

11

REMARKS

ADDRESSED TO

W. H. BELLAMY, ESQ.,

Secretary to the National Club,

ON THE

STATE OF EDUCATION IN IRELAND,

AND ON THE EXTRACTS CIRCULATED BY
HIM FROM THE CHARGE OF

THE LORD BISHOP OF OSSORY AND FERNS.

BY

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PREFACE.

SOME time ago an application was made to me to sanction the republication of a pamphlet which I had printed in 1849, on the subject of National Education. I replied that it was a long time since—now more than ten years—but that I would consider the subject, read the pamphlet over again, and then decide. I thought that there might possibly be some objectionable matter, which it might be imprudent to reprint, or language employed, which it might be wiser to avoid or amend ; but if I found that no incorrect statement had been made, nor anything justly censurable put forward, I would consent to the publication. I have perused the pamphlet. Though there is much to lament in the weakness of its execution, I see no reason why, when two large editions were published more than ten years ago, a third edition may not now be printed. It is, therefore, committed to the press without the alteration or addition of a single word. I have now only to repeat the same regret which

accompanied this essay on its first publication. I am still in opposition to the Bishop of the diocese on the subject on which I write ; but I continue to have the same admiration for his abilities, and respect for his person and office which I then entertained and at present hold. I have nothing to recall and nothing to add.

REMARKS

ADDRESSED TO

W. H. BELLAMY, ESQ.,

SECRETARY TO THE NATIONAL CLUB,

On the State of Education in Ireland.

CHAPTER I.

State of the Education Question before the formation of the National Board—Improvement on the Plan proposed in 1825–1827.

SIR,—As Secretary to the National Club, you have done me the honor of transmitting to me, several addresses to the public, and forms of petitions to Parliament, relative to subjects most interesting to the members of the Church of England.

I shall now only allude to one of these subjects, namely, the state of education in this country. I shall, therefore, direct my attention to the extracts selected by you, from the Charge of the Bishop of Ossory to his clergy in 1845, which accompanied the other documents, which you have been pleased to send me. I had read these extracts in the Charge at the time of its publication. Then, as now, I felt strong objec-

tions to the arguments advanced in it, but much more, to the tone of condemnation, which pervades several parts of the Charge, as well as the notes appended to it. And I should at once have presumed to express my dissent from its spirit and its reasoning, if I had not, but a short time before it was delivered to the clergy, published a pamphlet in reference to a document on the same subject, to which the bishop's name was subscribed, and of which he was the reputed author. I was, therefore, most unwilling to embrace a fresh opportunity of seeming to be at variance with his Lordship, particularly, as in all my intercourse with him, there was nothing to produce it. But the case assumes a perfectly different position, when a public body, with so many individuals distinguished by character and rank, as belong to the society of which you are secretary, cull out from the Bishop's Charge, extracts to support the views, which it is deemed prudent to propagate and promote. I now feel that I am relieved from any restraint which suggested the propriety of silence before. The republication of the Bishop's statements seems to imply, that they have not yet received any satisfactory reply, and are not capable of being refuted. I confess I should not now venture to engage your attention, if I did not suppose that you considered the reasoning in these extracts so convincing, that if generally known, the question in dispute would at once be adjusted, in accordance to the arguments which his Lordship propounds.

As with most persons who feel strongly and write well, the view of the controversy, as it is presented by the Bishop, is too much one-sided, to enable a dispassionate observer to form a well-founded judgment. I conscientiously believe that the Church is not placed in the position which one of the documents you have forwarded represents it to be. As it is addressed "to the Protestants of the empire," any erroneous decision, based on the opinion of so high an authority as the Bishop of Ossory, may have the most disastrous consequences; for it is possible that the papers which your zeal is so remarkably displayed in distributing, may be the only sources of information which a vast majority of the Protestants of the empire may have access to. I therefore feel, that it is especially necessary, that now some notice should be taken of the Bishop's Charge. I regret that the task has not been undertaken by an abler advocate. I have waited for more than three years in the expectation that this would have been the case. The course you have pursued has determined mine; for, even an inadequate representation of the truth is now, under the present circumstances of the case, better than silence.

The various papers, you have transmitted to me will, of course, obtain a wide circulation. Your design therefore evidently is, to possess the minds of the members of Parliament of both houses, as well as the public generally, with the force of the arguments, which you consider must, of necessity, be derived from the perusal of the extracts, you have disseminated so widely. It

is but just and reasonable, therefore, that an impartial representation of the whole case should be laid before the judges. The question has been long in dispute. No person is really competent to form an unbiassed judgment, that is not qualified and willing to examine, the previous history of the proceedings connected with education, before the establishment of the National Board. Any plan, that might have been adopted in 1831, must have encountered the difficulties, which encumbered the question at that period. It is, therefore, wise and just to remember the concessions, which, the force of circumstances had extorted, from the most steadfast advocates of scriptural education in the years 1826 and 1827. For, from the points then conceded, all the subsequent arrangements took their rise, and most assuredly had from them, in a certain degree, their sanction and authority.

It may now be necessary, to refer to the position in which, the question of education was placed in 1831, in consequence of what had previously occurred from 1825 to 1827.

In the Report of the Commissioners, signed, May 30, 1825, there is a recommendation to the following effect. "We propose that public schools of general instruction shall be established, one at least in each benefice, in which, literary instruction shall be communicated to children of all religious persuasions; that two teachers, to be appointed by the general superintending authority, shall be employed in each school, where the extent of attendance shall be sufficient to justify the expense;

that they shall each of them be laymen, and that one of them shall be a Roman Catholic, where any considerable number of Roman Catholics are in attendance on the school, and that a Presbyterian teacher shall be provided in those schools, when the number of the children belonging to that communion, shall render such appointment necessary or expedient; that, on two days in the week, the school shall break up at an early hour, and the remainder of the day shall be devoted to the separate religious instruction of the Protestants; the clergymen of the Church of England attending for the purposes, at once of superintendence and assistance, and the Presbyterian minister likewise, if he shall so think fit, for the children of his communion; and that, on two other days of the week the school-rooms of general instruction shall, in like manner, be set apart for the Roman Catholic children, on which occasions, under the care of a Roman Catholic lay teacher, approved of as mentioned in the minute which we have given, they shall read the epistles and gospels of the week as therein mentioned, and receive such other religious instruction, as their pastors (who may attend if they think fit) shall direct. It will be necessary also to provide a *volume compiled* from the four gospels in the manner adverted to in our conference with the Roman Catholic Archbishops. Such a book may be profitably used during the period of united and general instruction. We, by no means intend such works as substitutes for the Holy Scriptures, although we propose *the reading of the Scriptures*

themselves should be reserved for the time of separate religious instruction."*

The present Primate and Archbishop Magee proceeded to make arrangements for this compilation of Scripture, and even consented to the occasional use of the Douay and Rheimish versions in it. And after the lapse of more than a year, since the first intimation of the plan was communicated by the Commissioners, namely, in July, 1826, they continued to co-operate in the completion of the arrangement, even though reminded thus of the peculiar and distinguishing feature of the whole plan.†

"Your Grace will excuse me for *recalling to your recollection*, that, according to this plan, the children of the different religious persuasions, though united, for the purpose of receiving general literary instruction, are to be separated, for the purpose of reading the Holy Scriptures."

So that the exclusion of the Bible was not the invention of the Whig ministers, for all this occurred in the administration of Lord Liverpool, Lord Eldon, the Duke of Wellington, and Sir Robert Peel—Mr. Goulburn being secretary for Ireland. It would seem, therefore, that danger to the Church, coming through the golden channel of the Tory party, was not so offensive as a less objectionable scheme, when supported by the Whigs.

The present Archbishop of Dublin, and the other ad-

* First Report of the Commissioners of Education, pp. 97, 98.

† See Ninth Report of the Commissioners of Education, p. 12.

ministrators of the system of education adopted by the National Board, have largely extended the stringency of the rules proposed in 1827. We shall glance at a few instances of this melioration.

In the plan of 1827, the Bible was not to be introduced into the school where Protestants and Roman Catholics were assembled together. The Bible may now be read every day in the week by both.

In the plan of 1827, even the clergy of the Church of England could not, except on the days and hours of religious instruction, put the Word of God into the hands even of the Protestant children. They may now insist, that every day, for one hour at least, they may read it, and under certain arrangements, every hour of the day.

In the plan of 1827, even at the time of separate religious instruction, the Roman Catholic children could never read any translation of the Scriptures, but the one which we believe to be unfaithful and false. They now have the privilege, and sometimes enjoy it, of reading the authorized version, every day.

In the plan of 1827, if the harmony of the gospels had been arranged, as the present Primate and Archbishop Magee, and indeed all the Bishops, without one exception, had agreed,* that it might from the authorized version, and a judicious selection from the Roman

* "Under this impression I would *recommend*, as the Archbishop of Dublin (Magee) has done in a case somewhat similar, that a committee of divines be appointed by the heads of the Church, to prepare a harmony of the gospels, formed principally from the authorized version, *yet not so exclusively as to reject always the lan-*

Catholic translation, the Protestant children would have been compelled to read it, as a substitute for the Bible, and thus the minds of children undisciplined to such exercises, would have been subjected to the conflicting differences of two translations. At present, they have but one version, that of their own Church, which they can be compelled to read.

It surely may be said of conscience, as it has been

guage of the Douay Bible, if it afford an apt and instructive meaning.—*Letter of the Primate to F. Lewis, Esq., Ninth Report, page 10, date 31st January, 1826.*

After that compilation had been prepared, the Roman Catholic bishops objected to it, because it was taken exclusively from the authorized version. On this objection being announced to the Primate, he writes again to Mr. Lewis, as follows:—

“If the objections to our compilation, are confined to its having been taken exclusively and *verbatim* from the Protestant version, and to the possibility thence arising, of passages being found in it, at variance with the authentic version of the Romish Church (whatever may be the import of the term *authentic*), we are disposed, so far as our obligations as ministers of the Established Church, responsible to the supreme authority of the State, will permit us, to meet such objections with the utmost candour, and with the largest allowances.”—*Extract from the Letter in the name of the Archbishops and Bishops of the Established Church in Ireland to T. F. Lewis, Esq., dated 22nd February, 1827, and signed* ‘JOHN G. ARMAGH.’

In this letter, the Primate expressed, in the name of the Church, his willingness, if any passages in the compilation were found, at variance with the authentic version of the Romish Church, to modify them, under the influence of the utmost candour, and with the largest allowances. And in doing so, of course, his Grace would have fulfilled the promise he made to Mr. Lewis, in the former letter I have quoted, “to prepare the harmony from the authorized version, yet not so exclusively as to reject always the language of the Douay Bible.”—*See Ninth Report, page 23.*

of liberty, " what crimes are perpetrated in thy name!" For, can the nicest discriminator calculate, how conscience is offended by the regulations of the Board; and yet, that the same persons can, as an apology for disobeying the authority of the State, in refusing the aid it offers, plead the venerable injunctions of that inward monitor, which had taught them, that it was permissible to co-operate in a plan, that restricted the use of the Bible to two days in the week to Protestants, and excluded it, altogether, from the sight of a Roman Catholic child. But now all may read the Bible if the parents of all concur, or even if they do not object; and this right, thus secured by the maligned National Board at its original foundation, is now enjoyed and exercised by the Presbyterians, throughout the north of Ireland, and in those schools, over which the clergy of the Church preside, where parents co-operate with them in the privileges it confers.

