

LETTERS

ON SUBJECTS CONNECTED WITH

IRELAND,

ADDRESSED TO AN ENGLISH CLERGYMAN.

BY

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"Seek peace, and ensue it."—1 PETER, iii. 11.

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LETTER I.

MY DEAR SIR,

WHEN I had the pleasure of meeting you in ——— shire, we had much conversation relating to the state of Ireland, in a political and religious point of view, and on the condition, character and habits of my fellow-countrymen. And now, in compliance with your request, I proceed to address a few letters to you on the same interesting subjects; first premising, that you must not expect to find in them a full discussion of the various questions connected with politics and religion in Ireland, but simply what I promised, “familiar epistles” on the subjects upon which we conversed; such as you may show to your English friends, as containing the views of an humble individual indeed, but of one who has at least had abundant opportunity of obtaining a thorough

knowledge of Irish affairs—who is acquainted, by experience, with the arguments used on both sides of the several questions under consideration—who trusts he is actuated by upright motives—and who is not ashamed candidly to acknowledge, that the views which he now advocates he formerly condemned, and being fully convinced of their truth, is desirous to lead others to venture, in a spirit of disregard for old prepossessions and party associations, to think for themselves, and to judge dispassionately.

The lively interest which you evinced on these subjects was highly gratifying to my feelings as an Irishman, ardently attached to my native country ; and I am bound to acknowledge, that in every part of Great Britain with which I have become acquainted (and I have visited almost every county in England, each of your universities, the principal large towns, and the greater number of the cathedral cities of England, besides the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow) I have found the same interest in the affairs of Ireland manifested by individuals of all classes and parties. Amongst all, I have

witnessed the same eagerness to learn something of this country, and have usually found a readiness to sympathize with the wants of my poor fellow-countrymen.

While, however, I gratefully acknowledge the deep interest in Irish affairs thus generally evinced at your side of the water, truth compels me to state, that I have found no inconsiderable degree of ignorance to prevail amongst our well-wishing neighbours, on subjects connected with Ireland; and I must confess that my national pride has oftentimes been wounded, on discovering the opinion which many of our English friends have been led to entertain, respecting the state of this country and the character of its inhabitants.

It is true, that well-informed persons in England no longer look upon the Irish peasantry as a set of wild barbarians, and the Irish gentry as but a very little better. The great facility of intercourse between the two countries has brought us better acquainted with each other (and, as I love candour, I will acknowledge that this has been calculated in many

respects to benefit *us*), and we flatter ourselves that you have formed a better opinion of us on a more intimate acquaintance. At all events, you have had opportunities of meeting with many of the Irish, of various ranks and professions, and of differing creeds and parties, who have not failed to produce a favourable impression ; and of whom some, at least, have had better sense and better feeling, and let me add, a greater regard for truth, than to make it a point to abuse their native land, and to traduce the character of their fellow-countrymen. The fact, too, of no small number of English tourists, and numerous gentlemen engaged in commerce, having visited our shores, and penetrated sometimes into the most remote parts of the country, and yet having returned to tell the story, has satisfied many of our English friends of the possibility of getting alive out of Ireland, or of living safely in it, if so disposed ; points upon which considerable doubts were entertained some few years ago, and indeed still continue to exist at your side of the water.

Allowing, however, for this happy change in the

minds of our neighbours, I have had numerous opportunities of discovering to how great extent prejudices exist in England, with reference to Ireland and the Irish; and I blush to acknowledge, to how great a degree those prejudices have had their origin in the exaggerated accounts given of the country and the people, by Irish visitors, who, under the influence of party feeling, labour hard to persuade you of the awful state of things here, the degradation of the peasantry, and the insecurity of life and property; in a country described by them as in a state, compared with which Beotia is light, and Caffraria civilization, and in comparison with whose inhabitants the fiercest cannibals are merciful, and the most untutored savages enlightened and humane!

After all you had read to this effect in newspapers, and heard in speeches, and even in sermons, the surprise was very natural with which you received my observations, when I expressed my conviction, that in many important features, the state of feeling in Ireland, in a moral and social point of view, is more wholesome and safe for the commonwealth, and the principles of the people, in the

aggregate, more sound, than in, perhaps, any other country in Europe. I was well aware that your national pride would rise against the proposition, and I was not ignorant of the melancholy facts to which you would point, as apparently giving the contradiction to my statement. I was quite prepared for your appeal to the various Irish outrages, rebellions and murders, the agrarian disturbances and lawless acts of violence, as well as to the ignorance and bigotry which have heretofore too generally prevailed amongst the lower classes in Ireland. And to all these, and to more than I have here enumerated, you did at once appeal, as so many incontestable proofs of the degraded character of the Irish peasantry, as so many irresistible evidences of the prevalence of feelings and principles, more base in their nature, and evil in their tendency, than could be found to exist in any other nation laying claim to the title of civilized!

It must be allowed, that the history of Ireland contains too many

“Whole pages of sorrow and shame.”

It cannot be denied that the land has been stained

with blood. It must be confessed, that even at the present day, many and sore evils continue to exist in this country. Here we are all agreed. Not so as to the causes to which the evils which we deplore are to be attributed, or as to the remedies to be applied for their removal. To these I shall hereafter have occasion to advert. My present purpose, however, is to call your attention to a few facts corroborative of the position I have laid down, the assertion of which, on my part, occasioned you so much surprise.

I say, then, that in many important features, the state of feeling, and the morals and principles of the peasantry of Ireland, are in a more sound state than in, perhaps, any other country in Europe. I doubt not that it will be judged by you sufficient, if I confine myself to a comparison with the similar classes in England. If I can convince you that the state of feeling, and the moral principles of the Irish peasantry, are more sound and safe for the well being of the social system, than amongst the lower classes in England, I doubt not you will, as a true Englishman, acknowledge our state better than that of any nation in the known world. And it is

sufficient for my purpose to confine my observations to a comparison between England and Ireland.

At first sight, it would doubtless appear that my country could not for a moment stand such a trial. To a superficial observer it would seem absurd to institute the comparison. A glance at the comfort, wealth, and industry of a people having abundance of employment, dwelling in neat and substantial habitations, and enjoying large wages ; and then a sight or recollection of the misery and poverty of a population, without the means of earning more than a miserable pittance by the sweat of their brow, endeavouring to shelter themselves in hovels of the most wretched description, and in many cases subsisting on the charity of others scarcely less poor than themselves—a cursory glance thus taken of the two countries and of their population, might lead a casual observer, who judged only from the outward appearance, to suppose that these external circumstances were true indications of the moral condition of the population in each country respectively. Such a one would picture to himself peace and contentment, with morality and religion, taking up their abode in the midst of the people more favoured by

outward circumstances ; while he would associate with the condition of the less favoured, vice and discontent reigning in every heart, and breaking out on every occasion. If he would hope to find religion and a spirit of obedience in the one case, he would as naturally expect to discover infidelity and insubordination in the other.

But far different would be the result of a closer examination. I will not hurt your feelings by entering into detail ; but I assert, without fear of contradiction, that while a spirit of discontent and impatience of control and bold infidelity, prevails to an awful extent amongst whole masses of the people in England, patience and contentment, under privations such as no Englishman could endure, are characteristics of the Irish peasantry, and infidelity is absolutely unknown.

