of it." It may seem trivial to insist upon those things, yet are they in themselves most important, because human nature, being what it is, oral, must always precede scriptural education. Christianity was, before the Scriptures were: and therefore the latter cannot be the source, or origin of the former. Indeed

a great portion of these writings are, and can be, intelligible to those only who have been well grounded in Christian doctrine, and are as intimate with all the mysteries of Christianity, as were those to whom the Epistles of St. Paul, and of the other Apostles, were addressed. So far from being designed, or fitted to teach Christianity, these writings, for the most part, must appear to those to whom the doctrines of that religion are unknown, as unmeaning gibberish, and incoherent rhapsody.

Far be it from us then to blame the swaddlers of Canada for that they too have recourse to the catechetical system of instruction in their schools, where they attempt the perversion of "Romish" children. No other mode of procedure is open to them, or to any teachers of religion; for all religion, in its inception, must be oral, not scriptural. If then we criticise the French Canadian Missionary Society's Catechism for the use of the children at *Pointe aux Trembles*, it is not to the manner or mode of teaching that we take exception, but to the matter. We will illustrate our meaning by example.

There has been a public examination of the pupils at the *Pointe aux Trembles* school kept by the F. C. M. Society for rescuing little children from the jaws of Popery. A report of the proceedings is given by the *Montreal Witness* of the 8th and 9th ult., and from this report we propose to make some extracts. The pupils were examined in their Catechism—the old Protestant Catechism in use amongst the Soupers of Ireland—with the same stereotyped questions and answers, which have done duty against Popery for the last century; and therefore we do not pretend to have discovered anything very novel or entertaining in the errors of the French proselytising society. The children seem to have been well drilled, and to have, with one exception, gone through their catechism drill with mechanical precision. Here are some specimens of the Questions and Answers:—

"Q.—Is the Pope infallible?"

"A.—No—God only is infallible."

This may satisfy the infant mind at *Pointe aux Trembles*; but in after years the pupils, not content with repeating, parrot-like, the answers which they have acquired by rote without attaching to them any precise or definite meaning, may perhaps carry the same process of reasoning as that whereby the infallibility of the Pope is overthrown—a step further—when the following would be the result:—

"Q.—Were the writers of the book called the Bible infallible?"

"A.—No—God only is infallible."

And since the argument against the infallibility of the writers of the brief biographies of the person known in history as Christ, and of the other works which make up the New Testament, is identical with that which in their youth the pupils of *Pointe aux Trembles* were taught to look upon as conclusive against the infallibility of the Pope—they, it is to be presumed, will reject that of the evangelists, of St. Paul, and the other reputed authors of the New Testament. In so far as the argument that "God only is infallible" is conclusive against the infallibility of the Pope, it is conclusive against the infallibility of the author of the Epistle to the Romans—and thus it proves anything against Popery, it is fatal to Biblical Christianity. Here is another specimen of evangelical logic:—

"Q.—What is the great difference between the Roman Catholic and Protestant systems?"

"A.—The Roman Catholic is based on the authority of men, and the Protestant on the Word of God."

By the "Word of God" the composers of the *Pointe aux Trembles* Catechism understand a Protestant translation of the Bible; which translation being the work of man, and the Bible itself having originally been written by men, can afford only a human basis for the Protestant system. If to this the Protestant teacher respond that in the writers of the Bible the human and fallible element was supplemented by a divine, and therefore infallible element, he in the first place makes a statement which it is impossible for him to prove; and in the second place, he puts himself precisely in the position of the Papist. For the latter, who like the other receives the knowledge of the supernatural order, immediately, not immediately, asserts that the Church or medium through which that knowledge has been transmitted to him, is divinely assisted, and because divinely assisted, is infallible upon those matters which she has been appointed to teach. The great, the one difference between the Catholic system and the Protestant system is this—That the Catholic system is based upon the hypothesis that Christ being a divine teacher, appointed as the means for the propagating and perpetuating a knowledge of the truths by Him revealed, a body of teachers, or Church to whom He gave the commission to teach all nations, and with whom He promised to be present all days, even to the consummation of the world—thus guaranteeing to them immunity from error in the matter of their teachings. Thus what Protestants predicate of certain writings, exclusively, Catholics predicate of the teachings of the Church, to wit—that they are the "Word of God."—Were it possible to prove that these teachings were not the "Word of God," and were therefore fallible, it would be proved that the words of

Christ, as given in the Protestant Bible—"Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world, Amen"—St. MATT. 28 xx—were a lie, and that the speaker was one unworthy of credit.