The explanation of the privileges conceded by the National Board respecting the Scriptures, had the effect of inducing the Presbyterians to receive assistance from it. For it is not correct to say that the rules were altered. Their phraseology was modified and explained, but the principle, originally contained in them, was never changed. The Bishop of Cashel has stated, as we shall see more at large as we proceed in our inquiry, " I admitted *from the beginning* that in connexion with the National Board, Protestants might have the best religious education." And from a sermon lately published by the Rev. William John-

ston, of Belfast, a Presbyterian minister, it appears, that the arrangements made by the Synod of Ulster with the Board, had the sanction of his Grace the Lord Primate. Mr. Johnston states : "The first three propositions were submitted by the Synod's deputation to his Grace the Archbishop of Armagh, to the Bishop of Exeter, and to the Bishop of London ; and that, after their having deliberately considered them, the answer returned by the Primate of all Ireland, in *writing*, was, 'that *they* highly approved of them, and that should the deputation succeed in obtaining such a modification of the National system, as was contained in these propositions, no Protestant could really object to it.'" Perhaps some explanation of this statement may be made by his Grace. At the moment at which I write, it is not contradicted ; and therefore, as the case now stands, the Primate's opposition to the Board is not easily explained according to the ordinary mode of interpreting all that is involved in opposition. He is adverse to the National Board, because the Roman Catholics are not compelled to read the Bible. Yet, he felt constrained to promise to co-operate in a system of education in which they were not to read it. His Grace still objects to the Church co-operating in the National system. Yet he advises the Presbyterians to receive assistance from it, because "no Protestant could reasonably object to it."

CHAPTER II.

The Question of a Separate Grant to the Church considered.

WE now enter upon a consideration of the Bishop of Ossory's arguments, with some preliminary information, which is necessary to an impartial examination of the question. We have seen the position in which the subject of Scriptural education was placed by the present Primate. This has been studiously kept out of view, or misrepresented, when it has been alluded to. The concessions then made, or submitted to, by so distinguished a patron of scriptural education as his Grace, and under a long administration, must have been a most embarrassing impediment to any favourable adjustment of the question when the National Board entered upon their labours. But, the Archbishop of Dublin has done much, indeed, to mitigate the evils to which education, and the Church, and Protestants in general must have submitted, if the plan of 1827 had been adopted; and everything has been assented to, that was calculated to disarm hostility, consistent with the concessions, with which the heads of the Church had encumbered the question at that period.

The Bishop admits, that further opposition to the National Board is futile; but he proceeds to argue on the necessity and justice of a separate grant to the Church.

Now, what is the principle upon which the National Board is founded? I am content to employ his Lordship's words.

“Roman Catholic children were taken and kept away from the schools provided for the poor, because their parents were opposed to the part of the system adopted in the schools, by which, all the children in attendance, who could join in the exercise intelligently, were required to read the Bible.”

The use the Bishop seeks to make of this statement is this: that, as the prejudices or objections of the Roman Catholics to the reading of the Bible, were considered sufficient reasons for permitting them to be educated, without compelling them to read the Scriptures, therefore, a separate grant ought to be made to the Church, to enable the clergy to educate their flocks, in such a way as would satisfy their conscientious scruples.

The Bishop has admitted, that the Church has virtually said—“We will so far acquiesce in your determination, that believing the system to be fixed, we will not attempt now to disturb it;” that system being, that no Roman Catholic shall be compelled to read the Scriptures.

If this rule be maintained, and this privilege be not violated, what advantage can accrue to the Church, by a separate grant, which she does not now possess, by participating in the funds at the disposal of the National Board! But, if the Church should insist, that in the Church schools, whether the parent of a Roman Catholic child were a consenting party or not, the Scriptures

must be read, would not the cession of such a privilege invade the principle, upon which the National Board, by his own statement, is founded !

If then, on the one hand, no child who could read intelligently, was to escape the reading of the Bible; and on the other, the establishment of the national schools annihilated the exercise of power, by Protestants over Roman Catholics, in this respect, how could the administration of the funds of a separate grant be dispensed, concurrently with the freedom from interference, which had been thus secured !

But the Bishop may, perhaps, intend, that Roman Catholics, in Church schools, shall retain their privilege of not reading the Bible. If so, surely this is a strange mode of asserting the Protestant principle respecting the Bible, by consenting to put that principle into abeyance, in the Protestant schools, which have been called into existence, in order to maintain it. Yet equally strange would it be to speculate that the State would permit that this right, now conferred upon the Roman Catholics, of education without compulsion to read the Bible, should be wrested from them. Then, if the privilege now vouchsafed be continued, it would be strangest of all, that the State should grant funds, to accomplish a purpose she has already provided for under the National Board, and testify, that her own decrees were abortive speculations, and thus stigmatize her incompetency to execute her own designs.

The arrangements in England respecting education

do not invalidate this reasoning. On the contrary, they strengthen it. The principle which pervades them, is permission to all to carry into execution their conscientious views respecting the children of their own faith. But there is no provision made for the conversion of one class of religionists to the creed of another. Until, then, proof is adduced, and it can be satisfactorily determined that the Church in this country is debarred from the education of her own children in her own doctrines, under the provisions of the National Board, no support can be deduced from the proceedings of the Council of Education in England in favour of the present appeal for a separate grant. For it is not asserted by the Church in Ireland, that she cannot as fully, under the National Board, as the Church in England, under the National Society, teach her children her own creed. But she dissents, first, from the National Board, and next, claims a separate grant, because she is not permitted, as an adjunct of her office as public teacher, a compulsory power over the conscience of Roman Catholics, to read the Bible, as the price of secular education. This, the Church of Rome alleges, has the tendency and effect of converting her people to a false faith. The State has determined the sufficiency of this allegation, and has ruled accordingly.

The rule of the National Board, respecting the reading of the Scriptures, is then a law sanctioned by the State, and approved by successive Governments. Therefore, no grant of money, from any

national source, can make the least alteration in the obligations, by which the State is bound to carry into uninterrupted execution, the law of the National Board, respecting concessions made to Roman Catholics. Can any one conceive, that all the toil of the Commissioners of National Education is to be thus rewarded, and that the hand that smites them, is his whom they have served? But more oppressive still than all their labours, that the ignominy and reproach they have endured in obeying the mandates of the State and its successive governments, should be thus repaid by gross ingratitude? Shall all their devotion to their high duties, be pronounced worthless and dishonored, by granting to the section of the clergy who have most derided and opposed them, the means that shall enable them to triumph over those, who have nobly and faithfully, executed the great charge that had been committed to their care?

If, then, under the National Board, the State cannot manage to induce the Church to receive assistance to satisfy her scruples, no means can be devised, by which they can be removed. For it would be a mockery of legislation, that immense funds should be placed at the disposal of Commissioners of Education, yet, that separate grants were to be made to those who had dissented from their arrangements. And for what purpose are they claimed? For the purpose of opposing, so far as decency would permit, and as far possible, of upsetting, all that had been accomplished. But, perhaps, the Bishop does not seek, in the Church

schools, the abrogation of the privileges granted to Roman Catholics, of not being obliged to read the Bible. His Lordship may perhaps see, that this would necessarily involve the annihilation of the principle of the National Board. But, if this be so, what then is the object of a separate grant? For if, as the Bishop confesses, the system of the National Board is so fixed that it is not designed to seek to overturn it, the principle, upon which it is founded, must be carried out in any schools, the State supports from any funds. What then is the object, I repeat, of a separate grant? For then the Church schools must carry out the same principle as the National Schools—that is, no compulsion as to the Bible. But on what ground is the grant demanded? Because this very principle is maintained in them; for the whole groundwork, of the controversy of the Church education Society, stands upon the claim of not admitting children to education, who refuse, as the condition of receiving it, to read the Scriptures.

If, then, the principle of non-compulsion is relinquished, in any school supported by the State, it is confessed, that the National Board is founded on a false system. But, if it be maintained in Church schools, why is it necessary to make a separate grant for a purpose that is already accomplished under the National Board? But yet it is scarcely possible that the Bishop would seek, by the application of a separate grant, to place the Church, as he would consider, in a more unfavourable position than she now enjoys. At

present, in the Church schools, she can compel Roman Catholics to read the Bible. Under the supposition we have made she could not exercise this control ; therefore a separate grant would be injurious to the Church, if the principle of non-compulsion were maintained ; and it would overturn the National Board, if it were not maintained. But we cannot suppose that the Bishop would advocate such a departure from the rule which has governed the controversy hitherto. And, if this be so, what suggestion can his Lordship make to the State by which she can so adjust the question of justice to the Roman Catholics as to annul a privilege already conceded by avowedly conferring on the Clergy of the Church of England the power to invade and destroy it ? We may assume, then, that the Bishop's design, in seeking for a separate grant, the principle of non-compulsion being withdrawn, could not possibly be conceded without invading the principle of the National Board. This must lead ultimately to its annihilation. If, nevertheless, a grant were made to the Church, it must be for the sole purpose of the exclusive education of the members of the Church. Into schools so conducted no Roman Catholic could enter and maintain and exercise the privilege that had been granted to his Church, and therefore to him.

Has the Bishop sufficiently considered the injurious effects that must necessarily ensue from these seminaries of exclusiveness ? For, exclusive in the most

offensive sense they must be. For either the State must sanction the principle that the Church of England shall have power to educate her own children without the possible intrusion of any into her schools which dissent from her mode of teaching, or she must insist that the State shall withdraw from the Church of Rome the privilege that has been conceded. Of these two evils the less is that the Roman Catholic child shall preserve his present right, for he cannot enter these schools if he wish to exercise it; and, therefore, any grant made to the Church must be administered for the sole benefit of the children belonging to her. Then the question remains for an answer. What advantage could possibly accrue from any grant made to the Church under such conditions? What benefit could it confer upon religion or the interests of the Church, or the spiritual welfare of Roman Catholics that are not all equally available to her by a participation in the revenues of the National Board? The question then stands thus—if the Church had a separate grant, and Roman Catholic children were obliged to read the Bible, they would not enter such schools if they were desirous to maintain the liberty which is conceded to their fellows in the National Schools. If, again, the grant to the Church was conditional, and that the Roman Catholic maintained his privilege of non-compulsion, would not the Church schools be what the National Schools are? If, again, in all schools the rule prevailed of non-compulsion,

would not a grant, in the Bishop's estimation, degrade the Church, render her position less useful, and reduce her to bondage. For now, in her unfettered freedom, she can employ secular education as a possible attraction to induce unwilling parents to permit their children to read the Bible.

CHAPTER III.

“The hard measure that has been dealt to the Church, as compared with the Roman Catholics,” as stated by the Bishop of Ossory, considered.

THE Bishop continues to discuss the difference of treatment, as extended to the Church and Roman Catholics by the State. He asks, “Is it not notorious that this change, which has thrown open the schools of the State to Roman Catholics, has closed them against the children of the Church; that the members of the Church feel that there are objections to the existing system which prevent them from taking advantage of it? and it does not appear that upon the lowest principles of fairness, they might expect for their scruples and for the loss which they entail upon them, some measure of consideration, which was so liberally shown to Roman Catholics? that if it were thought too much to ask that the system should be restored to its former state, in order to enable them to take advantage of it, they should at least be helped to maintain schools upon a system which offers no violence to their religious principles?” Again—“It is to be supposed that the concessions against the reading of the Bible were not made because they regarded such objections as enlightened and reasonable and deserving of respect, but because they believed them to be strong. They

saw that they were a hindrance to their availing themselves of the benefits of the education provided by the State, and believed them to be an insurmountable hindrance, and they gave way to them. Well, and are not the objections of the ministers and members of our Church against the altered system, which enjoys the exclusive patronage of the State, operating as a hindrance to their taking advantage of it for their children, for whom they have to provide gratuitous education—and, if so, on what principle are they disregarded?”

These statements assume that there is equal strength in the objection which excluded Roman Catholics from the schools of the State, when the reading of the Bible was the condition of admission, and that of the Church which prevents her children from attending them, because Roman Catholics are not compelled to read it: and, therefore, the ground of complaint being at least equal on both sides, a separate grant ought, in justice, to be made for the easement of her religious scruples. The State must judge, and the Government must decide, if there be equal cogency in the claim, for a similar relaxation, in the two cases.

The Roman Catholic could not enjoy the advantage of education without an infringement of conscience, by the compulsory law respecting the Bible. The State relaxed this stringent law. He can therefore claim the privilege of secular education, though he may refuse to read the Bible; and this regulation, though its propriety is disputed by some of the clergy, is not now sought to be cancelled by the advocates of the separate

grant. On the other side, the Church can have secular education for her children, accompanied by the reading of the Scriptures, every day in the week. No arrangement can prevent the enjoyment of this privilege. But, also, they can avail themselves of it, in conjunction with Roman Catholics, "at all times, provided no child be compelled to receive, or be present at, any religious instruction to which his parents or guardians object. Subject to this, religious instruction may be given, either during the fixed hours or otherwise." These are the obligations which the National Board imposes, and this is the freedom it bestows respecting the Bible. How then stands the case? The Roman Catholic said, I cannot have education for my children if they are compelled to read the Bible. The State replies, we permit you to enjoy the privilege you seek. We relax the law that is oppressive.