I know you are not one of those who are so bigoted as to assert that the Roman Catholic religion is worse than infidelity. This is, however, boldly maintained by many zealots in this country. But even setting aside the religious consideration of the subject, in which point of view it might have been supposed that any one acquainted with the reli-

gion of the Gospel would acknowledge any form of Christianity preferable to infidelity—without, I say, entering into this view of the subject, it requires but a little knowledge of history, of morals, and of human nature, to lead to the conclusion, that, even in a political point of view, the most erroneous form of Christianity is to be preferred to infidelity. I would go farther, and am prepared to maintain, that many of the Protestant sects in England are more inimical in their principles to the well being of society, than Romanism under the worst circumstances.

The Irish, of the middle and lower classes, are a more religious people than the English. Whatever their religion is, they appear more attached to it. They are more of a church-going (or, as the case may be, a chapel-going) people, than are to be found at your side of the channel. To speak *phrenologically*, the Irish have the organ of “veneration” more strongly developed than the English. They are less disposed to radicalism, and more inclined to pay deference to their superiors, and they evince more zeal in their religion. This principle of veneration may have a wrong direction; it may be directed

to improper objects ; it may rest too much on outward ceremonies, and traditional customs, or be directed too much to their clergy ; but the principle is the same, and every tory at least must admit that it is a good and safe principle to pervade the minds of the lower classes, and to influence their conduct. And I cannot but consider it a very happy circumstance that the Irish peasantry are so much actuated by this principle. It is sufficiently amusing, indeed, to see the extent to which it is carried, and to observe how much an Irishman is influenced by considerations of the birth and connections of those who are placed in authority over him. Much, indeed, has been done by the Irish gentry to weaken the feelings of respect which the peasantry are thus naturally disposed to entertain towards them. Still they do cherish proper feelings towards their superiors, the absence of which, in too many instances, may be discovered in England.

After all you have heard of the danger in which the Irish protestant clergy are represented as living, you will, doubtless, be surprised when I assure you, that I would not exchange with many of my English brethren. Never have I heard of the same bad

spirit being evinced towards our body by the peasantry of a different creed, as I have witnessed, in numerous cases, manifested towards the clergy in England by the lower orders, and even by persons of the middle classes, who professed to belong to the same church. I might give details which would be too painful, but it is unnecessary. Suffice it to say, the Irish clergyman usually finds his immediate flock regular in their attendance at church, and thankful to receive his domiciliary visits, while, if he be a man of a conciliatory spirit, he will meet with kindness and respect from the Roman Catholics and Dissenters of his parish. Can the English clergy always say as much?

You have heard much of the insecurity of our lives in Ireland. And the circumstance of some Insurance company having declined to effect a policy on the life of a Protestant clergyman, has been quoted in the newspapers, at Exeter Hall, and in the House of Commons, as an evidence of the murderous disposition of the Irish peasantry towards the Protestant clergy. I have no doubt of the fact that some company did refuse the proposal to insure the life of some clergyman, and I am not surprised

at the circumstance. Nay, I am more surprised that any English company should effect Irish insurances, when the directors hear and read the exaggerated reports which reach them daily from this country. And yet I have found no difficulty at various periods in effecting insurances on my own life with two English companies, while I resided as a protestant clergyman in the three several roman catholic provinces of Munster, Leinster, and Connaught; and this too while the whigs were in power, and Lord Mulgrave the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland!

Having resided as a protestant clergyman in each of the above-named provinces, it may not be uninteresting to you to hear from an eye-witness a fact or two connected with each, illustrative of the present state of insecurity of clerical life in Ireland! In the county of Kerry, I have found the hall-door of a clerical friend's house open at nine o'clock of a winter's night, when neither friend, nor certainly foe, was expected, and in this state is the house usually to be found in one of the most remote and least Protestant districts of the province of Munster.

What renders this case more remarkable is, that the clergyman referred to, is strongly opposed in politics to the Roman Catholics, and was, at the very time to which I refer, (January, 1837,) using the most determined efforts, by the means of Exchequer "writs of rebellion," to recover his tithe composition rent. In so remote a locality is his glebe-house situated, that, excepting another clergyman living about eight miles distant, there is not a gentleman residing within ten or twelve miles in any direction, nor is there a town within fifteen Irish miles!—To go to Leinster. In the county Kildare, which, though contiguous to Dublin, is a very roman catholic county, I have frequently discovered my own hall-door open at eleven o'clock at night, and, except for the cold air which it admitted, I felt no apprehension on the subject. On my leaving a parish of which I had been for a few months the incumbent, in that county, my carriage was indeed stopped by the people, but it was for the friendly purpose of taking off the horses and drawing me and my family through the village!—Then as to Connaught. In the county of Sligo, which had been, indeed, disturbed at the period of the

last general election, I have found the same strange infatuation prevailing amongst the clergy (even amongst those most opposed to liberal principles), which leads them to leave their window-shutters open, and their doors unbarred, and to venture out at all hours of the day and night, without the protection of fire-arms, notwithstanding the warnings held out to them by the orators at Conservative meetings and Protestant associations, in spite of all the eloquent speeches delivered in the houses of parliament, and in defiance of "the sober prose of the Insurance companies," (to use the language of the leader of the tory party in the House of Commons,) all admonishing them of the dangers with which they are surrounded, and of the conspiracy which exists against their lives and property; all which their zealous friends have discovered, but of which they appear so perfectly unconscious themselves!

Do not think that I make light of the sufferings to which as a body we were for some time exposed, in consequence of the opposition to tithes, which so long continued; I do not deny that the Protestant clergy did suffer much during the period of that opposition, in a pecuniary point of view, and

did in some instances meet with personal violence; and it is with pleasure I record the fact, that, generally speaking, they endured the trial with exemplary patience. But I do deny that the Roman Catholics of Ireland entertain that enmity against the Protestant clergy, as such, which many would persuade you they do. On the contrary, I maintain, and daily experience confirms me in the persuasion, that, looking upon the clergy as a body of resident gentlemen giving them employment and relief, and treating them usually with kindness, the Roman Catholic peasantry entertain towards them feelings of respect, and this although they find them on almost all occasions distinguishing themselves as the most decided and unrelenting opponents to every liberal measure; which latter fact I cannot but consider a most unfortunate circumstance, and most injurious to the cause which they desire to promote.

I have observed that the Irish are a religious, or, if you please, even a superstitious people, and it must be acknowledged that in some respects they are credulous to a fault. And yet it is not a little remarkable, that the multiform species of

fanaticism which find such ready followers in England, can never get a footing here. In Ireland, Joanna Southcote had no followers; in England, some of her disciples remain to this day as firm in their faith as ever! The same may be said of the Ranters, Jumpers, Swedenborgians, and many others, none of whom have been able to gain adherents amongst any class of the "benighted Irish;" while these, and many more—indeed one is inclined to think as many more as choose to try the experiment—are sure to find followers in England!

Nor does this difference arise from any deadness or unconcern as to religious subjects in this country; on the contrary, it has been generally remarked by the English clergy who have visited us, that a greater degree of religious ardour and zeal prevails in Ireland than in their own country. Whether, however, it be that the Irish have too quick a sense of the ridiculous, or too much of the organ of veneration to allow of their taking up new-fangled notions, most certain it is that they are not so easily *humbugged* as your countrymen, nor can fanaticism find so ready

acceptance here as at your side of the water. Take the instance of Thom (or Courtenay) who, in a few days, got so many hundred followers in Kent—

“—— the civil'st place of all the Isle.”

He could not have raised the twentieth part of his army in as many years in Ireland.