"Q.—Should not tradition be called in to supplement the Bible?"

"A.—No."

But what is the Bible itself but a "tradition?" that is to say something handed down from generation to generation. How, except by "tradition," can any one who has not been instructed upon the subject by God Himself, ascertain of what writings it is composed? how, except by "tradition," can its inspiration and the infallibility of its contents be proved? Was it not by tradition, and by oral tradition, that the Apostles and first preachers of Christianity, propagated their doctrines? and as it to expose the absurdities and dishonesty of Protestantism, does not the authorised Protestant version of the Bible represent St. Paul as exhorting the Christian converts to "stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught whether by word or our epistle"—II. Thess. 2 xv. ? All knowledge not immediately acquired, reaches us only through tradition: and of all means of transmitting the knowledge of past events, that of a wide-spread oral tradition is the most efficacious, and the least liable to corruption.

We single out these questions and answers from the *Pointe aux Trembles* Catechism, because they explain a phenomenon insisted upon and deplored by our contemporary, in the same issue of his paper as that in which he proudly records the progress of the F. C. Missionaries in uprooting Popery in Lower Canada. The phenomenon is this: that the tendency of modern Protestantism is to infidelity, and that that tendency is strikingly displayed in the actual condition of the Protestant or non-Catholic communities in France. Protestantism, in short, in that country is running its natural course, that course which, should the efforts of the F. C. M. Society prove successful, Protestantism would inevitably run in Lower Canada.—

This course is thus described by the correspondent of the *N. Y. Christian Advocate and Journal*, quoted by the *Montreal Witness* of the 9th inst.:

"We are obliged to acknowledge that anti-Christian tendencies are defining themselves more clearly every day. Infidelity among us is gradually laying aside all the circumlocutions in which she has been accustomed prudently to wrap her bold negations. The style with which she reverts herself varies with the classes of society which she addresses; but her deplorable influence is everywhere manifest. Among the educated classes she presents herself under the guise of a refined skepticism, of genteel parlance, denying all relation to the Voltairian vulgarity that runs the streets."

"National Protestantism, in the crisis through which it is passing, is only fit to succeed Catholicism, and to present itself as the asylum of a faith quite cast out in these times of infidelity. All absorbed by its intestine struggles, it has no leisure to pay serious attention to the state of mind beyond its limits; and could it do otherwise, it would not be able to offer to those seeking stability, any refuge against skepticism, since it is itself tainted with this malady, and its pulpits proclaim simultaneously, the most contradictory principles. The theological crisis which has continued several years, does not appear to approach a termination."

This phenomenon, which repeats itself with unvarying monotony amongst all non-Catholic populations, which is to be witnessed in Germany and in England, which is as striking amongst the de-Catholicised populations of the Italian and Spanish Peninsulas, as amongst the Protestant churches of France, and which is not striking in Lower Canada only because the French Canadian Missionary Society has as yet made no progress in undermining the faith of the French Canadians—is one which certainly claims some consideration from those amongst Protestants who have not adopted as their own the Voltairian device "*Ecrasons l'infame*."—Why do Papists, when they throw off the authority of the Church, invariably, and as the necessary logical consequence, throw off their Christianity? The silly questions and answers of the *Pointe aux Trembles* Catechism are sufficient to explain the apparent mystery.

If God has made a revelation to man, and if He holds man responsible for his belief, He must have given man some simple, but certain means by which all men, learned and unlearned, can attain to a full and infallible knowledge of the contents of that revelation. Now this, all experience shows, cannot be attained to from the Bible. Indeed, anything more inadequate for the purpose which Protestants attribute to the Bible, than is that book, it would be impossible to conceive—and were it possible to convince us that it was the medium, or the only means through which He had been pleased to reveal to us His will, we should form but a very low estimate indeed of His intelligence, or of His honesty.—The Bible evidently never was intended to teach religion, because it is evidently not competent to do so; and because it is deficient in every quality which a book destined to be man's sole religious instructor should have, and would have, if its author were an all-wise and all-just God. Besides, the Church is the sole voucher for the Bible, determining, not its mysterious meaning alone, but of what works it is composed, and establishing the fact of its inspiration. By rejecting the authority and the traditions of the Church, the convert to Protestantism resigns all reasonable grounds for the inspiration of Scripture, and has no means of fixing its Canon—for it requires a divinely assisted, and therefore infallible tribunal to decide what writings are, and what are

not, entitled to be treated as Sacred Scripture. Thus, with the loss of the Church, the convert to Protestantism loses the Bible, as a sacred, inspired and infallible record of divine truth; and he falls back therefore upon pure nature, or natural reason, as the only guide roused by God to man upon earth. He spins his religion out of himself, from the depths of his moral consciousness; and to what this may lead a man—the religious history of Germany, England and the United States can tell.