The Protestant says, I cannot permit the children of the Church to receive secular education, unless they are permitted to read the Bible. Well, the State replies, you shall have both. Your demand is granted. Your conscience shall have nothing to complain of. But, I cannot avail myself of this permission, unless, together with the exercise of this right for the members of my own Church, it is extended to the Church of Rome, as well as every section of the reformed faith.

It is extended to all. It is free as the light. All may, by our permission, enjoy it. But as man cannot compel the blind to see, no more can we force unwilling ears to hear, nor tongues to read, the Bible. The

Church replies, none then can share with us in any education, unless they are compelled to read the Bible, whatever obligations they may assert, their conscience imposes on them to prevent it. The State rejoins, we must hold an even balance. We wish that Roman Catholics would avail themselves of the blessing, which, we are convinced, is attached to the study of the Word of God. But we do not believe that divine Providence has committed to any power on earth, a commission to starve men, as a punishment, for not reading his Word. And as education is one of the means which enables a man to provide food for himself and family, we are persuaded, that we have no power to impose this worst of all pains and penalties on conscience; for we should tempt man to transgress its sacred sanctions, by bribing him to dishonour God's Word. Therefore if he, being alone responsible to God, determine that he ought not read the Bible, we cannot arm you with power to entice him. Your demand is unreasonable. You seek not only to discharge the obligations of your own duty, respecting the Scriptures, but, together with the free exercise of your own conscience, you call upon us, to sanction your claim to invade the exercise of the duties of your fellow-men, as they interpret them.

The Bishop of Ossory replies, this is not equal justice. You relaxed the rule which was offensive to the Roman Catholic. We claim an equal concession, as it regards the exercise of our conscience. If their's be offended in the case of being compelled to

read, ours is equally so, because they are not constrained to submit, or punished for non-compliance, by being denied the advantage of any education.

But the cases are far, indeed, from being similar. The Roman Catholic seeks for the abrogation of a law, which prevents his children from accepting a valuable boon. He does not demand or hope for the extension of this rule, beyond those who are to benefit by its application. He leaves the conscience of others, to adjust the regulations, which may render the advantages of education available to them ; and, therefore, the State has ruled that an equal law shall extend an equal amount of liberty to the children of the Church. Their conscience, too, shall be unfettered respecting religion. But we refuse to be involved in any enactment, which not only concedes all that you can require for the children of the Church, but would deprive the Roman Catholic, of an equal amount of freedom. His conscience is his prerogative, as well as yours. Why should we judge his creed by your faith ! Why should we invest you with the fearful responsibility of standing between him and his God ! You thus force yourself into the position which you decry as being odious and awful, when assumed by a Roman Catholic priest. We do not demand of you to silence the voice, or stifle the energy, of the faith that now presses you to occupy a false position. Whenever the time or opportunity arrives, when you can be the herald of truth to those who are benighted, we shall cheer you to

your labour of love, and honour you for all your sacrifices. But now you seek to limit and control the exercise of conscience in others, by the demands which the reformed faith makes upon your own. Do you not perceive, that when you attach a punishment, which the denial of education is, to the non-compliance with your theory, you argue in your own mind, that the Roman Catholic has already imbibed so much of the Protestant faith, as to believe that the reading of the Scriptures is his duty to God! He has not advanced thus far on the road of truth; and you ought not to torture him to advance by a bribe, which appeals to his worst passions. We, therefore, cannot invest you with authority which would limit and control his sense of duty, by the exercise of yours over him, which no more than his over you, ought to be permitted to extend beyond the members of your own Church. His objection, therefore, to read the Bible, though we do not acknowledge its propriety, yet we determine, that it is not amenable to human legislation, and much less to your direction. But it is strong, and we, therefore, have made the law of the National Board to meet his case. But, on the contrary, your exclusive claim, not only to indulge your own sense of duty, but to regulate and govern his, we reject, because, for the reasons we have already assigned, we consider it unreasonable and therefore weak. But at the same time, we have provided, by an equal law, the full amount of liberty which you can justly claim. You too can educate your children as you please, without

any infringement of your conscience, or any curtailment of what is necessary, for the full development of the spiritual improvement of the members of the Church.

How then, I ask, can the analogy in the two cases be sustained! And how can there be an equitable claim for a separate grant on the ground that it is! If it were required, that the children of the Church should receive secular education, and be denied the privilege of reading the Bible, then the analogy would have corresponding features. For, what one party considered an infringement of conscience to be deprived of, the other deemed a no less gross invasion of religious principle to be compelled to submit to. But how the suffering to each is of equal enormity, and therefore requiring an equal extension of favour to mitigate it, when one side is forced to submit to what is against their conscience, and the other is permitted to enjoy all that conscience can demand, in the education of their respective children, is beyond my power of reasoning to explain or understand.

CHAPTER IV.

“The inequality which our Branch of the Church has received, as compared with our Brethren in England,” as stated by the Bishop of Ossory, considered.

THE Bishop of Ossory having discussed “the hard measure that has been dealt to the Church, as compared with the Roman Catholics,” proceeds to examine “the singular inequality, which our branch of the Church has received, as compared with our brethren in England.” The State,” his Lordship adds, “aids the British and Foreign Society, in whose schools nothing beyond general religious instruction is given; and this does not prevent assistance from being given to the National Society, which was established for promoting the education of the poor in the principles of the Church. I do not believe that any inconvenience has arisen from the fact that the more limited society receives parliamentary aid, as well as the more open one, or that the proceeding has been arraigned as inconsistent in point of principle. It would not appear, therefore, that the maintenance of what is called the national system in Ireland, offers any good reason in principle or policy why the Church Education Society also should not receive aid from the State.”*

* Charge, p. 290.

From this extract, it is evident that the State intended that the Church and Dissenters in England should be enabled to educate their respective children in their own creeds. The rights of each were preserved. No power was ceded to either, to force upon one side what was rejected by the other. The children of the Church can have the best religious education that her clergy could desire. The Dissenter can convey to his the spiritual information he wishes to impart. The case of Roman Catholics in England had not been adjusted when the Bishop published his Charge. But the subsequent concession made by the Council of Education, is only a more enlarged development of the same principle. Even in England, where the members of the Church of Rome are but an insignificant minority of the people, conscience was not permitted to be any hindrance to education. An inconclusive deduction may be too hastily drawn from this concession. But under the shelter of the expansion of this principle the Church has a claim only for the children of the Church. The greatest adversary of the National Board does not deny, but indeed freely confesses that she already possesses this privilege; and if so, the more enlarged consideration of the wants of the various religious parties establishes that this indulgence cannot extend its advantages beyond the freedom which vouchsafes assistance to each of them.

The different channels through which the money of the State is distributed in England and Ireland does

not make the least alteration. The grants made for the special objects of the Church and the Dissenters in England, come more directly from the State to each. But the same measure of justice is meted out to the Church and the Roman Catholics in Ireland. The same principle is upheld by two societies in one country, and by one in the other. In both countries the Church can have the best education for her own people. Special provision is thus made for all classes of Dissenters, and now for Roman Catholics in Great Britain as well as in Ireland. This is calculated to repress that craving of power to interfere with others, and to moderate the ambition of being legislators instead of the servants and administrators of the law, which has so much distracted the public mind. The conscience of the Church is not permitted to exercise itself, in compelling Dissenters to learn her formularies, or any thing, which they consider calculated to originate or foster opinions, contrary to their modes of faith. And, on the other side, they are equally restrained from imparting anything but such general religious knowledge, as has no direct tendency to feed and nourish controversial disputation. The rule is precisely the same in Ireland, varied only in the degree, and under such regulations, as the difference of the case requires. The Church can have exactly the same education for her children under the National Board as in England under the National Society. The dissenters have precisely the same

measure of justice in Ireland as the schools under the British and Foreign Society in England. And the Roman Catholics in both countries are allowed to conduct their religious teaching as their conscience dictates, provided they do not offend either the Church or the Protestant dissenters, as these are not permitted to offend them.

In England no claim is set up, or at least acknowledged, that one section of Protestants has any right to regulate the religious teaching of others. Each is satisfied that he can teach his own. Nor is any party weak enough to reject the bounty of the State, because a part of its revenues is allocated for other purposes connected with education, than the disciples of their own faith would approve.

It is true that in England all the children in a church school are bound to read the Bible, and to learn the formularies of the Church. But why? For the sole purpose of the benefit of the children of the Church. The rule was not made for the purpose of controlling the conscience of others. That it was not is evident; because concession was made to those who rejected the rule—first, as to the formularies, and now as to the Bible. It is true, then, though with some apparent difference, there is really the same freedom in Ireland to dissenters, and the same protection to the Church. Her own children she can educate as she pleases. But the compulsory regulation is not insisted on, for the cases are numerous in which a very small number of Church children might be

associated in a school with a very large number of Roman Catholics. That the State should assume the prerogative of compelling the conscience of the majority to be swayed by that of the minority, would be too flagrant an exercise of power ; and, therefore, the spirit that animates the educational proceedings in England is fully carried out in Ireland, where all can teach their own creed to their own children, and to none is deputed the privilege or power to interfere in the doctrines or the faith of any Church or sect.

What then is the objection grounded on that resists the reception of assistance from the National Board ? Is it that its funds are partly devoted to the service of Roman Catholics, who refuse to read the Bible ? And would the Church in England be justified in rejecting aid from government because there is assistance given to Dissenters ? The principle which rendered necessary the endowment of the schools of Dissenters in England, and of Roman Catholics in Ireland, is precisely the same. The point that conscience fastens on in the two cases is different. But the State yielded to both, because it was a case of conscience. And though the rejection, in our minds, is more offensive that excludes the Word of God, than the heavenly prayers, which are the work of man, yet we have no more power to enforce the reception of one than of the other. The influence of conscientious scruples, has made the learning of the formularies of the Church, an inviolable rule, in the schools of the National Society. If so, surely the arguments assumed by the

members of the Church in Ireland, that it is a duty to reject the assistance of the National Board, because Roman Catholics are not compelled to read the Bible, ought equally to prevail with the Church in England, in refusing any share in the national funds for education, because their scruples are offended, by the application of any part of them to modes of teaching from which she dissents. The force of this truth is strengthened, by the late assistance given to Roman Catholics in England, because the case of the two branches of the Church, in this respect, is now analogous.

There can be no doubt, that the future destiny of the Church in England is mysteriously involved, in the fate of her sister in Ireland. How awful the responsibility of that section of the clergy in this country, that attracts immediate danger to the other branch of the Church, by seducing her to enter into collision with the State.

Any candid mind, that is not carried away by the torrent of zealous impulse, must acknowledge that the first and great concession made to conscience in religious teaching was granted to English Dissenters. Surely, that they are not compelled to learn the formularies of the Church, implies that men have a civil right to education, which is not to be withdrawn or infringed, because their religious opinions are not in unison with those of the Church of England. In the case of the Roman Catholics, compulsion to read the Word of God was the obstacle to their receiving

assistance in education. But this no more destroys the civil right than the objection of Dissenters to the formularies of the Church in the other case ; because conscience was the obstacle to reading the one or learning the other. There is, then, no forfeiture of principle in yielding to what men consider their religious duty, which you can control in the one instance no more than in the other. And, therefore, there is no more relinquishment of sound truth and duty in the Church's receiving aid from the National Board than in the clergy in England co-operating in the proceedings of the National Society, because Dissenters have their wants supplied from the same fund. As well might a chaplain in a county gaol refuse payment from the county taxes, because a Roman Catholic priest was paid from the same source. Such a chaplain is involved in equal guilt, but in no more than if he received aid for a school from the National Board in the same parish in which this prison was erected. The guilt, then, whatever its amount, is in the government, not in the society who distributes, nor in those who share, its funds. To assume the justifiable power of refusing the assistance of the State, because one does not approve of the appropriation of its revenue, is a very perilous experiment in self-indulgence ; for every one might then exercise his conscience, not only over any particular department, but over all. If any grant made from the national resources involved a relinquishment of duty in the estimation of a too sensitive mind, assistance

for the best and holiest purposes might, on this ground, be rejected.