Although I almost fear to try your forbearance by pursuing the comparison further, I must say one word as to the comparative *morality* of the English and Irish peasantry. Whether it is to be attributed, as doubtless much of it may be, to the old system of poor laws in England, or to whatever other cause, it is a certain fact, capable of easy proof, that female virtue is at a far lower ebb amongst the lower classes of England than in this country; and that a “misfortune” reflects far less disgrace amongst the former than it does amongst the latter. The evidence of many of your clerical brethren, as well from the agricultural as from the manufacturing districts, before parliamentary committees, affords shocking proof of the laxity

of morals in this respect amongst the lower classes in England.

But I must draw this letter to a conclusion, entreating you to bear with me, when I assure you, that on a review of all I have witnessed of the two countries, I am nowise ashamed that I am an Irishman ; and at the same time I trust you will believe, that, entertaining the highest respect and esteem for my English fellow-subjects, and heartily desiring that a cordial and permanent union may ever subsist between the people of the two countries,

I remain, yours very faithfully,

E. N. HOARE.

Deanery House, Achonry,
Sept. 16, 1839.

LETTER II.

MY DEAR SIR,

I stated in my former letter that I fully anticipated your appeal to the miseries and crimes of the Irish, as an answer to all I might advance in favour of the character of my fellow-countrymen; and I promised to advert to these, with a view to trace them to their source.

It is very usual to attribute all the miseries and crimes of Ireland to the existence of the roman catholic religion in the country. In a certain sense this is just, inasmuch as the penal laws arose out of the existence of that religion in Ireland. Nor can it be denied, that the unhappy difference of religion amongst us is the root from which have sprung much animosity and ill-blood between the opposing parties. Disagreement on so important a subject as religion, especially amongst a people of warm feelings

like the Irish, does too naturally cause strife and contention. But when the peculiar circumstances of Ireland are considered, in reference to the two rival churches existing in the land—when it is borne in mind that the protestant religion was introduced by conquerors, and too long upheld by penal laws, while the religion of the majority of the people was proscribed, and their clergy persecuted, and that nothing was left undone which the intolerance of a minority, in the enjoyment of the fullest political ascendancy, could devise, calculated to exasperate the feelings of the majority, and to insult those whom they had injured—when, I say, these things are considered, (and I have but glanced at them, because it is desirable that they should be forgotten,) I ask, is it a matter of surprise, if the hearts of the roman catholics of Ireland have been estranged from their protestant fellow-subjects, their attachment to British connection weakened, and the passions which are common to all men excited against those whom they have learned to consider as their hereditary oppressors?

I feel persuaded, indeed, that even in a political point of view, the protestant religion is to be preferred to the roman catholic; that it is better for the cause of rational liberty, and the advance of science, and the spread of education, as well as in a more spiritual point of view, that the reformation took place, and that it should still be spread; and as a sincere member of the church of England, I rejoice that it is the established religion of the land. But, in proportion as I value protestantism, I condemn the practical contradiction to protestant and christian principles, which is involved in the refusal of civil and religious liberty and of equal rights and privileges to all; and, in proportion as I am attached to the church of England, I mourn over the hindrances which a mistaken system of expediency, leading to intolerance, has so long and so effectually reared up, to impede her progress in this country, and to prevent her "establishment" in the hearts of the people.

While, then, I do not find fault with the establishment of the national church, in this part of the United Kingdom, (which act I look upon

as but a reform of the church, and a restoration of the faith which existed here before the English brought the ancient church of Ireland into subjection to the See of Rome,) I do condemn, as no less impolitic than unjust, the means which were adopted for the support of the protestant faith; nor can I wonder that the use of such unjustifiable means should have led to so disastrous results.

I consider it, therefore, more correct to attribute the evils of Ireland to the long period of misgovernment under which she suffered, and to the impolitic and unjust treatment of the roman catholics, rather than to the existence of their religion. To the long continuance and mal-administration of the ascendancy system, and to the penal laws enacted for the support of that system, are mainly to be attributed the evils under which Ireland has so long groaned.

But here you may, perhaps, inquire, as it is frequently demanded—if the penal laws and the ascendancy of one party were the causes of crime, why, seeing that ascendancy has been broken down, and those penal laws repealed,

have not the crimes ceased? I answer, the country *has* improved, and crime *has* diminished, since the introduction of new principles of government, to a degree greater than could have been anticipated. Ten years have scarcely elapsed since the catholic relief bill was granted; and when it is borne in mind that emancipation was conceded with reluctance by the ministry and the legislature of the day, and that the greatest efforts were made to render it a dead letter, when obtained—so that it should resemble the opening of the corporation of Dublin to roman catholic freemen, which has existed for upwards of half a century in theory, but has never, to this day, been carried into practice—when it is further considered, that the roman catholics are daily reminded, by the most honest, though not the most prudent of their enemies, that, as emancipation was unwillingly granted, so it is with equal reluctance suffered to continue—when all these things are considered, it is rather a subject of astonishment and of gratitude, that we see *any* good fruits from the measure, than of surprise or disappointment that ten years of partial con-

ciliation have not more perfectly atoned for centuries of unmitigated coercion !

Another fruitful source of misery and crime in Ireland is to be found in the want of education amongst the poor. And this is intimately connected with the causes just adverted to. It was a long time penal for the roman catholics to educate their children, or for any to teach the people in the language which they best understood. And even since the relaxation of those laws, education has only been offered on terms which, however acceptable to us, could not be available to the roman catholics, consistently with their principles. That their view of the subject (namely, that the Scriptures are not suited for general circulation) is erroneous, all protestants, except indeed the ultra high-church party, maintain ; and this is thought by many a sufficient reason for denying education to the roman catholics on any other terms. Whether this was right or otherwise, I do not here stop to inquire, as I shall probably devote a separate letter to the consideration of the vital subject of education. But, right or wrong, it is evident

that to have insisted upon terms which it was well known would be rejected, as the condition of affording the benefit of education, was, as far as we were concerned, to have opposed as effectual a barrier to the progress of education, as the enactment of the severest penal laws which could have been framed for that purpose. And, whatever was the cause, or whosoever the fault, ignorance must be named as one of the most fruitful sources of Irish crime.

Next to these, I am compelled to reckon the evil example which was too generally set by the higher orders in Ireland, as a great cause of the misery and crimes of the lower classes. Can we wonder that intemperance, one of the most prolific parents of misery and crime in this country, should prevail, when we hear (for happily it is now more a subject for history than of matter of fact at present existing) of the horrible extent to which drunkenness and debauchery prevailed, some years since, amongst the Irish gentry ! This example of the higher classes did not produce the moral effect of the intoxicated Helot. As might have been expected, it operated

with the most baneful influence on the habits and character of the lower orders. Whatever of evil the peasantry witness in their superiors, they too readily imitate, and, of course, carry into practice to a more offensive degree.

The same observations will apply to the pugnacious spirit evinced by the Irish peasantry. How much of this must they not have imbibed from the example of the gentry, at a period when duelling prevailed not only amongst country squires and fox-hunters, but was found to extend to the judges of the land—when barons of the exchequer, chief justices, and privy counsellors, engaged in mortal combat! Add to this the more direct encouragement which it is well known the Irish magistrates generally used formerly (and of very late years) to give to faction-fighting amongst the peasantry, it being supposed that the security of the higher classes depended upon the continuance of such feuds amongst the lower orders.

To the evil example of their superiors, and the inveterate habit of Irish “*jobbing*” amongst the gentry, may likewise be traced much of the

deceit and falsehood which unhappily prevail ; hence, also, the suspicious character of the Irish, who always appear to think that a "*gentleman*" is trying to cheat them.