We can make great allowances for the—"Our Own Correspondents" of Protestant journals. They must write to please the palates of the great non-Catholic public: they must consult its vitiated appetite, and cater thereunto; and if their letters be dated from Italy or any other Popish country, they are expected to contain, if not direct attacks, at all events covert insinuations against the Romish Church, and the "Mystery of Abomination."

We are well disposed therefore to be indulgent towards the "Naples Correspondent of the *Montreal Herald*," but then there are bounds beyond which that indulgence cannot be extended; and though of course we expect a writer under such circumstances to have his fling at Popery, though we expect from him nothing either very witty or very wise, we do expect at least that he shall treat us to something better than the exploded platitudes of Joe Miller, and the thrice confuted calumnies of the "intelligent tourist." One would think that even the least easily satiated of Protestant appetites, must be weary of the St. Januarius *plat* which every Great Briton who has done his Naples and his Vesuvius deems it to be his duty to set upon the table. But no; the same rapid mess is regularly served up, with the same old garnishing and seasoning; and still it seems to be swallowed with delectation by the strong-stomached public to whom it is offered.

Having in a letter published by the *Montreal Herald* of the 26th ult., informed us that "the lower classes of Naples place implicit faith in the bi-annual miracle of their favorite Saint," Januarius—the Naples correspondent of the *Herald* assumes that it is his duty to sneer at the credulity of these "lower classes," and to expose the rascality of the Romish priests by whom the trick of the "liquefaction of the blood" of the Saint is performed. With this object in view, he reiterates the following old story, that may be found in almost any jest-book, or "Diary of an Italian Tourist" published during the nineteenth century. The *Herald's* correspondent naively changes the name of Murat, for that of Victor Emmanuel—for the joke itself, which is ancient and fish-like, has many fathers, and has been narrated of every conqueror of Naples, as well as of the present King of Sardinia:—

"The famous spectacle associated with the name of the saint in question takes place twice in the year, in May and September, when it is repeated for eight successive days; so inveterate is the veneration of the people for this 'miracle'—whose non-occurrence is believed to be a tremendous sign of Divine anger—that every conqueror of Naples has found it necessary to secure the testimony of the Saint in his favor. Even Victor Emmanuel in the midst of the enthusiasm that greeted his presence in Naples, felt compelled to pay this debt of homage to the popular superstition. It is whispered that the King, having learned that the Chapter had made up its mind that the liquefaction should not take place, sent a private message to the Archbishop to the effect that 'his lordship had better see that the miracle took place, or he would know the reason why'; and the Chapter accordingly altered its decision, and allowed the Saint to bear its testimony in honor of the excommunicated King."

This joke has done good service in its day; like the smart sayings of the Clown in the Circus, it is none the less popular because the audience are accustomed to it; but in all seriousness we put it to the proprietors of the *Montreal Herald*, whether it is worth while paying postage for such an old Joe Miller, &c., and whether a little novelty would not be an agreeable incident in the letters of its *Foreign Correspondents*. Here are some further specimens of these worthies' style:—

"The liquefaction, which forms the greatest of the Neapolitan festivals, and excites the superstitious enthusiasm of the people to the highest degree, first takes place in the chapel of the saint, in presence of the authorities, a number of old women who claim to descend from the family of the saint, and distinguished guests" who have been invited by the authorities, and a crowd of priests. When the miracle is slow in showing itself, the old women aforesaid storm and scold at the saint in choicest Neapolitan, mixing their angry objurgations with prayers and entreaties, while the blackish lump that does duty for blood in the hand of the officiating priest.—When this happy event has taken place, shouts and cries of joy fill the chapel, are taken up by the dense crowd that fills every inch of the Cathedral, are echoed by the mass of the population gathered in the streets outside, and are responded to by the cannon of St. Elmo and the Castel Nuovo. The two bottles are then carried in solemn procession to the high altar, where mass is performed in honor of the event. The liquefaction takes place on seven successive days at this altar, the population crowding to the Cathedral to witness the prodigy, and keeping holiday during the week set apart for the manifestation. Although it is well known that there are many mixtures which are capable of liquefying when brought in contact with the warmth of the hand, it must be conceded that the Neapolitan clergy have given proof of no little ingenuity, secretiveness and dramatic skill in keeping up their miracle, with so much success and *edat* through so many centuries."