The unfairness or inequality of which the Bishop complains, and which he supposes to exist, respecting the position of the Church in England and Ireland, is only attributable to the aspect, in which only he is content to look at the question. For the cases are thoroughly identical, as to the advantages, which the societies that administer funds for education, confer on all parties. First, as to the liberty granted to each class, to instruct their children in their own way. Secondly, as to the freedom from invasion of each other's principles by the exercise of any compulsory law. And thirdly, as to the source from which the funds are derived. For the State supplies them to all the varieties of religionists, as they have been contributed, by the members of those various bodies.

The great difference that seems so offensive to his Lordship, is one of circumstances only. It is so modified, by the peculiar situations of religious parties in the two countries, as to lose any force which it appears to possess. For, the same influence which operated on the State, to grant the Church in England, the power of enforcing instruction in her own formularies in her own schools, extended an equal amount of privilege to Roman Catholics, that they should not be compelled to read the Bible, in schools in Ireland. In each case, conscience was preserved inviolate. The Dissenters in England were not

hereby deprived of education. Provision was thus made for their conscience also. It was not necessary to make a sacrifice on the part of the Church, in order to accommodate them. For the number of the members of the Church, in every parish in England, would furnish a sufficient supply of children for instruction. Therefore the system of the Church, entire and unbroken, had full range for its operations. But in Ireland, even when high Protestant principles had ample indulgence, before Catholic emancipation was granted, and all institutions connected with the Church, were untouched by the liberality and concessions of modern times; our own bishops and clergy did not attempt to carry into operation, the same system which the Church in England, uninterrupted by any local hindrances, has had full opportunity of executing. For in the schools of the Association for Discountenancing Vice, since 1805, Roman Catholics were permitted to attend their schools, without the same rule being insisted on, which governs the arrangement of Church schools, in England.

The first of all evils of society in Ireland, is the classification of parties, and by exclusion from general intercourse forcing them to herd with their own flocks. And the first of all blessings that can be conferred is, to annihilate the precision, and most of all in legislation, that pins them within the precincts of association with their own class only. If then the Church, long before the existence of the Church Education Society, saw and felt the wisdom of resign-

ing any pretension, to force her formularies on Roman Catholics, and at a time when no provision was made for their education, and, consequently when the temptation to transgress the instigations of conscience, was more attractive and ensnaring; surely, it is but an extension of the same generous example of the Church that has taught the State, the necessity of ceasing to make the Holy Book of God, the price and bribe of any temporal advantage. If, then, the power to enforce her own mode of teaching is granted to the Church in England, with no intention thereby to effectuate the conversion of Dissenters to her creed; and if, on totally opposite principles, from any such design, they are permitted to educate their own children in their own faith, is it not evident, that in the restraint, placed upon the Church in Ireland with respect to others, and the permission for the most enlarged development of all her spiritual resources for her own people, the State never purposed any indignity, nor planned any device, by which her conscience was to be invaded, or her energies crippled, but that the laws respecting education are intrinsically the same in every case in England and Ireland—freedom to all, and invasion from none.

CHAPTER V.

The claim considered, of the Church of Rome, and of the Presbyterians to separate Grants for Education, if one be made to the Church of England.

IN corroboration of the observations at the conclusion of the preceding chapter, I may here add, that the Bishop of Ossory, in replying to the arguments of Sir Robert Peel, as advanced in his correspondence with the Primate, says, that it is not easy to comprehend the following statement made by Sir Robert Peel:—
“ I do not understand that instruction in the principles of the Church—that is, in the Catechism and Liturgy of the Church—is given in the schools of the Church Education Society, as a necessary part of the system, to all children indiscriminately.” Why the force of the observation appears very striking. The Church, in a society supported by voluntary contributions, made regulations respecting the education of her poorer children. She was unimpeded by any restraint except the urgency of the case. She was the maker of her own laws, yet she was compelled to vary the system of Church education adopted by the Church Society in England. The different state of the two countries rendered it necessary that the same Church should have different rules; and, therefore, as this was a voluntary declaration, on her own part,

by the Church in Ireland, that she needed a variation in the system of her schools from that adopted in England, she ought to be content with the enjoyment of the funds which would enable her to educate her own people in her own creed. Her own conduct ought, in truth, to have silenced her remonstrance against the rules which were established for the guidance of any other class of religionists, while the arrangements by which her own plans might be executed were at her own disposal. This ought to have been a sufficient reason for taking assistance from the National Board, for the Church thus confessed that she could not enforce the rules which the National Society in England insists on.

When the project was entertained of the Church in Ireland, deriving aid under the National Society in England, it was not intended, that the regulation which had made the formularies of the Church a necessary part of the compulsory education, should be insisted on. It is surely a striking feature in the case of the Church in Ireland, that, not only, did she deem a departure from the practice of the Church in England, a necessary sacrifice to expedience ; but, the propriety of submitting to this difference, was acknowledged by the National Society that enforced a contrary rule in England.

Thus, the public are put into possession of the warning truth, that circumstances may vary the obligations of conscience, in persons of the same Church, even when engaged in the performance of the same duty. And this would seem to suggest to any calm

and dispassionate mind, that this confession, by both the divisions of the Church, intimates strongly, the delicacy that ought to be observed, in interfering with the creed of others by any compulsory law. And therefore, that she ought thankfully to receive a grant from the society, whose funds the State had destined, by a generous arrangement, for the benefit of all.

Sir Robert Peel also stated, "that there is a very important departure from a principle, which many would contend, ought to be enforced, by an institution avowedly formed in connexion with the Established Church." To this the Bishop replies—"This objection has not been made by the heads of the Church in Ireland, nor by the clergy, nor by the laity of our own communion." And in another place he adds, "nor by any individual." I refrain from repeating names; but I know persons of high character, and members of Parliament too, as well as some of the clergy, whose ability and literary attainments rank them among the most distinguished of their profession, who separated from the Church Education Society on this very ground. If, under the present circumstances of the Church, the number of such dissentients be few, the fact of a separate grant to the Church would doubtless increase it; and though perhaps, at no time, would this class be numerous, still it is certain, that it would be sufficiently great, to evince that a separate grant, did not necessarily, insure peace to the Church or to the public.

The persons to whom I allude—and I am convinced

there are many whom I do not know—prove the likelihood, that a party would arise, that would require the destination of a grant to the Church, to promote the plan, to which Sir Robert Peel referred. But, even if there were not now, any such remonstrants against the relaxation permitted by the Church Education Society, surely the practice and example of the Church Society in England, afford sufficient grounds for supposing, that advocates for such an appropriation of funds, would arise. If the National Society in England were so peremptory, in insisting upon the rule, as to render the institution of another society necessary, for the easement of the Dissenters, it is more than probable, that many of the most simple-minded lovers of the Church would consider the adoption of such a rule obligatory, and a conscientious duty to enforce. But in truth, whether this result were the consequence of a separate grant or not, the danger of yielding to such a demand would, most assuredly, produce the consummation, which has been foreseen and dreaded. For, under what circumstances would this inauspicious event take place? Why, with the known fact existing, that all other religious bodies had consented to receive assistance from the National Board, and therefore, that a special grant to the Church was given, for the more independent propagation and display of her creed. For, neither the Church of Rome, nor the Presbyterians, ever entirely concurred in the regulations which the Commissioners were obliged to adopt. The Pres-

byterians, for a considerable time, were dissatisfied, and would not co-operate. And one whole diocese of the Church of Rome still continues dissentient from these rules. Dr. MacHale, forsooth, would be too happy to contribute his mild and dignified advocacy to promote peace for the future, and to testify forgiveness for the past. But both these parties, the Roman Catholics in three provinces and the Synod of Ulster, yielded upon the principle, that, though all they required was not granted, yet, provided they were not compelled to adopt anything they objected to, they would co-operate with the National Society for national purposes. But let the rustling of the leaves ever so faintly intimate a coming change, and soon indeed would the storm commence. The exigency of the case, and the mutual sacrifice of what the Church of Rome and the Presbyterians deemed necessary for a perfect educational system for their respective children, would immediately cease to have any influence in binding them to the present arrangements. A grant to the Church would at once make all their past demands a present grievance, for the condition upon which they ever consented to co-operate with the board was to this effect: that no religious party should possess a privilege in education, which, if exercised in the presence of others, would trespass upon the sanctity of their religious views. But if one of the parties that rendered necessary the sacrifice of scruples for the free and unimpeded working of the whole educational system, not only dissents, but is destined to enjoy, as

a reward for her refractory hostility, a special grant for the purpose of opposing, by the very terms in which the boon is craved, the theory and practice of the original institution, then and at once the condition of the former contract is broken. If all that the Church requires for the full development of the teaching of her faith, and the pacification of her outraged conscience be conceded, there is no argument or artifice that could rationally satisfy a calm observer of events in this country, without seeking to aid the force of these observations, by anticipating the fury of the zeal of those whose element is mischief, why a similar favour, or rather equal justice, should not be granted to all other complainants as well as to the Church. And, indeed, to them more than to her, ought such a compliance be conceded in attestation of the State's acknowledgment of their accordance to co-operate in the furtherance of the system that the State and successive governments had deemed it wise to adopt.

In the degree that any party had made a sacrifice to attain a great end, would the awakened power of resistance to any departure from it be proportionably vigorous and active. Instead of conscience, as the Bishop argues, not possessing any claim to urge on this score, I conceive her justifiable demands would be immeasurably strengthened on the very ground of conscience. It might well be argued by these parties that we had consented to receive aid for education, not because all we thought necessary was included in the regulations; but we

almost defrauded ourselves of our just rights, by accepting the lowest condition that could be offered, that nothing should be required from us, that infringed the rights of conscience. For the difference is vast indeed between conscience being satisfied, and not offended. As no party was to enjoy all that it needed, we submitted to our penalty to complete the concession. But then the requirements which conscience craves, and without possessing must be querulous, vary according to what others, with only equal claim with our own, obtain. The weaker then the reasons, upon which the State yielded to the Church, in conceding to her a separate grant, the stronger is our justification, for pressing for a similar relaxation. The Church will now be armed with means, unalloyed by interference of any controlling body, to exercise at will, any machinery she may devise, as best calculated to promote her principles and creed. We cannot consent to flutter tamely, with clipped wings, while she is permitted to soar. We, says the Church of Rome, as a safeguard against the influence of such operations as the Church of England may now employ, require a full development of our religious system in our schools. We must now compete with the new advantages, which the State has conceded to her. We had consented to hide under a bushel, the light of the Church, by which we could entice the stranger to gaze upon her, with favour and without fear. We accepted education, as it were, in its naked form, but now we reasonably claim, to adorn it with the

beauty of holiness, and to decorate it with all the magical attractions of our persuasive faith.

The Presbyterians would, or might, advance their pretensions with similar strength; and even if the simple argument were pressed, that because the Church of England has obtained a separate grant, the other parties demand the same concession; it is vain to suppose they would not obtain what they required.

The Bishop, indeed, acknowledges that such a demand would most likely, be made by the Church of Rome and the Presbyterians. But he has found out an easy answer:—"But why should it be complied with?" There is, however, a great difference between legislating on a principle, and writing theories on a disputed question. But does his Lordship believe, that there might not be as harassing a pressure from conscience, instigating these parties to emulate the victory the Church would have attained, as now inflames a portion of the clergy, in the persevering pursuit of the boon they crave? But who is to decide this case of conscience? Who, but the judge, that has already ruled against the Church, and in favour of them. So that, even if conscience, as he argues, did not operate upon the petitioners, it must be admitted, that they have both a jury and a judge inclined and willing to pronounce a favourable judgment and verdict. And, on the favourable interpretation of the demand of the Church, for a separate grant, is the incalculable danger to be hazarded, of her opponents being placed in the position of probable and most perilous success?