The spirit of violence and revenge, which it is so difficult to keep in check, may, to a great degree, be traced to the same source ; to which may be added the improvidence and the neglect of comfort, neatness, and order, which we deplore in the Irish peasantry. And when the people of this country are accused of cruelty, it ought to be remembered that they had lessons of ferocity in the measures too frequently adopted by former governments, for the suppression of disturbances and the discovery of the disaffected, particularly at the period of the rebellion of 1798.

Now when these things are duly considered, every candid man will acknowledge, that there is much allowance to be made for the faults of the Irish peasantry. Either they learned these crimes from their superiors, or they inherited those evil propensities in common with the gentry of Ireland. In either case, it is too much to expect that they should keep equal pace in improvement

with those who enjoy a liberal education. In no country has so happy a change—so general a moral reformation taken place, within a comparatively short period, as that of which we see the happy fruits amongst the higher classes of society in Ireland. Many, indeed, are suffering severely for the follies of their fathers ; but the present generation have, for the most part, avoided the rocks upon which their predecessors split. But we must allow time for a gradual reform amongst the lower classes of society. Evil example is more easily imitated than good ; it is far easier for our fallen nature to learn to do evil, than to learn to do well. Notwithstanding, much has been done ; and if we will have patience, we have the greatest reason to expect a steady improvement.

In one of the conversations which we had together on Irish affairs, you expressed your astonishment that the principles of the reformation had not made greater progress in Ireland, under the influence of the established church. Alas, my dear sir, the subject for just astonishment is, that protestantism should be found to

exist in this country at all. Some of the speakers at protestant association meetings will tell you, that it is wonderful that our religion could have stood the shocks of the opposition of the roman catholics. But this is not the true point of view in which to consider this matter. The wonder is, that our church has continued, notwithstanding the former pluralities and other bare-faced abuses of the church establishment, the non-residence and worse than apathy of the clergy, and the supineness and nepotism of the hierarchy. You will say, I speak strongly ; but, my dear sir, if I were to recite one-half of the facts which I have had opportunity of ascertaining, as having occurred in times not long gone by, you would not say that I expressed more than the circumstances of the case demanded, were I to use language much more strong than I should be inclined to adopt.

I am unwilling to enter into details ; but I know enough of the English character to make me feel the necessity of stating *facts*, to bear one out in assertions. I could state facts connected with the history of the Irish church establishment, which would justify the conclusion

that no branch of the reformed church had ever sunk so low. But I will only allude to a few cases which have come more immediately within my own observation.

On visiting the protestants of a parish once committed to my care, I learned that it had been no unusual circumstance for the poor people to find, at the end of a long walk to the village, that there was no service in the church, owing to the squire of the parish not having attended, and the clergyman having taken advantage of his non-attendance to keep within doors, if the weather was bad. I well remember the earnestness of the poor woman, who assured me, that if it had not been for the fear of "giving the papists a triumph," the poor protestants would have gone to the chapel, thinking it "better to go to mass than to be like the heathen, going nowhere of a Sunday." Such cases were by no means rare. I was once solicited by the incumbent of a parish adjoining that of which I had the charge, to take his duty for a Sunday, in his absence. I gladly consented, having heard that the parish was sadly neglected. The morn-

ing arrived, but, in consequence of an accident on the road, I did not reach the glebe-house, where I was to put up my horse, till near one o'clock (being almost an hour late for our *Irish* "morning service," which commences immediately *after noon*). I found the sexton and a few parishioners waiting my arrival at the gate, which was not far distant from the church. I expressed my regret at having unavoidably kept the congregation waiting so long after the time. They observed that my reverence was "not at all late." This I attributed to the usual politeness of the Irish; but I remarked to them the circumstance of the bell having, as I had supposed, ceased ringing. "Oh not at all, please your reverence," was the reply of the sexton, "but it's now 'twill begin." Accordingly, the tolling did commence. "We always begin the ringing of the bell," pursued the sexton, "just when the parson comes to the spot your reverence is standing on this minute," (within 500 yards of the church-yard gate.) "And at what hour is that, in general?" I inquired. "At different hours, please your honour; some days it's at twelve,

and other times at one, or nigh two o'clock, and sometimes his reverence doesn't come at all."

"And then what do the people do?" "Please your reverence, they go home, them that come, and that's not many, most Sundays." The wonder is that any come, thought I. Arrived at the church, the sexton's wife inquired if I intended "to give them a sermon?" Having received an answer in the affirmative, she replied that she was "proud of it," as there was "a fine congregation." I found an attentive congregation of sixteen persons, including four policemen, the sexton, and his wife; and this was "a fine congregation," in a parish containing about 200 protestants!

In another parish I was the first incumbent who had resided for nearly thirty years, and I had some difficulty in proving my right to the vicarage pew in the church, the undisturbed possession of it, for a quarter of a century, having been set up as a ground on which to rest a claim to a vested right by a gentleman from a neighbouring parish. There I found that the tithes of a demesne of considerable extent had been

lost, during his incumbency, by one of my predecessors, at a game of billiards with the roman catholic squire of the parish !

In another parish with which I am acquainted, during the last twenty-three years the joint residence of four successive incumbents amounted to no more than seven years, and previous to the period referred to, no incumbent had resided within the memory of man. For the space of nearly forty years, the sole charge of the parish and union, comprising 70,000 acres, and containing now 1,200, and formerly probably nearer 2,000 protestants, and in which there was then only one church, (a second was erected about nine years ago,) was left to one curate, who lived in a cabin, and of whom it is enough to state, that, after having lived with a roman catholic woman (who could scarcely speak a word of English) for twenty years, the marriage ceremony was performed with the aid of an interpreter ; this act, together with his resignation of the curacy, having been stipulated for by the incumbent and parishioners, as the terms on which he should receive a retired allowance of £40 per annum.

In the registry of the parish, eleven years after this event, is recorded his death, at the age of eighty-six years !

Such was the state in which a parish, yielding during the greater part of the period referred to nearly £1,400 a-year to successive non-resident incumbents, was left ! Such was the temporal provision made by the state, and such the *spiritual* provision made by the rulers of the church, for the instruction of a population of 15,000 souls, of whom about 2,000 were protestants ! Such was the state of a parish constituting the head of a diocese—the benefice attached to a deanery ! The bishop's throne, and the stalls of six dignitaries were there in the cathedral church, but all were empty ; and the sole officiating minister was the curate, with whose manner of life a whole generation to whom he ministered was well acquainted ! Such was the state of a parish, the first in rank and emolument of the *twenty-six* benefices of two united dioceses, for the episcopal oversight of which a generous state had, in its zeal for religion, assigned an income of about £5,000 a year to the bishop, whose

residence was then only twenty-five miles distant !

I assure you these are but a few, and not the worst of the cases which I might recite as illustrative of the state of the Irish church not many years ago. It really would almost seem as if a conspiracy had existed amongst the protestant clergy of all ranks, to ruin the protestant church, and to strengthen the roman catholic, by such culpable and constant neglect of their first duties.

You once expressed your surprise to me, that the protestant clergy and people of Ireland did not remonstrate more loudly against the measure which reduced the number of bishops in this country, from twenty-two to twelve. An acquaintance with the history of the Irish church would have accounted for the circumstance of ten bishops being thus struck off, (or double the number,) without a remonstrance or expression of regret, except arising out of political feelings.

