

“Protestant Organization”

Let us now consider the present state of this Province, with the prospects ahead... Emigrants who annually land upon our shores are (as we before observed) generally of the very lowest class. Perhaps after all it is well that they are so; for if they were intelligent, quiet, orderly people, and still cherishing those hostile feelings which we have noticed, there is little doubt but the Protestant population would take them by the hand, and treat them with the greatest cordiality, and not awake to their danger until they found their liberties attacked, or a rebel boat in arms against British sovereignty. But unfortunately for our present peace – fortunately we hope for our future prosperity – these emigrants are the most inveterate scoundrels in creation, and no sooner obtain a footing among us than they fall to their old trade of breaking heads. In the South of Ireland, where there are scarcely any Protestants, they enjoy this national pastime by trying the strength of each other’s skull; but here they find plenty of Sassenachs to practice upon, and the whole country is disturbed....

This riotous and murderous conduct excited considerable attention some five years since, and sensible men began to inquire what was to be done to put a stop to it. “Get up a Protestant Conservative Association,” says one. It was tried, and failed. “We have a remedy,” said the mean of Ulster, “on which has been tried in the North of Ireland, and proved;” and they immediately established some Orange Lodges. Many natives of this Province who, if not really alarmed at the progress of events, did not think it consistent with the character of Britons, who love their freedom, thus to be insulted, and trampled upon by a horde of ignorant and ragged savages, and that too in the land of their birth, joined heart and hand with the Irish Protestants, and the Orange Society has ever since been spreading and gaining strength in every part of the Province.

It becomes us now to look at this Society calmly, without prejudice for or against, and consider first the necessity for its organization, and the objections usually urged against it. The necessity, in our opinion, for Protestant organization in this Province, arose not more from the many murderous attacks committed upon quiet and unoffending Protestants, by Catholic ruffians, than from the dreary prospect which the future presented. The facts were these – several thousands of emigrants were annually landing upon our shores; they were clearly all Catholics, nearly all ignorant and bigoted, nearly all paupers, many of them depraved, and many became chargeable to the parochial authorities. The advent of so many emigrants of this order was a serious tax upon the inhabitants of the sea-ports; many of them got what they could from the poor overseers, and then betook themselves to the United States; others found their way into the interior, where for want of better men (we do not mean physically, for many of them are sturdy rogues) they were employed, a few in agricultural pursuits, and more in lumbering; those who were employed by agriculturists generally behaved pretty well, as they were thinly

scattered over Protestant settlements and it is only when they herd together that they are so very turbulent and arrogant. Those who were engaged lumbering, took occasion every time they left the woods to get drunk, quarrel, fight, riot, cheat, smash windows, and break heads. But besides these, there were numerous herds of them located in York Point and Portland; these were “your humble servants” during the day while the backsaws were in their hands, but if they saw you by night they broke your head; and lately they had grown bold enough to assemble in force by daylight upon particular occasions, riot and murder, and dispute the possession of public streets with the authorities! This, surely, was a state of society calling for immediate preventive measures, and if the authorities were either too weak, too indolent, or too much frightened, to suppress and punish the disorderlies of the peace, all lovers of order were at least justified in organizing.

Five years, however, have elapsed, and although the rioters have in several instances been checked - when they attacked the Hiberian Hotel; when they attacked a Protestant house in Portland, and recently at Woodstock, for instance - still they rally again and again, and more effectual measures for their suppression seemed absolutely necessary.

But the future (unless a remedy be soon applied) appears the most alarming. We have no statistics by which we can form anything like a correct estimate of the number of Irish Catholics in this Province, but will suppose these to be one fourth of the population. But if they continue pouring their thousands upon us from Ireland every year, they must gain rapidly in proportion, and not many years will elapse before they will form a majority! Should that be the case what have we to expect but murder, rapine, and anarchy, without any chance of redress? Our legislature would then be overawed by letters from the notorious Captain Reck; mob law would usurp the functions of our Courts; and our elections would be conducted under the surveillance of a thicket of Irish Shillelahs! Mercy on the Protestant minority who might then dare to plead their rights, or cross the path of the bigots!...Let us ask, then - with this prospect in view - should not Protestants be united? Should they not organize?