The Bishop proceeds to argue thus in refutation of the statements of Sir Robert Peel:—"The Roman Catholics and the Presbyterians having actually availed themselves of the advantages which the National Board offers, can never plead conscience in objecting to its system."

We shall endeavour to test the validity of this statement. The Protestant Dissenter and the Roman Catholic were ineligible, at one time, to sit as members of Parliament. The laws which caused their exclusion have been repealed. Their conscience, which had been offended by the restriction, which limited the privilege to members of the Church of England, was satisfied, by their being put into possession of the same freedom which others had long enjoyed. But, if it should happen that any members of Parliament who, belonging to the Church, should renounce their seats on account of the concessions which conferred on others equal privileges with their own, shall now acquire exclusive advantages to entice them to their duty, would not this cession to them of special immunities so change the position of the Dissenter and Roman Catholic as at once to open a new ground of complaint? Would they not summon to their clamorous demand for equal rights the plea of conscience, that concession, similar to what the Church had secured, should now be awarded to them.

And would these unreasonable members of the Church, who had rejected parliamentary responsibility, because others, not of their modes of faith, had been

permitted to undertake it, have no sophistry to urge in justification of their conduct, on account of the sufferings that the exercise of their conscience had inflicted on them! Might they not say, "We do not deny, that we can exercise our rights as members of Parliament. There is no hindrance to the full manifestation of our legislative privileges, as well as, that of these new-born senators, and there is no diminution of the full expansion of our individual rights, all of which, we might still enjoy, if we continued to act in our capacity of legislators. It is not what we lose that we complain of, but we remonstrate against the advantages which others have secured. We can therefore be no partners with them, in the responsibility of legislation. For they now share in its duties whose loyalty and creed are equal objects of our aversion. As the concession has not been assented to, that we should compel those who have entered on their new-born power, to submit to our determination of what is best for them, we claim permission to exercise privileges, which still will have the effect of insuring and perpetuating our exclusiveness and thus save us, from the contamination of a heterodox combination with those, who have a false creed with an adulterated Church, or no Church and a half-sound faith!" And would not the reasoning in claim of exclusive privileges in the imaginary case, as well as in the real one, be equally subject to condemnation for its narrow and sectarian spirit!

Thus, I think, it appears, that conferring any right

of a special nature on favoured individuals, to which all are equally entitled, as a direct appeal to conscience, to seek to obtain an equivalent privilege, because they were excluded.

This may be represented under many different illustrations ; for instance, an equal privilege is now vested in certain persons to give one vote in the election of a member of Parliament ; all who possess this right ought to feel that, so far as they are concerned, their interests as citizens are sufficiently maintained ; but if it were ordained that power were granted to certain electors in Westminster to give two votes for each candidate for the representation of the borough, at once there arises, necessarily, a call on conscience to demand a similar boon for those who had been excluded. While all exercised equal power and enjoyed like privileges there was no reason for remonstrance, and none was therefore made ; it was the new possession of authority by some, which all did not share, that produced fresh ground for dissatisfaction. Now, this privilege is not claimed by any, because none possess it ; but the exclusive advantage of one party creates the complaint, which never can be removed until they are again made equal with their fellows.

Or if the merchants of Bristol were enabled to import wine from Madeira free of duty, while those of London or Liverpool were denied a similar advantage, would not the latter feel that they ought not equally to be required to contribute to the revenues of the

State when they do not equally with others enjoy the opportunity of being enabled to do so?

The influence, then, of conscience in its most imperative demands, so far as it is exerted in connexion with either civil or ecclesiastical arrangements, is not limited in its exercise to the rights which we have secured and enjoy, but the cravings of its unsatisfied requirements are created and nourished by the privileges which others, with only our own claim to them, possess, and we cannot obtain.

CHAPTER VI.

The reasons assigned why it may be supposed that the State has refused, and will continue to refuse, a separate Grant to the Church.

ALL parties in the State can now receive a full and satisfactory secular education. They enjoy this privilege as a right, without the alloy of any compulsory interference in their religion, while at the same time every assistance is contributed that its holy doctrines and precepts shall be taught as conscience directs the parent's duty to impart them. This is liberty, without any artificial sophistry to blight the blessing of the generous boon. In Ireland this principle is maintained more free from unjust invasion than in England. For here a parent can claim the right of secular education and reject any religious interference, which in some instances might be of incalculable advantage. There is no provision made in England for the exercise of a similar safeguard.

This new code, in regulating education, is only the reflection on the child of the light, which constitutional liberty has allowed his father to possess and glory in. For, to remove all the shackles of antiquated restriction from the parent, and lead him forth to bask in the sunshine of freedom--to proclaim that his religion is no bar to the attainment of the highest dignity and

honour—and then to connect this glorious gift with the bondage that others shall have power to force his child to learn a creed which he rejects and disowns, would be the revival of the persecution and the martyrdom that bound the living and the dead together, and then called upon the victim to praise the God, in whose sacred name this tyranny was perpetrated.

Yet this enfranchisement from the spiritual control of those whose faith is abjured, is called unrighteous and unholy. One section of Christians mourns that they cannot compel another to receive what they are unwilling to enjoy. This would be, in truth, the revival of the old penalty and fine for not attending the services of the Church. And who that loves the Church does not grieve that her Bishops and her clergy are they, who crave and struggle to grasp this iron wand of power. To maintain them in this crusade of ancient bigotry, since they cannot force others to share their light, they demand a separate grant, that they may enjoy their illumination alone. They writhe under the responsibility of being unable to control the religious scruples of their Christian brethren.

I have endeavoured, in the last chapter, to show to what result any such concession to the Church would inevitably lead. It had been foreseen that, if this grant were once made, the Presbyterians and the Church of Rome would demand a similar concession. To this the Bishop of Ossory replies, "Doubtless common sense must be exercised in every particular case, to

determine whether the plea of conscience is a *bona fide* plea, or only a pretext."

This is a fair appeal. Let common sense then be the law, by which the State shall decide this question. But what question?—for that must be accurately defined. It is not that the children of the Church cannot be educated in her own creed—she admits that they can; it is not that she demands that the rights now conceded to the Roman Catholics must be cancelled—she reluctantly confesses that they are inviolable; it is not that the Church of Rome and the Synod of Ulster exclusively possess any protection or privilege, and that to her, is meted out the stinted donations of sectarian or capricious benevolence. No; none of these. But this is the question—Is the Church of England entitled to a separate grant for education, because she will not accept aid from the National Board, as she would thus be a party to a compact to keep the Scriptures from the Roman Catholics? This is the point submitted to the arbitration of common sense. How auspicious, that this difficult problem is at last left to such an impartial tribunal. Hitherto, this question and common sense have scarcely had the honor of an introduction to each other.

The State then, as judge, thus decides. We cannot make a separate grant to the Church in Ireland. We shall enter fully into the reasons, that justify this decision. In the first place, there appears to be considerable indistinctness as to the obligation on the conscience of those, who argue in favour of the grant.

There seems to be in their mind, a confusion as to the relative duties of the petitioners and the State. They are not chargeable with any guilt the State may contract. Whatever may be the errors of legislation, the makers of the law are alone to be impugned. The petitioners are the objects and servants of the law. They are not the keepers of the conscience of the State. They have to discharge a sacred duty to the Church. We enable them fully to execute it. We have conceded to the Church of Rome the privilege of secular education, without the condition of reading the Bible. But this is only the application to them of the same rule, to which all are subjected. No party is obliged to read the Scripture. All may read it if they choose. The law is the same to all. Education they may have on a general system, that is uniform and defined; but religious instruction we do not regulate. We leave that to the clergy and parents of the children. If they never came to school, that duty would be discharged by those who are responsible to God, for the discharge of it. If they come to school, we shall gladly aid the same agents to execute, in a more regular and systematic manner, that which might be inadequately performed at home. But we believe, that the State possesses no more right, to compel a Roman Catholic child to learn the Bible, in a school-room than in a church. And if we insist, that anything of a religious nature shall be learned in the school-room which the child would not be taught in the chapel, we

assume a right, to direct the Church of Rome in the way, in which she should teach her own creed. We do not believe we possess this right, or that either reason, the principles of freedom, or even the Word of God, would sanction this assumption. And therefore we maintain the same fixed principle throughout our entire educational system. We do not limit the exercise of conscience to hours or places. We endeavour to give it expansion and protection, which, if it have not everywhere, it has it nowhere.

We felt, too, that education is a civil privilege ; it is one which, of all others, we have the least right to shackle with restrictions ; it is the avenue that leads to every other privilege. For in the degree it is shorn of its advantages, or that they are interrupted by modifications or rules, except those that appertain to the most beneficial regulations by which it can be imparted, we prevent or encumber the possession of all civil rights, which are attainable or become valuable, just in the degree that the people become an educated class. And therefore, by any effort to enforce or insinuate purer doctrines of religion, as a necessary accompaniment of education, we believe we should cut off the entail of the only inheritance, which the poorer classes of our countrymen can call their own.

But beside this, we have no criterion extrinsic to themselves, to test, whether the refusal to read the Bible is a pretext or a justifiable plea. If the secular clergy had been opposed by the regular, as to the value of Scriptural education, or indeed, any free independent declaration had been ever promulgated, that there was

in the Church of Rome, a living energy that craved the food of life in the Word of God ; we should, with all the holy zeal of the most ardent servants of the Church, have protected such a glorious aspiration, and promoted its longings after Divine truth. But Rome was unanimous against the indiscriminate use of the Scriptures. And we know not by what law, human or divine, we have any commission or right, to place the principles and the creed of millions of men, in the alembic of another man's conscience, and there distil what the one party believe to be the waters of life, but they who are to drink them, as well as their spiritual physician, pronounce to be poison to the health of their souls.

We have said that the Church of Rome was unanimous in rejecting the use of the Bible. On the 25th of January, 1826, a series of resolutions were adopted by the Roman Catholic prelates. This is the fourth of them—"That, in conformity with the principle of protecting the religion of the Roman Catholic children, the books intended for their particular instruction in religion, should be selected or approved by the Roman Catholic prelates; no book or tract for common instruction in literature shall be introduced into any school in which Roman Catholic children are educated, which book or tract may be objected to, on religious grounds, by the Roman Catholic bishop in the diocese, in which such school is established."

Here is a claim that no book shall be used, not only at the time of religious instruction, but any other book, at any other time, that shall be objected to.

In the December of the same year, Archbishop Murray states, "a work, however abstracted substantially from the Scripture, *but not purporting to be the words of Holy Writ*, would not be liable to the same objection." Yet we are called upon to grant funds for reversing the concession founded on this—that is, to refuse secular education unless the Scriptures are read by Roman Catholics in Church schools.

Again, in April, 1827, Dr. Murray states, "I will avail myself of this opportunity to express an opinion which you will not, I am sure, consider at variance with the respect which I sincerely entertain for the Board of Education Inquiry—it is, that the Board has created for itself *a very needless difficulty* by requiring, as a matter of necessity, *any Scriptural compilation* to be used in schools for the purpose of general instruction. Were the religious instruction confided wholly to the care of their respective pastors, what appears to be the only remaining ground of disagreement might, without difficulty, be carried into immediate and extensive operation."

So that even this compilation, which had been destined as a substitute for the Bible, with the knowledge and concession, at least, of the Lord Primate, at the time of general instruction, could not be completed in any way satisfactory to the prelates of the two Churches.

The following extract from the ninth report of the Commissioners of Education, from which the previous

extracts are taken, is a sufficient authentication, that the Church of Rome had unanimously avowed that the Scriptures should not be read in schools, in which Roman Catholics were present :—

“ We beg leave to recall to your Excellency’s recollection, the particulars of a minute of conference held between our Board and the four Roman Catholic Archbishops on this subject, bearing date 8th January, 1825.

“ The Commissioners inquired, whether it would be objected, on the part of the Roman Catholic clergy, that the more advanced of the Protestant and Roman Catholic children should, at certain times during school hours, read portions of the Holy Scriptures together, and in the same classes, but out of their respective versions, subject to proper regulations, &c.”