It is indeed painful to have to give such an account of the branch of the church of which I am a zealously attached member ; but while I draw the curtain over much that I might expose,

my affection for the church compels me, in justice to her, to show, that to the mal-administration of her responsible rulers, and not to any defect in her doctrines or principles, her comparative inefficiency is to be attributed.

And while I present so much of the humiliating picture of the deformity of the Irish church, I cheerfully and thankfully acknowledge, that even in her worst days, a remnant of faithful men, few indeed, and despised and persecuted by those in authority, was to be found, sighing for the prevailing abominations, and in their several spheres making "full proof of their ministry;" and great indeed, and happy, is the contrast which the present state of the established church in Ireland presents to the sad picture of its condition in times so lately passed.

Let political partizans declaim as they will, the state of Ireland, civil and ecclesiastical, physical and moral, has, within a few years, made the most rapid strides in the path of reformation and improvement, such as to afford subject of congratulation to the christian as well as to the statesman, and calculated to call forth feelings of

lively gratitude, and to raise expectations the most cheering.

I proceed to consider other causes of the crimes and miseries which have unhappily prevailed in this country. And amongst these causes, I must not omit to notice the want of employment. We do not forget what we learned in our nurseries:—

“Satan finds some mischief still,
For idle hands to do.”

Consequent upon this is the abject poverty which surrounds us, under the pressure of which the patience of the peasantry is such as you can scarcely form any idea of in England. In consequence of the want of manufactories to afford employment, the people have no means of obtaining support for themselves and their families, save from agriculture. The land is their only staple; deprived of this, they must starve, or beg, or steal. Hence it is not to be wondered at, however much to be deplored, that there should exist in this country, combinations amongst the tillers of the land, analogous to those which obtain amongst mechanics in large towns, and the operatives in your manufacturing districts, and

that the same disastrous results should follow. And such are found in those agrarian disturbances which are frequently, but improperly, attributed to political and sectarian motives.

While on this subject, truth compels me to say, that although there are numerous and daily increasing honorable exceptions, the conduct of Irish landlords has too frequently been such as to excite the worst passions of their tenantry, and to goad them into acts of violence. Instances of oppression and injustice such as would scarcely be believed in England, have been of too frequent occurrence here. Never were there landlords who, as a body, stood more in need of the salutary admonition addressed to them by the present under-secretary for Ireland, when he reminded them, (or rather, as respects many, informed them, for they had never heard of such a doctrine before,) that *property has its duties as well as its rights*.

However slow to acknowledge this unwelcome truth in their own case, when an election takes place, the landlords hold that the tenant in right of his freehold, has duties to perform, but no

privilege to enjoy! The situation of an Irish freeholder, not in independent circumstances, is most deplorable in the event of a contested election; such as almost to incline one to desire for his protection a similar expedient to that which the higher classes do not scruple to employ when they elect members of social clubs by ballot. If the poor man in this country vote agreeably to his feelings, and in accordance with the views of the party to which he belongs, and this be on a side contrary to that taken by his landlord, he is exposed to ejectment and every possible hardship; if he vote otherwise, not to speak of the outrage to his own feelings on the subject, he is exposed to losses and dangers, oftentimes even to risk of life itself. In justification of the landlord visiting on the tenant's head the sin of exercising the privilege which the constitution gives him, according to his own wishes, it is usually urged that the relationship between landlord and tenant ought to establish a tie which should bind the latter to comply with the expressed wishes of the landlord; and it is further alleged, that inasmuch as the roman catholic clergy exercise an undue influence to compel the

peasantry of their persuasion to vote in opposition to the landlords, it is necessary for the latter to counteract that influence, which they believe to be unwarrantably exercised and for injurious purposes. Now it must be confessed, that it is highly desirable that the landlord and tenant should be united—that the landlord should be as the father of his tenantry, sympathising in their trials, and studying to promote their welfare, and that in return the tenant should study to please his landlord, paying to him all the respect due to his superior, and all the affection due to a benefactor. But the question still remains, does the tenant absolutely owe his vote to the landlord, without regard to his own private feelings or principles? If so, the franchise is but a mockery, and it would be better at once to take it from the tenant, and to give to the landed proprietor a certain number of votes in proportion to his rent-roll.

But let us make the case our own. Let us suppose a protestant tenant holding under a roman catholic landlord.—Will the Conservative assertors of the landlord's right to the vote advise the tenant, in this case, to support the candidate in whose

return to parliament his landlord takes an interest? Would they not tell him he must vote for his church against his landlord! Would not the protestant be branded as an apostate if he acted otherwise, that is to say, if he acted just as those who would be the first so to denounce him, would compel the roman catholic under precisely similar circumstances to act?

With respect to the influence of the priests at elections, and on other occasions, it must be admitted, that it is too frequently exercised in such a manner as to irritate the landlord. It cannot be denied that it is often used in a very reprehensible manner. All the power of the priest's office is applied on such occasions; and however the object of religion, as connected with politics, may be alleged in justification of the exercise of their influence, the very undue use which they too often make of their power, and the language which they frequently address to so excitable a people as they have to do with, cannot be too strongly censured.

But neither does the conduct of the most violent priest justify retaliation against the unfortunate

peasantry on the part of the landlords. Every man possessed of the elective franchise should be allowed to exercise the privilege as he pleases. The landlords may use their influence, and the clergy may give their advice; but the use of violence and intimidation is criminal—whether it appear in the legal ejectment of the landlord, the denunciation of the priest, or the bludgeon of the peasant. All blame the last, though the principle is precisely the same, and equally to be condemned, in each instance.

Add to these considerations of the injustice of the case, the bad policy of the course usually pursued. Would it not tend more to counteract other influence, if the landlord, by a spirit of forbearance (of forgiveness if you please), won the hearts of his tenants by passing by the transgression, if such it be?—would he not thus “cut off occasion from those who desire occasion” to undermine his influence over his tenants by weakening their attachment to him?

Under any circumstances, it is bad in policy, no less than in principle, to act ill because others do. Protestants are too apt to justify themselves in

uncharitableness by appealing to the spirit and conduct too often evinced by roman catholics. But we ought to remember that we profess to be "reformed." If then we would prove our faith to be more pure, and our church more tolerant, than that of our neighbours, it must be by the fruits of more excellent practice and by the evidence of a more charitable spirit. Let us ask ourselves, "what do we more than others?"—How far has our religion taught us to "overcome evil with good"?

I am persuaded that a steady adherence to the true protestant principles of toleration and forbearance, and the pursuing of a course of conciliation on the part of the better informed portion of the protestant community, would, ere long, produce the happiest results in this country. But this requires no small portion of moral courage. It is too much the fashion to judge of the advocate of toleration towards those in error as a *particeps criminis*, a traitor to his own faith, and an advocate for expediency at the sacrifice of principle. Whereas in point of fact, the only ground on which the opposite system can be maintained, is that of a supposed necessity, or expediency, in opposition to the Christian principles of charity and toleration.

But I must draw this letter to a close, reserving my observations on this head to future communications, in which I purpose calling your attention to the present tranquillity of Ireland, the causes of improvement, and the means in the use of which we may reasonably hope for the continuance and further progress of these blessings.

I remain, faithfully yours,

E. N. H.

September 21, 1839.

LETTER III.

MY DEAR SIR,

I shall devote this letter to the pleasing task of noticing the state of tranquillity and improvement which my native land at present enjoys, and of pointing out the causes which appear to me to have led to so happy a result.