Perhaps it may be urged that Government should protect us, keep the peace, and punish all offenders. But will Government do it? It is possible for Government (or municipal authorities) to organize a strong police force, and station them in the disturbed districts, but it is expensive. It might (and we think should) be adopted for the preservation of peace in St. John and Portland, but it could scarcely be carried out elsewhere. But even then it would prove much less efficacious than a general Protestant organization. Let the miscreants who disturb the peace of this Province, (where we believe there is not a single Protestant but ardently desires peace and good order) but know that the entire Protestant population have become so thoroughly disgusted with their misdeeds, (as, happily, is now the case in the County of Carleton) and they will shrink from a repetition of them, lest they draw down upon their heads the vengeance of

an insulted and outraged community. Again, we have seen Magistrates and Crown Officers shrink from a proper discharge of their duties, apprehensive, no doubt, of the vengeance of the lawless hordes...

Again, what remedy have we for the grim looking future? Government it is true, may encourage emigration, or discourage it; but we can scarcely ask or expect our local Government to adopt the latter course, while there are so many millions of acres of the public lands unsettled, and while it is so obviously the interest of Government, in a financial and commercial point of view, that the population should increase. Nor would Government, were it so disposed, pass any discriminating regulations, or restrictions, on emigration; it could not impose a tax, or "head money" upon Catholics, and allow Protestants to enter free, - it could not wink at free grants of lands to the latter, and prohibit the sale of them to the former. Something, perhaps, Government could and should do, is establish agencies in the rural districts of England, Scotland and the North of Ireland, and thus induce a healthy...population....

But with our present prospects in view, as we have described them, it is by the Protestants, as an organized body, acting under one and the same impulse, and by them alone, that the dire calamity which threatens us can be averted. If they wish to save the country it is high time for them to adopt precautionary measures. Let them discourage by every means in their power a pauper Catholic emigration. Let the Legislature be compelled to pass a law forbidding the Captains of vessels from landing an emigrant upon our shores, unless he has a certain amount of capital, or can give bonds that he will not become chargeable to our authorities for a certain period; let this law be made known in Ireland; and by agents, and through the public press of that country, let it be made known that the Protestants of New Brunswick will neither harbour nor employ a Roman Catholic. At the same time let a fund be raised, by voluntary contributions, to assist able-bodied Protestants to emigrate, and let every encouragement be held out to them on their arrival. These are the only measures which can prevent New Brunswick from becoming a Catholic Province, and they must be adopted soon, or it will be too late; and these measures can only be carried into effect by Protestant Organization....

[W]e will briefly notice the objections usually urgent against Orangeism. These are as follows: - first, that it is a secret society; secondly, that it stirs up strife entirely by exciting the Roman Catholics; and thirdly, that it is confined to the middle and lower orders of Protestants, and therefore is not respectable. Before we sweep away those silly objections, let us first premise that we joined the Orange Society several years since, because we perceived there was a necessity for Protestant organization, and because a Protestant Society of which we were previously a member, was broken up. We are not particularly wedded to the Orange Institution; any other Protestant association, - provided its objects were as laudable, its rules as good, and it possessed the same inherent elements of vitality - would be equally welcome to us. But the secrecy complained of is the very

thing which ensures its life. Look at the history of Societies in general...Men combine in the excitement of the moment, the excitement over they become careless, and the combination loses its vitality. But in the Orange society men enter; and while the act is voluntary, they are aware that they are taking a step which can never be resigned; they receive symbols which they can never divulge to the world; they are received into a brotherhood to which they are bound by the most solemn obligations; they are wedded to Protestantism (in the purest sense of the word) for life. It is this which accounts for its extraordinary vitality and adhesiveness; it is this which has defied every attempt of the enemies of Protestantism to crush it; it is this which is causing it to spread far and wide throughout the British dominions. It is this which will one day be found the main pillar of the empire, as it will be the means of perpetuating British rule in these colonies, and what is there secret about it? Nothing but the signs and passwords by which the members know each other, and which were instructed chiefly for a benevolent purpose, and such of the business proceedings as the Society may deem it prudent to keep among themselves, - generally of no importance whatever to the public.

That Orangeism may possibly excite a feeling of indignity in Roman Catholics we will not deny; but it is because it is a Society which keeps watch upon their actions, and because they are conscious their actions will not bear a scrutiny. Orangeism is not bigoted; neither of the three, they and Orangeman might go hand in hand together. But this excuse is of not weight. If there is any necessity for Protestant organization, the Society to which we attach ourselves may as well be this as any other, for there never was a Protestant Society in existence that did not draw down the ire of Roman Catholics....

Already do we perceive a stir in the ranks of our aristocracy. Slow to move, they are at length convinced that organization is necessary. In the Counties of York and Carleton many new lodges have recently been installed, and the Protestant population - with very few exceptions - are united together as one man....