Dr. Murray answered, “ that serious difficulties would exist in the way of such an arrangement ; and in lieu of it, he proposed, that the Holy Scriptures should be used *only* when the Roman Catholic children should be taken apart for the purpose of receiving religious instruction.”

The Commissioners in 1825 commenced their labours with this announcement as the frontispiece of their scheme, that the Bible was not to be read. Next, that not even a compilation of Scripture was to be announced as a part of Holy Writ. Next, that not a book or tract that ever so remotely alluded to religion, should be used without the approval of the Roman Catholic prelates. Next,

that the compilation, even if it could be agreed on, was an unnecessary work ; for all religious instruction should be left to the time of separate education.

How then could the State, except they were agents of deceitful mockery, impose the reading of the Bible as the condition of education ? And how can the prelates and clergy of the Church be justified in exercising such energy and continued agitation, to oppose what the Government and the State deem to be their unavoidable duty—a duty they have been constrained to discharge—unless they consented to refuse to the people any education whatever ?

But we are aware, that the impression which these statements are calculated to produce, is sought to be set aside.

It is alleged, that great numbers of Roman Catholics did read the Bible, under the arrangements of the Kildare-place Society. Surely, the very ground of its labours being suspended was, that they did read. They could have no education if they did not. The Church of Rome protested against the government of the country using the general funds of the nation, for the purpose of undermining the foundations of their faith. Therefore, no inference in the least degree favourable to their conscientious willingness to read, can be deduced from the history of the proceedings of the Kildare-place Society—but the contrary ; and, therefore, the duty that the State is summoned to discharge, of placing the means of education within the reach of all, without organizing any restriction, to which con-

science may object as an impediment to its being received, must be powerfully influenced by this fact. For it is plain, that Roman Catholics received education in defiance of their conscience, so valuable did they consider the advantages it bestows. When conscience was not assailed by the temptation, they partook of the boon without its objectionable adjunct. What then is the case we have to decide? Whether Roman Catholics are voluntary agents in refusing to read the Bible. And what testimony have we to form a sound and wise judgment? Two witnesses are before us, to enable us to ascertain the truth. One proves that they did read the Bible, when they could not have education unless they read it; the other proves that they did not read the Bible, when they could have education without reading it. This defines our duty with great accuracy, and developes and sanctions the plan which conscience imposes on us to pursue.

But next, we are assailed by the unsatisfactory statement that even now 45,000 Roman Catholic children still cling, in defiance of all temptations, to attend the National Schools, and of the injunctions of their priests, to the glorious privilege of reading the Word of God. Small as this number is, we wish the fact was satisfactorily authenticated. We do not presume to express suspicion that this number does not attend the Church Education Schools. We have not the least doubt that if such a statement is guaranteed by the clergy it is true. But that actually proves

nothing to the point at issue. Do they attend these schools that they may enjoy the blessings of reading the Bible? How many of them can read any book? What is the age of the children? How many are under ten? How many of them attend a Church school, that have an opportunity of instruction elsewhere? This information is quite necessary to test the validity of any argument deduced from the number of the children. It is the object with which they prefer one school to another, and their ability to enjoy its advantages by their age and competency, that can bestow any value upon the statement, for the purpose for which it is adduced. We can well understand, and our own knowledge and experience prove it, that the tenants or workmen of landlords, and of the clergy interested in Scriptural education, have a powerful influence operating upon them, to induce them to send their children to schools which they patronize. If to children and parents under this natural influence, is added the number of those who cannot read at all, and next, the number of those who attend Church schools, because they have no opportunity of being educated elsewhere, the amount would be wonderfully reduced, which is now brought forward to vindicate the statement, that Roman Catholics, in defiance of their priests, in condemnation of the National Schools, and in reprobation of the decision of the State, attend Scriptural schools, simply because they prefer education with the Bible to education without it.

But it is the proof of this alone that can give the

slightest value, even to this small number, that now is educated in the schools of the Church Education Society.

Independently of the reasons already assigned for the determination the State has adopted, we should be justified by others in dissenting from the position, which the dissatisfied clergy of the Church struggle to uphold. They conceive that there ought not to be any provision made by the State for education, without the inseparable adjunct, that the Bible should be read. This must mean, either that ignorance is the deserved punishment of refusal to read the Scriptures, or, that men are more likely to turn at last to the Word of God by continuing them in ignorance, or because they are unable to read it, or, that the partial removal of ignorance by secular education, would serve as an additional disqualification for the mind being inclined to accept it.

This appears to set forth for approval the strange doctrine, that the more ignorant the savage, the more is he prepared for the reception of Divine truth. The Apostles, however, experienced the greatest success to their ministry, in the cities where the people, however debauched by idolatrous worship, were prepared to estimate and admire their eloquent appeals, in consequence of their cultivation in human learning. Some of their most forcible appeals were built upon the application of that learning to their heavenly mission, though their auditors had derived it from sources not illuminated by any knowledge of Divine truth. We do not believe that ignorance is the handmaid of reve-

lation, or that it can ever be its instrument. And indeed, when properly considered, this mode of reasoning is an impeachment of Divine wisdom, for the Almighty has never limited his gifts, to those who appreciated their value, or gratefully acknowledged them as the merciful dispensation of Him who bestows them. The rain was to fall upon the just and the unjust. The Apostle inferred the just condemnation of the heathen, because the knowledge of the Godhead, which the works of creation displayed, had not the effect of conducting his mind, from their wonderful excellence and beauty, to expand its inquiries and search after their Divine Architect. Is the state of ignorance which the clergy contend it is their duty to perpetuate, unless the people will read the Bible, better calculated to remove the awful responsibility of unexcited investigation, or a participation in such knowledge as awakens reflection by expanding our ability to inquire? God, however, imparted that knowledge without giving revelation to correct it, and he decreed that men were responsible in the degree that they possessed it. But we cannot pursue this investigation, yet we are unable ourselves, to devise any satisfactory answer to the reasons which it furnishes to justify the State in giving secular knowledge to those who will not receive Divine knowledge at their hands or through their means.*

* "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse, because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."—*Romans*, i. 20, 21.

These reasons have made it difficult for us, to entertain again the question, as proposed by the dissentient clergy. All these several arguments influenced the members of the State and successive governments, in the decision that has been come to. Still the clergy struggle by incessant agitation to superinduce the declaration of Parliament, that our regulations ought to be cancelled, and therefore that our arrangements have been constructed on insufficient authorities, or that we had either mistaken or misinterpreted them. But an appeal to common sense, that worthy stranger to this long-ventilated question, we cannot, and we will not refuse.

We have declared before that we had no means to discover the opinion of the Church of Rome as to the reading of the Scriptures, except the declaration made by herself. Her bishops and clergy were unanimous against its adoption. But happily we can apply to the petition of the clergy for their right to a separate grant the test in which we were deficient in the case of the Roman Catholics. For the issue we have to try and decide upon, with the assistance of common sense, is this, is conscience a pretext or a justifiable plea in the members of the Church in their crusade for a separate grant? We can only be enabled to judge of this by trying their conscience by this test, how the same objections are interpreted and acted on by persons, equally with them, under the influence of Protestant principles.

We find, then, that the Presbyterians, distinguished

in their whole history as the boldest maintainers of the doctrines of the Reformation, as contra-distinguished from those of Rome, have consented to accept the aid we offer, and which the clergy refuse. Their conscience, at least, equally alive with that of the clergy to the power and ambition of the Church of Rome, and to her great sin in separating religion from the reading the Word of God, has been no impediment to their being partakers of our liberality. Beside this great and powerful branch of the Protestant people of Ireland, we have ascertained that there are more than five hundred of the clergy of the Church of England, among whom are bishops, and deans, and archdeacons, and professors and fellows of the university, and some of them the brightest ornaments of the Church, advocates of the National Board. It may be a justifiable estimate, though we believe it would represent unfairly, for our view, the state of opinion among the laity, to assume that if the 1,500 clergy who are opposed to the Board represent three-fourths of the members of the Church, the 500, who side with the national system of Education, may be considered to represent one-fourth. Then how stands the test of common sense?

By the last census the numbers of the	
Church of England in Ireland were	. 852,064
Deduct one-fourth, represented by one-	
fourth of the clergy who approve of the	
National Board, 213,013
	<hr/>
	639,051

The number of the Presbyterians by the same census is	642,356
To which we add the members of the Church approving of the Board,	213,013
	<hr/>
	855,369

We have, then, in this figure, the gross amount of those who belong to the Church, and to the Presbyterian body, who adopt the policy which the State has sanctioned respecting National Education, and if from this we deduct the number of the members of the Church who oppose the Board, as thus,

855,369

639,051

216,318

we have a majority of two hundred and sixteen thousand three hundred and eighteen upholders of the Protestant principle of the value of Scriptural Education, who, nevertheless, side with and advocate the principles which the State has deemed it wise to adopt, and of the National Board, which is their instrument for carrying out this policy.

And therefore, on common-sense principles, upon which, we are called upon to decide this question, we make this rule : that the opposition of the dissentient clergy is vexatious ; for we have more than eight hundred and fifty-five thousand witnesses to testify that no Protestant principle is endangered by an adherence to the Board ; that, therefore, there is no reasonable

validity in the objections of the opposers of the State, of the Government, and of the National Board. We will not say that conscience is a pretext ; but we do put it on record, that in this case, it is not a justifiable plea, and we therefore rule, that there shall be no separate grant made to the Church in Ireland, for her exclusive use.

CHAPTER VII.

Evidence adduced that the best Religious Education may be had under the National Board.

It may here be necessary to show, that the Church is enabled, under the regulations of the National Board, to give the most satisfactory religious education. It is acknowledged by unquestionable authority. The Bishop of Cashel has stated at the clerical meetings in Dublin in 1848: "I admitted from the beginning that, in connexion with the National Board, Protestants might have the best religious education, but I could not be a party to a compact, to withhold the Scriptures from the Roman Catholics."^{*}

I adduce the authority of the Bishop of Cashel, to correct a gross misstatement in one of the addresses, which have been forwarded to me by the Secretary of the National Club. That address is intended to afford information to the "Protestants of the empire," as to the unjust position respecting education, in which the Church is placed in Ireland, by the State. A more exact acquaintance with the subject, and more discretion, would have been desirable ingredients, in the adoption of the means by which this society

^{*} See an excellent pamphlet addressed to the Bishop of Cashel, by the Rev. Frederick F. Trench, of Cloughjordan, in which the latter part of this statement of the Bishop, has received a most satisfactory refutation.

proposes to illuminate so large a body as the circular is intended to reach. It is well to compare the address of the society, and the statement of the Bishop.

“Unrestricted access to the Holy Scriptures, is of the essence of Protestantism.

“Prohibition of that unrestricted access, is of the essence of Romanism.

“Schools founded on one or the other of these principles, must, of necessity, be opposed to the conscientious scruples, either, of Protestants on the one hand, and to the mistaken objections of Romanists on the other, according to which of the two principles may happen to be selected.

“It has seemed good to the Government to select the Romanist principle of prohibited access, in what are called the National Schools in Ireland, which have been established, both in the Protestant and in the Roman Catholic districts.

“The system therefore of the Irish National Schools is essentially different from that of the schools of the same name, in England. The Irish ones (of which more than one-half are under the patronage of Roman Catholic priests) are founded in conformity with the Romanist principle of prohibited access ; and to this principle, the whole body of the Irish Protestant clergy and laity, with the exception of a very small number, conscientiously object ; because they believe, that, by connecting themselves with these schools, they would be compromising the fundamental principles of Pro-

testantism in the country, and under circumstances, in which it is peculiarly their duty to uphold it.

“Nevertheless, they do not urge upon the Government to adopt the Protestant principle instead. Their present request is far more humble. They ask, as a matter of bare justice, that their conscientious objections may be treated in the same way, that the conscientious scruples of *all* other religious bodies in Great Britian are, and have been treated by the Government, viz., that in common with the rest, they should receive a grant from the Imperial Treasury, for the education of their poor brethren of the same faith with themselves. This request, however, has been, and still continues to be denied. The Irish branch of the United Protestant Church of England and Ireland is alone made the exception, as if, in scorn and mockery, to prove the rule.”