But I think I hear you exclaim—"Tranquillity of Ireland! where is it? Is not Ireland in such a state, that there is no security for life or property to the unfortunate protestants residing in that unhappy country?"—And yet, here am I, a protestant clergyman, residing in perfect security in the wildest part of the very county which was singled out as one of those in which no protestant could live in safety; here am I, remote from any town, four miles from the smallest village, two miles from a police station, five or six from any magistrate, in a parish

in which the proportion of roman catholics to protestants is as fifteen to one ! and yet here I am, writing this letter, by night, with as much coolness and as little of apprehension, and in as much peace and comfort, as I hope it will be read by you in the picturesque and peaceful parsonage-house of D——. Certainly there are districts of England in which the prevalence of Chartism and Socialism would prevent my feeling equally secure. I know that some of my English friends would scarcely give credit to these facts ; and I am not surprised, when I consider the counter-statements which they continually hear ; and which it is not a little remarkable, are chiefly reported by orators from the north of Ireland—the province furthest removed from the alleged disturbances, but at the same time the most remarkable for the height to which party spirit, on the side of the said orators, runs.

I do not mean to accuse *all* who declaim about the “ awful state of Ireland ” of wilful departure from truth ; but the spirit of party leads them to take a gloomy view of the case, and their

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prejudices give birth to their alarms. I will state one or two facts in illustration of this.

When I visited London, a few years ago, inquiries were made of me in a room full of company, as to the state of Ireland; and great was the surprise of all present, when I stated that it was tolerably tranquil (it was not then so quiet as it is now); and it was remarked to me by one of the company, that my report differed very widely from that of an Irish gentleman whom he had met at dinner a few days before, and who declared that such was the dreadful state of Ireland, at that moment, that he actually never went to rest without having a brace of loaded pistols under his pillow! I could only observe, that if such was the fancy of any gentleman in company, he might sleep with pistols under his pillow in Grosvenor-square! A man having arms so near him was no evidence of the *necessity* for having them.

The second anecdote which I shall relate, is equally illustrative of the length to which the apprehensions of well meaning people lead them. I mentioned in a former letter, the circumstances

attending my visit to a brother clergyman in the county of Kerry, and the state of security in which I found the family living—certainly not arising from having loaded pistols under their pillows! But to give you an illustration of the way in which an erroneous judgment is often formed of the state of Ireland, I must inform you, that the visit to which I referred was undertaken for the purpose of taking possession of the Arch-deaconry of Ardfert, and of being inducted into the benefice attached to that dignity. I have told you with how much ease and safety I accomplished it. Of course there was nothing about this quiet and every-day procedure in the newspapers. But about the same time, in the adjoining county which was equally quiet, another clergyman had to receive induction into a small living. He was a good man, but he was one of your alarmists. He was convinced, from the evidence of his own fears, that the people would not allow him to take legal possession of the living. Accordingly, he got some of the police to accompany him to the churchyard (there was no church in the parish) and then and there he was duly inducted

in the usual form. The circumstance of his having been so attended was duly published as an evidence of the disturbed state of the country, the lawless spirit of the peasantry, and the danger to which the protestant clergy were daily exposed!

Whatever else the investigation recently carried on before the lords' committee may have proved, or disproved, it affords clear evidence of the present tranquil state of Ireland, and that this has been steadily going on for the last four or five years. The calendar at every assizes, and the charges of the judges to the grand juries, generally, prove the same thing, as does also the "sober prose" of the accounts of land agency offices. In fact, it cannot be denied that this country is now in a more tranquil state than at any former period. And those who reluctantly admit the fact, are reduced to the necessity of endeavouring to account for it in some way that will not reflect credit on the peasantry, or on the government, and especially the lord lieutenant, under whose auspices this improvement has taken place.

You will naturally inquire to what causes I attribute this improved state of the country. I

answer, to a removal, in a great degree, of the causes of the evils and miseries of Ireland, achieved under the auspices of the present administration. The catholic relief bill was made to be the law of the land, in fact and spirit as well as in letter, by the Marquis of Normanby, who, in the discharge of the functions of the high office entrusted to him as the representative of his Sovereign in this country, "used the sword committed into his hand, with justice and mercy." It is true Lord Mulgrave was not the first to take some steps towards carrying the relief bill practically into effect; but he did it more effectually than any of his predecessors. Hence, he met at once with the virulent animosity of the old ascendancy party. These placed themselves in violent opposition to his government, and studied to thwart all his benevolent designs. Nor did they stop here; the opposition to his lordship was made personal; the usual courtesies of life were disregarded in the conduct of many towards that excellent viceroy. But he persevered through all opposition. And if he appeared to be identified with one party, it was because the

other set themselves in array against him. If the distribution of his patronage seemed to flow in one channel, it was only just, inasmuch as great arrears in this way had long been due to the roman catholics of Ireland. If he be thought to have exercised the high prerogative of pardon too freely, it was at all events a failing which "leaned to virtue's side;" and after so many ages of trial of punishment with so little good effect, it was at least worth while to try the experiment, so novel in Ireland, of the effects of mercy and kindness. Some instances may, indeed, have occurred, in which the objects of his clemency proved ungrateful; but generally speaking, good effects were produced by the humane course which his lordship pursued. But even if he had erred on this side, I cannot but observe that the exercise of mercy is rather an unfortunate subject to provoke the censure of an ambassador of the gospel of peace, and the sparing of men's lives not a very suitable theme for the condemnatory declamation of a minister of Him who came "not to destroy men's lives, but to save." And such you know was the case

at the "great protestant meetings" recently held in England, at which Irish clergymen have dwelt upon the fact of lord Normanby saving men from the gallows as "the head and front of his offending!"

The equal administration of the laws, and the breaking down of the ascendancy of one party, have tended much to the peace of the country. Amongst the many ways in which the carrying out of the principle of the relief bill has produced good effects, one may be particularly noticed, but which I do not remember to have seen put forward prominently. I allude to the appointment of roman catholics as judges, assistant-barristers, stipendiary magistrates, &c. The roman catholic peasantry of Ireland had long imagined that the laws were put in force against offenders of their class, only because the judges and magistrates were protestants. But since the elevation of roman catholics to the judicial bench, this delusion has been dissipated, and they have found that transgressors will not be suffered to escape with impunity, even when the sheriff and judge are of the same religion with themselves. The

happy consequence is to be found in the existence of a greater respect for the law amongst the people. The same remark applies to the police, and in fact to all departments; and to this circumstance, I feel convinced, the improved state of this country, in respect of tranquillity and obedience to the laws, is, in a great degree, to be attributed. No doubt, the popularity of the present government with the roman catholics of Ireland, and the very natural desire of the people that there should be no change of ministry, tends to keep the peasantry tranquil; as well because of the practical good results of the principles on which the government of this country continues to be carried on under the present Lord Lieutenant, being identical with those of his noble predecessor, as that feelings of gratitude lead the people to avoid every thing calculated to embarrass a government under whose influence they have experienced so much benefit.

If it be said that the present quiet is only temporary and deceitful, I hold that even this is better than the storm. Let the causes or motives be what they may, a state of tranquillity

affords a favourable opportunity for the adoption and carrying into effect of such measures of improvement as will tend, under the divine blessing, to render this tranquillity permanent.