There are, no doubt, "many mixtures which are capable of liquefying when brought in contact with the warmth of the hand;" but as the phial in which is contained the mixture said to be the blood of St. Januarius, is not brought in

contact with the hand at all, at the time when the liquefaction takes place, the hacknied allusion of the intelligent correspondent of the *Herald* is worthless. To be relevant, it should be shown that the liquefaction occurs when, and only when, the phial is held in, or brought in contact with the hand, or other heat radiating surface. This cannot be done, because it is well known that when the phenomenon of liquefaction occurs, the phial is not subjected to any manipulations, or other mode of treatment by which an increase of temperature however slight can be imparted to its contents. Again, seeing that Naples and its churches with their treasures, have often been, and again are, in the possession of the enemies of Romish superstition, of Liberals and Revolutionists whose interest it was and is to discredit the pretensions of the Church, and priesthood, it is not easy to explain why such a chemical cheat as that which our intelligent correspondent suggests, has not long ago been detected, and its processes made public. The enemies of the Church would greatly strengthen their own position, could they show that the liquefaction of the contents of the phial was produced by any natural causes which science can imitate. This exposure it often has been, and now is, in their power to make, if the miracle of St. Januarius be what the enemies of Romanism assert it to be; and that the latter do not make this exposure of the frauds of that Church, and priesthood which they hate and dread, is conclusive proof that the wit of man has hitherto been unable to suggest any plausible explanation of the process of liquefaction. The Piedmontese conquerors of Naples have never betrayed any conscientious scruples with respect to church-property or sacrilege; they have robbed and plundered without hesitation whenever plunder and theft could serve their turn; and if they had any reason to suspect, even, that the chemical science of the nineteenth century, applied to the substance said to be the blood of St. Januarius, would convict the priests whom they hate of fraud and jugglery, they would long ago have had that substance tested by the ablest chemists of the day. They have not done this, only because they know that the phenomenon of the liquefaction cannot be accounted for by human science, and that it cannot be imitated by any known natural process. It is to this, and not to the "ingenuity, secretiveness and dramatic skill of the Neapolitan clergy," that is due their keeping up their miracle with so much success and *edat* through so many centuries." Nothing more easy than to expose the cheat, if cheat there be; nothing which would more tend to weaken the influence of the Church, and therefore to increase that of the Liberal party now ruling with absolute sway over Naples; and since with such urgent motives to convict the Church of fraud, and with such perfect facility for ensuring that conviction, if fraud there be, the present Liberal and anti-Catholic Government of Naples, like its many Liberal and anti-Catholic predecessors, does not attempt even to obtain a conviction—we may be sure that it is unable to do so, and that the means, not the will, is wanting. The case of the Piedmontese Government of Naples in this respect is as that of one who should refuse to produce in Court documents which if in existence at all, would be in his possession, and which if produced would ensure a verdict in his favor.

That under such circumstance, and with such convincing moral proof that fraud cannot be brought home to the ecclesiastical authorities of Naples even by their bitterest enemies, the people, not of Naples only, but of the Catholic world, believe that the liquefaction of the substance said to be the blood of St. Januarius is not natural, but supernatural, and therefore a miracle, is by no means surprising to any one accustomed to weigh evidence; yet the correspondent of our *Montreal* contemporary affects great surprise at the general belief of the Neapolitans in the supernatural origin of a phenomenon, which it is in the interests and in the power of their present rulers, to prove to be the product of natural causes—if it be not indeed a true miracle as the superstitious Neapolitans believe, and as the sacerdotal tricksters pretend. The faith of the people is real as "our correspondent" admits:—

Wishing to see whether the faith of these people is as real as it is said to be—"Can you tell me what the priests do to the stuff in the bottle to make it melt?" I enquired of the youthful Cicerone who took me to the chapel of the saint, and had duly pointed out its relics. This lad looked up into my face with an evident sense of quiet superiority as he replied:—

"It is a miracle."

"But do many of you Neapolitans really believe that it is a miracle?"

"All!" returned the boy, with a depth of conviction and a robust sense of security in the universality of the belief that was quite impossible to question. He was evidently too comfortably sure of the reality of his belief to be in the least annoyed at the suggestion of unbelief on the part of strangers.

The credulity of the English Protestant is more marvellous than is the faith of the Neapolitan Catholic. The Catholic has sensible proof, or ocular demonstration of a certain phenomenon; he knows that those who have it in their power to test the origin of that phenomenon, and who have also the strongest of motives to urge them to discredit the clergy and to convict them