If the best religious education can be given to the children of the Church under the National Board, are not these statements derogatory to the dignity and character of the noblemen and members of Parliament connected with the National Club! I shall not say a word, as to the waste of wrathful indignation which the secretary employs. But is not their reputation soiled by connection with such an intemperate and unfounded representation of the question! “It has seemed good to the Government, to select the Romanist principle of *prohibited access*, in what are called the National Schools in Ireland, which have been established both in the Protestant and Roman Catholic

districts." The facts, which I have stated respecting the Presbyterian and the clergy schools under the National Board, I need not now repeat. It is not necessary to add, that the former have not bated one jot or tittle of the prerogatives of their sturdy faith. Are not their schools and those under the Church, in the terms of your own definition, as to what is "the essence of Protestantism," enlightened by an unrestricted access to the Holy Scriptures! Would not the same rule, that governs those schools be extended to all whose patrons claimed the same privilege! Is the secretary aware, that in districts, where there are no Protestants, patrons have exerted the right, even in opposition to the interference of the Roman Catholic priests, to insist, that the Douay Bible should be read! Is it known that the Board have assisted the patron against the priest! And as the parents wished, that their children should have education, even upon the condition of reading the Word of God, since they could not have it otherwise, that the school, conducted on these terms, now flourishes under the Board!*

Even in mixed schools, in which there are children of different creeds, the Scriptures may be read without any injunction, at the time of the reading of them, that Roman Catholics should retire. Have the members of the National Club ever seen the reply of the secretaries of the National Board, to the assertion which contradicts this statement? Lord Clancarty appeared to have been under the impression, that when-

* See Mr. Trench's Pamphlet, pp. 6, 7.

ever the Scriptures were read, the Roman Catholics must be directed to retire. The refutation of this erroneous impression is very precise :—

“We are directed to inform you, that Lord Clancarty is in error in stating that the reading of the Bible can never be introduced into National Schools, *except after notice given, that all those pupils should withdraw, whose parents and guardians have not expressly directed them to attend.*” If the secretary of the National Club were ignorant of these facts, some of the gentlemen connected with Ireland and members of the committee ought to have protected themselves from the consequences of such a misdirection to the jury “of the Protestants of the empire,” to which an appeal is made, which must be entailed upon the propagators of such mistaken statements.

“The Irish schools,” it is declared, “are founded in conformity with the Romanist principle of *prohibited access.*” It would not be more true to assert that Roman Catholics are not eligible to sit in Parliament. But the entire statement is, in all its parts, erroneous. “Nevertheless, the Protestants do not urge upon Government, to adopt the Protestant principle instead of the Romanist one.” Well, then, what is required? Why, simply, “that a grant should be made for the education of the poor brethren of the same faith.” It is already made. Yet it is asserted, “this request has been, and still continues to be denied.” If the abrogation of the privilege, which protects the Roman Catholic from compulsory reading of the Bible, be

not sought for—if the request, as conveyed in the above words, be really the only object of petition, namely, that the poor Protestants may be taught their own faith, does it become gentlemen and men of honour to be partners in the cheap cant of agitation, and to make declarations which have not even the semblance of truth! Are the statements believed, by those in whose name they are uttered! If they are, what apology can be offered by those who seek to direct “the Protestants of the empire,” when they have not yet learned the alphabet of the system they labour to annihilate! But let the Presbyterians, and the numerous clergy of the Church who have schools under the Board, answer, if they believe the statement in the address to be true.

Supposing that, in ignorance of the truth, those erroneous allegations have been made, it will be gratifying to the members of the National Club to know, that the rule of the National System respecting the Scriptures, may most accurately be defined in the words, which have been selected to designate “the essence of Protestantism,” for *unrestricted access* to the Holy Scriptures, is the law of the Board. The prohibition of them is nowhere enjoined, but strongly discouraged, wherever and whenever willing readers of any creed or Church can be procured.

As such laborious efforts have been employed by the National Club, to disseminate extracts from the Charge of the Bishop of Ossory, it must have been supposed, that his views coincided with those

expressed, in "the addresses to the Protestants of the empire." It is not probable, that the Bishop permitted the sanction of his name to be used, as a passport for such misrepresentations. For if the opinion entertained by the Bishop of Cashel, as expressed in the sentence quoted at the commencement of this chapter, represent the Bishop of Ossory's mind on the same subject, the extracts from his Charge have been circulated, under the influence of misinformed zeal and a misconception of their meaning. And if the secretary of the Club had known, that the poor members of the Church, could obtain the best religious education under the auspices of the Board, he would not have been its accuser, for I will not use the phrase, calumniator, but its advocate and ally. However, he can make atonement for his present error, by his future patronage of the intents and objects of the National Board, which perfectly coincide with his own, as conveyed in the address to the Protestants of the empire.

CHAPTER VIII.

General observations on the question of Education, and the mode in which it has been patronised by the Bishop of Cashel and the Bishop of Ossory.

I SHALL now make a few remarks on the statement of the Bishop of Cashel. To the valuable declaration, that Protestants might have the best religious education, he has added: "but I could not be a party to a compact, to withhold the Scriptures from the Roman Catholics." Every conscientious objection is entitled to respectful deference. But they who have the power to permit the exercise of conscience to display itself in acts, must examine and decide upon its reasonableness. Beside this, they must inquire, how much and how far, the permission to yield to what conscience may appear to demand, may interfere with the conduct of those, whose case has been already decided upon, and whose claims in deference to their scruples, have been adjusted.

I hope I have fairly stated the case that the Roman Catholics, in refusing the assistance of the State, if compelled against their conscience, to read the Bible, is a stronger appeal to the justice of the State and the responsibility of the Government, to yield to their prayer, than that of the dissentient members of the Church, who can have the best reli-

gious education for their children, and all that they require, for their spiritual and literary improvement, but refuse co-operation in a national system of education, because others, not of their faith, are not compelled to submit to a practice to which they object. If the Roman Catholic, not only, claimed exemption for himself but insisted upon compulsory submission from others, to an act of which he disapproved, then the case of the two claimants would correspond. The State administers full justice to both parties. But the privilege of invasive interference is permitted to neither. Therefore, it is wisely determined, that each shall have all that the children of their own faith require. If the case of the Roman Catholic be the stronger one, and if no power is to be given to one church, to compel another church to depart from what she has determined to be necessary for the preservation of her faith, this concession must be maintained, by such restrictions upon the party that has the weaker side, as will tend to preserve the rights granted to the other party, because it had the stronger case. For every concession, that tends to invade the privileges that have been admitted, must have the effect of continually casting imputations upon the wisdom and discretion of the Government, that yielded to the stronger case. And concessions, if once made, will operate, gradually but certainly, to invalidate the position which had been assumed as the wisest to adopt.

If, then, the dissentient clergy maintain the equity

of the State's yielding to the petition, for a separate grant to the Church Education Society, because the Scriptures are not read by all, surely the Roman Catholic may now equally object, that they are permitted to be read by some. For the whole weight of any arguments ever advanced in favour of this grant, is founded, upon the right to force one church to adopt the rule of another. And though the persons who now do read the Bible, are not of the same faith with those who complain of their doing so; and on this ground, might claim an exemption, in the exercise of their conscience, from being bound by the will of another; this, which would be, and is a satisfactory justification of their being allowed to read the Bible, would not, in the least, destroy the force of the objection in those who are here supposed to advance it. For this is the very foundation of the argument which some of the clergy have used, in vindicating their refusal to share in the funds of the National Board. It is not, that the children of the Church may not read the Bible, that any participation in the use of those funds is abjured, but because, though they may enjoy that privilege, others who object to do so, are not compelled to submit, or punished for refusing, by the denial to them, of any assistance from the State, to promote their views of education.

If we once admitted this principle, that we could not share in the application of any funds, a part of which is used, for objects of which we disapprove, there is scarcely an institution or public body, in the

benefits of which, the various members of society could participate. For instance, in our University, Roman Catholics are not compelled to read the Bible. But who refuses, on this ground, to reap the advantages of its educational system? Or, who is the member of the Church, whose abilities and acquirements have rendered the acquisition of a fellowship the reward of his talents and perseverance, yet has rejected this rich repayment, because all are not compelled to embrace the faith which he has adopted?

If there be any force in the Bishop of Cashel's objection, that he would be no partner in a system which was instrumental in giving the best religious education, because all who share in it are not forced to accept the most valuable department of instruction, his lordship ought to vindicate the reputation of the distinguished Fellows of our University, who are guilty of the very sin, which is the barrier between him and the National Board; and compels him, reluctantly, to agitate the public to resist the Government and the State. For the Fellows have not been daunted from laying hold of the high reward of their genius and learning, because conscience, in others, was permitted to indulge the errors of a mistaken creed.

If such arguments have any force, as they respect the funds of the National Board, they are a thousand times more forcible, as regards the University. For the funds of the National Board are the gift of the Legislature, whose component parts hold the mixed

creeds of all the motley tribes of dissent, as well as, those of the Churches of England and Rome, and they were bestowed for the nation's benefit, whose citizens might hold opinions as various and many-coloured, as they who have conferred the boon. But the funds of the University were granted for a single purpose as to religion—the promotion and perpetuation of the Protestant faith. In the one case, there is a greater violation of conscience, if any in either, than the other. He, who refuses aid from the National Board, because all are not compelled to receive spiritual improvement from the same source, acts in opposition to the generous philanthropy which determined that, notwithstanding the varieties of religious faith, there was freedom for all, and exclusion for none. But the Fellow of the University, if he transgress the obligation of conscience in enjoying the reward of his attainments, sins in a still higher degree; for the sources of his enjoyment, and the reward of his honours, have been applied in a manner, contrary to the known intentions of the author of the bounty that bestowed them.

And, if ever the day shall arrive, when the pusillanimous policy of any ministry or party, shall be seduced to comply with the demand for a separate grant to the Church Education Society (all whose just wants have been amply provided for by the State from the funds of the National Board), the rancour of religious frenzy, extravagant as has been its wildness in Ireland, will only then begin its reign of terror and

confusion. For there is not one argument, that the Church can adduce for a separate grant, that, as I hope I have already proved, the Church of Rome and Presbyterians cannot, and could not, urge with equal truth and cogency. And then, at last, the shortsighted bigotry, which vainly seeks the garb of conscience to mask the real motive, will wail the loudest, when the power, and the wealth, and the whole machinery of the National Board, by the active yet blind zeal of the dissentient portion of the Church, will be, and must be, handed over to the Church of Rome, to work her full of mischief, without restraint or check.

I trust, I transgress not the limits of courtesy, in saying it appears to me, that the doctrine of the Bishop of Cashel is a strange tissue of inconsistency and mistaken duty. As a bishop he is to administer the law. As a member of the House of Peers, he is to give his assent or opposition to its enactments while under discussion. If, as a father of the Church, his vocation is exercised, he is called on to appropriate to their destined use, the benefits which the laws have provided for the education of the members of the Church. If the best religious education can be secured for them under the National Board, and yet, he refuses to accept it, does he not attempt to control the legislation of Parliament by his single power? He acts, not as a Bishop, not as a peer, but as an autocrat, impeding and nullifying what the united wisdom of Senates and Governments determined to

adopt. Responsibility, as to the National System, he contracts none. His conscientious obligations cannot be impeded by an act of the Legislature, which permits and enables him to afford the best religious education to the children of the Church. If he were summoned to act as a Commissioner of the National Board, he might justifiably decline its duties. He then would assist, by a voluntary act, in a system a part of which he condemns. But to reject assistance to accomplish the project he approves, is a refinement in scrupulous tenderness, which, certainly, cannot find its apology in any thing, which reason, or prudence, or conscience, or deference to authority, or submission to Government, can suggest.