The settlement of the tithe question, under the auspices of the present government, has tended much to the peace of the country, as well as to the relief of the clergy and the security of the church establishment. It would have been well for the country and for the church, had such a measure as that which passed in August, 1838, been enacted half a century ago. The practical effects of the bill may be found in the termination of strife between the clergyman and people, and the placing of the property of the clergy on such a footing, that it is at this moment the best paid income in the country. With a view, however, to the better distribution of ecclesiastical revenues, I should wish to see an amendment of the law, to the effect of placing the entire amount of ecclesiastical property, in each diocese, in a common fund, to be received by a bursar, and disbursed in due proportions,

according to the circumstances of the several parishes, amongst the clergy of the diocese; and thus to have the property of each diocese managed in a similar manner to that of the University of Dublin, and the several colleges of your Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. This plan was proposed by the present Archbishop of Dublin, seven or eight years ago.

As I stated, in my last letter, that truth compelled me to enumerate, amongst the causes of Irish crimes and Irish miseries, the evil example set to the lower orders by the higher classes in this country, it is my more pleasing duty here to reckon amongst the causes of improvement, the great reformation which has taken place in the morals of the Irish gentry, and the laudable efforts now making by many landlords for the comfort, welfare, and moral improvement of their tenantry. The Irish protestant clergy, too, of the present day, are, as a body, equalled by few, and exceeded by none of any country, in zeal, piety, and moral worth; and I trust there is a leaven of a more liberal spirit spreading amongst them.

The great obstacle to the spread of liberal principles amongst our body in this country, arises from the very general persuasion conscientiously entertained, that *expediency* alone calls for the adoption of a liberal line of policy, while christian *principle* demands a different course. But this I would by no means concede. In advocating liberal principles, I take far higher ground than that of mere "expediency." Surely the religion of the Gospel teaches us to deal kindly even to our enemies; true christian principle will lead us to be gentle towards all men, "forbearing one another and forgiving one another." Christian principle is christian charity, and will lead those who are under its benign influence to do unto others as we would they should do unto us. Now let us put ourselves in the place of our roman catholic fellow subjects. If we as protestants lived in a country, in which, though *we* were the majority, the roman catholic was the religion established by law; let us ask ourselves, how we should like to be treated?—Would penal laws against us be agreeable to our feelings? or, such laws having

been repealed, after years of struggle on our part, should we like the Executive to withhold from us the benefits of our hard-earned liberty, or otherwise?

I say, then, that christian duty, no less than prudence—principle, no less than policy, demands the patient, consistent, untiring carrying out of the principles of conciliation and toleration, as well in the conduct of every private individual towards his fellow-subjects, as in the administration of the affairs of the kingdom by the ministers of the Crown. In fact the penal laws are to be traced not to protestant principle, but to expediency. It was judged inexpedient to act upon christian principles towards the Irish roman catholics.

Trusting that the day is not far distant, when principles of liberality, in accordance alike with justice and prudence, will be adopted and acted upon, in their several spheres, by all classes of her Majesty's subjects,

I remain, faithfully yours,

E. N. H.

September 24th, 1839.

LETTER IV.

MY DEAR SIR,

At the close of my letter of the 21st inst. I promised in future letters to call your attention to the present tranquillity of Ireland, and to the means in the use of which we may reasonably hope for a continuance of peace and the advance of improvement. Accordingly, having in my last letter pointed out some of the causes which have led to the present improved state of Ireland, I shall now proceed to notice the means to the use of which we are to look forward for still further advance in the improvement and welfare of this country.

This may, indeed, appear unnecessary, further than to observe, that the continuance of peace and the progress of improvement can be best effected by a steady perseverance in the use of those means which have already produced such

a measure of those happy results as we now witness. The subject, however, is one of so great interest and importance, that even at the risk of wearying you by repetition, I must enter into some detail on this head.

In the first place, then, as the chief cause of the evils and miseries of Ireland, is to be found in the long continuance of a vicious principle of government, by supporting the ascendancy of one party, and keeping the other, comprising the majority of the nation, in a condition of helotage; and as the chief cause of the recent improvement in the state of this country is to be found in the just and liberal policy "which has guided the executive government of Ireland of late years," so, it is manifest that the permanence of tranquillity, and the advance of improvement in this country mainly depend upon the continuance of the same line of policy, carried into effect by those who possess the confidence of the people. It would, indeed be a comparatively easy matter now, for others to adopt the same principles, and to *promise* to conduct the government of this country in a spirit of

conciliation, and even in some degree to carry into effect liberal measures; but that the work may be done effectually, the executive power must be left in the hands of the men who have borne the burden and heat of the day, who have evinced that their liberality is the result of principle, and not of mere expediency and necessity. That the laws may be respected, they must be administered by those whom the people have learned to trust and to love.

But though the government can do much, it cannot do all that is necessary for the welfare of this country. Every individual in his proper sphere must be aiding the good work of conciliation. A spirit of moderation and of forbearance, of kindness and of conciliation, must pervade all classes of society, to render Ireland a happy country. What we want is a moderate, and I may say, a rational party, who will keep clear of the extremes into which all parties, Protestant and Roman Catholic, Whig and Tory, are too apt to run. There must be a spirit of mutual concession and forbearance. Each party must remember, that on both sides violence and pro-

vocations have abounded—that those of the opposite party, *whichever it be*, have as much reason for complaint, on the score of old quarrels and ill-blood, as those of our own party can adduce. But especially, let us Protestants consider, that we alone have offended by the infliction of *legalized* wrongs; and by so much the more as we think our faith superior, and our religion to be more in accordance with the word of God and the doctrine of Christ, than that of others, by so much let us consider it incumbent upon us to shew our faith by our works, and to prove the conformity of our doctrine to the word of God, by manifesting the spirit of our blessed Saviour, who was “meek and lowly in heart.” O, my dear sir, if we had more of the spirit of our blessed Master, how different would be our conduct towards those who differ from us! There would be no “railing for railing,” but “contrariwise blessing.” But, alas, the great enemy of peace and of mankind has ever laboured hard, and, because of the depravity of our nature, effectually, to persuade men that they are “doing God service,” and proving their zeal for the truth, and devotion

to the cause of religion, by persecuting, according to circumstances and opportunities, those whom we suppose to have erred from the truth. And here it is no less curious than instructive to observe how extremes are found to meet. The self same principle which actuated the fathers of the "holy office," to enact the dark deeds of the Inquisition, led to the enactment of the penal laws; and still is found to influence those who maintain that to live in peace and charity with all men, although they be in religious error, is to deny the faith, and to betray the cause of truth; but that, on the other hand, christian principle must be strengthened by an unchristian spirit, and evidenced by the fruits of unchristian-like practice! Is it not strange that the more violent and intolerant a man, and especially a preacher, is in his temper, language and conduct, the more loudly he is applauded as a faithful christian; while the man who humbly endeavours to follow the example of the Saviour, to imbibe his spirit and to obey his precepts, enjoining humility, forbearance and peace, is set down as an unfaithful servant, compromising the truth, and sacrificing principle to expediency!

Do not suppose, that I am myself forgetting the principles which I advocate, in thus alluding, it may appear uncharitably, to others. I write in perfect acquaintance, formed by experience, of the facts of the case ; and in a spirit of forbearance towards those who I am persuaded act conscientiously, and in a manner which they consider as the very evidence of strong christian principle, boldness, and sincerity.