The hostility with respect to the National Board, which such energy is used to maintain, and the clergy are encouraged to promote by agitation, is still more unreasonable and unjustifiable, since it is admitted, that the concession made to Roman Catholics is not now sought to be withdrawn. This limits the controverted point to a single issue, how the children of the Church are to be educated?—or rather makes the controversy unintelligible, for it is admitted that the best religious education can be secured under the Board. For if, on one side, the Roman Catholics are not to be invaded in the privilege which has been vouchsafed, and no compulsion is to be enforced; and on the other, the best religious education can be secured under the Board, what more can be demanded? The petition, then, for a separate grant to the Church

Education Society, would seem, to reasonable minds, to be a fiction of conscience, and a palpable quibble of sentimentality. From whom are to proceed the funds which are to be denominated a grant for Church Education? From the same party, be they the Senate or the Government, that have already adjusted the application of the revenues of the National Board. What then is the difference, in receiving the amount required from that Board? To accept it from hands stained with the guilty allocation of money to a condemned society is too awful an interruption to his Lordship's peace of mind! For how is this guilt diminished, if the Chancellor of the Exchequer should, unpropitiously, provide the sum demanded, with the same hands and from the same coffer, from which the accursed grant to the National Board has been taken! Or, would the guilt be pardoned, if the sovereigns of the Church had never been permitted to touch the sovereigns of the Board! Such sophistry of the tenderness of conscience, would puzzle the astute learning of a Bishop Saunderson, to classify among the *casus conscientiae*. The guilt is not the guilt of the Commissioners of National Education. The crime is committed by those who devised the plan they administer. Yet, it is from this corrupted source that the scrupulous recusants agitate, to wring a boon not tainted by an adulteration with anything that is common or unclean.

The path of duty seems now distinctly traced—to maintain Church Education, by means supplied by

the Church. From no other source can they come in an unpolluted channel. It is more noble to make a generous sacrifice of our own wealth—that conscience should be unrebuked, and no longer haunted by the fear of evil than incur the reproaches of a troubled spirit, by receiving anything from unclean hands. If this resolution be finally adopted, it might be wise to consult the peace of the Church, and perhaps her safety too, by a proclamation, that agitation was now to cease, as unworthy of her ministers, her position, her loyalty, and her creed.

But the Church may not be driven to this self-sacrificing expedient. The Bishop of Cashel may, perhaps, re-adopt his now abandoned opinion. His Lordship has been always understood to be the author of the essay, from which the following extracts are taken. It was published in *The Christian Examiner* in 1842, previous to his elevation to his present dignity. Who but must lament that the spirit of Christian philosophy and wisdom which they breathe, did not continue to abide with his Lordship, when power and station had been conferred upon him, to give them currency and support?

“Shall there be no attempts to raise, in the scale of intelligence, a Roman Catholic population *as such*? Must they, in their state of ignorance, give up their Romanism first, and put themselves into the hands of Protestant instructors that they may be educated? Is it reasonable to expect that they are to give up their priests, *in order that* they may be educated, rather

than first be educated, and, as a result, give up their false teachers? If men will choose what is of minor importance for their children, viz., a secular education, and neglect what is all-important, a religious one, is the State to blame, because it does not deny to any of its subjects the temporal privilege, till the spiritual one has been taken due advantage of? Is not this, as if our Lord Jesus Christ should have refused to heal a sick man, till he had exhibited an appreciation of the higher power, to heal his sin-sick soul, of which the Saviour was possessed, and ready to impart? A supposition contradicted by the fact."

I should not presume to attribute the authorship of these words to his Lordship, even upon the strength of universal opinion. But they have been quoted as his, in a pamphlet dedicated to the Bishop, and of course transmitted to him, by a most highly respectable clergyman, and no announcement has ever been made that the Bishop of Cashel is not the author. Therefore, we cannot but regret that the generous sentiments, which were the immediate precursors of his episcopal life, did not continue to shed their lustre upon his mitred brow. What a strange change, and how rapid, must have passed over his convictions? In how brief a period has he declared, and I am convinced with equal sincerity and truth, the very opposite opinions.

The Rev. Frederick Trench, who quotes these words, very appositely remarks: "How any person, entertaining such just views as to the value of a

good literary education, could turn away a Roman Catholic child, craving the boon of literary education, I cannot understand."

Mr. Trench may be content in his ignorance. The whole fraternity of reasonable creatures are equally involved in his stupidity. But this is not the most inexplicable part of the difficulty. For we may ask—but we certainly never shall have an answer—how any person, with such an intelligent mind as the Bishop's, and entertaining such views, could be a petitioner for a separate grant to the Church Education Society. On the one side he acknowledges that the children of the Church may have the best religious education under the auspices of the National Board. On the other, he confesses that literary education must, or may, precede religious, in the case of the Roman Catholic. This surpasses my philosophy to explain. If the Bishop is consistent, in holding these two opinions, what does his Lordship crave? If he does not now adopt both, which did he abjure, and when? But his Lordship has a retreat from this confusion of opinions. For since he was a Bishop he has declared "I could not be a party to a compact to withhold the Scriptures from the Roman Catholics." But I must take the liberty of asserting, that this is a most unjust representation of the National System of Education. I have sufficiently proved that it is so, in the preceding pages. For the Bible is not withheld in any case, in which a Roman Catholic is willing to accept it. If this be not so, let proof be adduced that my statement

is unfounded. But if it be so, how can the Bishop refuse to be a patron of the National Board? For it imparts literary education, which he confesses ought not to be withheld. And it provides for the inculcation of God's Holy Word, whenever a willing recipient is desirous to obtain it.

My chief desire in adducing these opposite statements is not to confront the Bishop with the man. It is, for two reasons, independent of any such object. The first is, his Lordship's views on education appear to approach closely to those of the National Board, if they do not coincide, and are not incorporated, with the very rules of its system. It is, therefore, gratification to know that there is a retreat for conscience and honour to retire to, and provided by the generous spirit of his own conduct and theories, that will afford shelter from the merciless denunciation of the following extract from one of his own speeches:—

“Fifteen hundred out of two thousand clergy in Ireland had signed against the Government system, and *the five hundred who declined doing so, were the very worst members of the Church.* He did not mean to say that there were not good, but mistaken, men amongst that five hundred; but, at the same time, he was convinced it included all the bad men.”*

How much of prejudice, how little of sound judgment, and still less of Christian temper, not to speak of coarse invective and undignified zeal, have entered

* At a meeting of the Church Education Society. Reported in *Dublin Evening Mail*, 28th April, 1848.

into this perilous anathema against the approvers of the Board. Yet that critic must have the discrimination of an angel, who can allot to his Lordship a refuge from his own denunciation. But he is safe from all danger, and has surely been comforted with the warning, "Escape for thy life—look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain—escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed." And for a season the Bishop fled from his former associates ; but "the sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar."

My second reason, and indeed my chief one, in adducing the case of the Bishop of Cashel was this : I hoped that the circumstances connected with the contradictory opinions of one so eminent as the Bishop of Cashel might have a tendency to mitigate the severity of reproach so pitilessly lavished on all who agree with his Lordship's former creed. He, now the head and front of the opposition to the National Board, once at least, and at a memorable crisis too, was not so steadfast and unrelenting as since he was a Bishop. His judgment flickered, and did not shine with its steady and wonted light. Yet I do not dare, or wish, to attribute his vacillations to selfish or ambitious motives, or brand his name with apostacy or deceit.

I cannot avoid, in the conclusion of these remarks, making a few observations on the part the Bishop of Ossory has deemed it prudent to take in this controversy. I am one of the clergy in his Lordship's

diocese ; therefore I shall avoid the adoption of any language, even in the use of a single word, that might possibly be considered offensive. Under other circumstances, my sense of duty might have directed me to a different course. To write at all upon the subject, is to me the cause of pain and grief. But of two difficulties I select the less. To shrink from the expression of my opinions would be to admit the justice of his Lordship's condemnatory language. This is a more painful position to allow myself to remain in, than to express my dissent from the justice and propriety of the censure the Bishop has pronounced. And this I shall endeavour to perform, considering the severity of the commentary, in the most respectful language I can employ.

In the extracts which you, sir, as Secretary to the National Club, have given from the Charge of the Bishop of Ossory, and in many other parts of it which you have not circulated, there is a flood of censorious comment poured forth on all, who support the National Board. That those reproaches are deserved, seems in his mind, an inseparable adjunct of any advocacy of that system of education. If such imputations were but rarely cast upon the objects of this censure, one might charitably attribute them, to some cause that might possibly palliate their severity. But there is no form, in which condemnation could be moulded, that does not find an instrument in his Lordship's vocabulary, to give it consistence and shape. He even deemed it his duty, to convey this condemna-

tion, in a letter to a member of the late Government, which he hoped would be the subject of consideration for the whole cabinet.* In this document, intended to produce a re-action in the minds and purpose of the ministry against the interests of the National System of Education, there is an unbounded supply of imputations against the honour, the reputation, and the sincerity of the advocates of the Board. When this letter was sent to the high personage, for whom it was intended, the grossly accused party had no opportunity of refuting these criminatory allegations. Happily, we may suppose, they were not credited, for they formed the most forcible portion of the Bishop's defence. At the least, one-fourth of the clergy were intended, and doomed to suffer from these accusations ; and bishops, too, who might claim to be removed from the suspicion of a poisoned conscience, were included. At least there is no city of refuge provided for their honoured heads, unless they choose to fly to the *refugium peccatorum* of "the few exceptions." I humbly crave permission to deprecate this ungenerous warfare. My purpose is now simply to obviate and prevent its future adoption. Any scribe can invent a scheme of torture of the same kind, upon which he can impale the reputation of his antagonists. Surely the imputation of motives, could as justly be cast upon the clergy of his Lordship's three dioceses, in which he has the donation of one hundred and twenty benefices. Which of the clergy in that part

* Charge, page 302.

of the vineyard, could hope for promotion at his lordship's hands, if their conscience, unfortunately for their interests, so shaped their convictions on the subject of education, that they would not fit in the mould which is the criterion of virtue in the Bishop's estimation. It is determined, that with very few exceptions, none but corrupted minds with sinister design, could adopt such an adulterated opinion, as would disagree with his standard. Surely, without imputing motives, it is just as possible, that interested suggestions or ambitious projects might sway the judgment, in the one case, as in the other. Yet his Lordship accuses the approvers of the Board, of courting the favour of Government, at the sacrifice of an abandonment of principle. Some are saved from ignominy, that lie within the chartered range of "the few exception." But what mortal can enter into the conscience of the great majority of the remainder, that are thus elected to disgrace, and pronounce sentence on their honour. But it seems never to have occurred to the Bishop, that his own clergy are just as liable to the same charge, if any one would forget himself so much, as to utter the impeachment.

"Methinks in those, who firm with me, remain,
It shows a nobler principle than gain.
Your inference would be strong, the Hind replied
If yours, were in effect, the suffering side:
Your clergy's sons, their own, in peace possess,
Nor are their prospects, in reversion, less."*

I shall now select a few of those condemnatory ex-

* Dryden's "Hind and Panther."

pressions, and shall limit myself to the *one letter*, to the member of the late Government. They are equally severe and plentiful, in other parts of the Charge.

“The Truth, however, is, that the existing system is supported by a minority of the clergy, very inconsiderable in point of numbers, and of *still less consideration in every other important respect.*”

Again, “*The favours which were lavished upon those who abandoned their principles.*”

Again, “At the outset, it would oblige Government, to advance men of no character in the Church, OR WORSE THAN NONE.”

Again, “Would sell their reputation at last.”

Again, “They would lose the most important part of their characters, and with it, of course, the power of filling, creditably and effectively, any post high or low, to which they might be advanced.”

I could expand this treasury of reproach. I could indulge in severe language to express my opinions upon it. But respect for the Bishop and for myself imposes silence. Enough I hope is done—and even this has been performed with reluctance and pain—to mark this system of recrimination, as undignified and unjust. May it have the effect of stifling a repetition of such calumnies. At least that they should not be uttered by a distinguished prelate. One heeds it not from the meaner herd, who may be ambitious to imitate so high an example. But every virtuous mind shrinks from its use, when the accuser’s character, valuable to religion and the Church, is more likely to suffer than

those whom he inculpates. The Bishop of Ossory does not need the vulgar artifice of imputing unworthy or selfish motives. The elevation of his reputation can be sustained by itself. It is a practice derogatory to the dignity of a great mind, even when agitated by controversy, and it is surely unsuitable to the repose of a Christian temper.

THE END.