Neither would I have you to judge of me as of an advocate for latitudinarianism in religion, nor as of one who thinks little of the difference between the two churches of England and Rome, and who therefore has no desire for the spread of Protestantism. This is the libel which is continually uttered in sermons and speeches, and published in pamphlets and in letters in the newspapers. This bad name of "latitudinarian" is the great *bug-bear* by which the bigots deter simple minded protestants from the exercise of christian charity. But it is a most false and groundless charge. Believing as I do, that the doctrines and services of the united Church of England and Ireland are in accordance with the word of God, and

that her system of ecclesiastical polity is in conformity with that of the primitive church in the purest ages; and believing, on the other hand, that the church of Rome hath greatly erred, as well in matters of faith as of discipline and ceremonies, by reason of which the light of gospel truth has become obscured, the simplicity of christian worship lost, and the purity of christian morals tarnished — being firmly convinced in my conscience of these things, I am far from indifferent on the subject. My earnest desire is, that those whom I consider to be enveloped in moral darkness, should be brought into the clear light of gospel truth. At the same time, I do not think the errors of others a reason for my ill-will towards them; I do not feel called upon to rail at them, to abuse their clergy, and to adopt the system of exclusive dealing against them; nay, though they were to act so towards me, I should not consider myself justified in returning “evil for evil.” As “honesty is the best policy,” so is christian conduct the best means for the propagation of christian truth; and we may hope that by the exercise of a

christian spirit we may recommend the protestant faith (which, it must be confessed, had in days gone by but little to recommend it in this country) to those who still cling to the errors from which we have emancipated ourselves.

I have already alluded to some circumstances, the consideration of which ought to urge us, as protestants, to an especial exercise of forbearance; and to lead us to make allowances for the want of charity, if we detect it, in the roman catholics. There is yet another consideration bearing on this subject, to which I will advert. In any case of religious difference, it is incumbent on those who feel themselves called upon to separate from others, to exercise the utmost forbearance towards those from whom they have separated themselves. It is very natural that those whom we leave behind should feel sore at our separation from their communion; and although no circumstances can justify uncharitable feelings, yet there is certainly more excuse for such feelings on the part of those who remain as they consider steadfast to the old system, than in those who have left them there. It is at least very natural

for churchmen to feel annoyed with dissenters for deserting them; but it is highly unreasonable for those who leave us to be angry with us for not following them. Whether right or wrong, they have made the breach, and therefore there is a *prima facie* case against them. But if they be right, and we wrong, those who think that they have themselves emerged from the darkness in which they are supposed to have left us, ought to recollect that they were as we are, and should feel the more tenderness towards us. They cannot look upon us as the aggressors, nor can they consider us in the light of deserters, as we may perhaps feel inclined to look upon them. Now, all that applies to the case of churchmen and dissenters, applies equally to the case of roman catholics and protestants. It does not alter the case that we believe we are not the new church, but are following the good old paths from which the church of Rome has strayed; the dissenters think precisely the same of their position and of ours, and claim to be the consistent followers of the apostles, and profess to walk according to the primitive church, in the

path of simplicity and truth, from which (as they allege) we have wandered.

It is well that we should, as I have before suggested, try to put ourselves in the place of others, and consider what our own feelings would be under similar circumstances. We cannot, indeed, find any case in all Europe analogous to Ireland, as respects the position of protestants and roman catholics. We must therefore *imagine* that there is a country, and that we live in it, in which the great majority are protestants, but the roman catholic religion ascendant; the estates, lay and ecclesiastical, which formerly belonged to the protestants, transferred to the roman catholics; the latter glorying over the former, deriding our religion, abusing our clergy, turning our most solemn services into ridicule, and trying to convert us by ribaldry, misrepresentation, and abusive language! Let us ask ourselves what our feelings would be under these circumstances which we have imagined; and let the answer of our consciences teach us forbearance towards our fellow-countrymen who are actually placed in similar circumstances.

An incident occurred to me when an undergraduate of Trinity College, which has often recurred to my mind since, when I have heard or read controversial sermons and discussions, conducted in the spirit in which they are usually carried on in Ireland. An eminent dissenting minister in Dublin was engaged in delivering a course of controversial lectures against the church of Rome. These I attended, in common with many other young men, whose hatred of "popery" so far overcame our prejudices against dissent as to allow of our occasionally going to an independent meeting-house. There we were highly delighted and entertained by the preacher, who indulged in the grossest ribaldry, and most violent invective against pope and popery. This was all very well; but one evening, the good old man "being crafty" thought to have "caught us with guile," and being determined not to let off his protestant episcopalian hearers scot free, he launched out into a tirade, in his own peculiar style of irony and abuse, against the church of England! I will not confess to you the extent of my feelings, writhing under the scourge of his

tongue. It is enough to say, they were sufficiently strong to enable me to form some idea of the feelings of resentment which must have been excited in the breasts of such roman catholics as had been hearers of his former sermons. Of this one thing I felt convinced, that whatever effect an attack of such a nature might produce on my mind, it was not calculated to convert me to the views of the preacher. It then occurred to me that this was not the way to convince men's minds—that abuse was no logic, ridicule no argument. The observation and experience of twenty years, which have since elapsed, have not tended to weaken these convictions.

I have somewhere met with the observation, that “the best method of dealing with mankind and converting them, is not by abusing their errors, but by mildly and steadily upholding the truth;” and this, in my opinion, would be the best way of treating the Irish roman catholics.

I feel persuaded that the violent speeches delivered at your (so called) protestant meetings in England, have very much tended to excite the roman catholics, and to give weight to their

influence in your country. In this opinion I am fully borne out by the testimony of clerical friends in various parts of England.

Among the measures for Irish improvement, I look forward to the operation of the poor laws in Ireland as promising much good to this country. I look to this measure as a means of extracting from absentees and heartless proprietors, some relief for the pauper population who now subsist on the charity of the residents and of the struggling farmers. I anticipate its effect in making it the interest of landlords to provide employment for the poor, and to study the welfare of their tenantry.

Employment must be given, in order to the continuance of tranquillity, and the progress of improvement in this country. How sad to think that even the opening of railroads in Ireland must be made a party question! Happily, in spite of party opposition, the improvement of the Shannon is no longer to be deferred.

In conjunction with all the above-mentioned means of improvement, we must look to the

progress of education, temperance, and above all the circulation of the Holy Scriptures, as the grand instruments for the regeneration of this country. Without these, all the rest are comparatively of little avail; and all the rest are valuable as they are subsidiary to these. And yet, if we cannot effect all, it is well that we do something. All men cannot so much as attempt all the means which tend to the good of the country. All are not agreed as to the proper means to be used. But it would be a happy state of things if each were found seeking, in his own sphere, the good of his country; if unable to do all he *would*, at least doing all he *could*, for the cause of social order and national prosperity; and in order to this, if all would "seek peace and ensue it."

I remain, yours very faithfully,

E. N. H.

Sept. 27, 1839.

LETTER V.

MY DEAR SIR,

You may, perhaps, have considered the subjects to which I have adverted in former letters, as partaking too much of a political and secular character for our attention as clergymen. But it is to be borne in mind, that under the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, politics have so direct a bearing upon religion, that it is scarcely possible for the man who takes a deep interest in the cause of the latter to feel indifferent to the grand subjects of Irish politics. Indeed, the question respecting the government of this country appears to me to be strictly a religious question ; resolving itself into this :—Shall Ireland be governed on the principles of the Gospel, being those of conciliation, justice, and impartiality—on the principles of civil and religious liberty, which, as protestants, we have asserted for ourselves ? or, shall it be by a

departure from protestant and scripture principles, on a system of religious exclusion, and a practical denial of the right of private judgment and liberty of conscience? Shall the government be conducted on a system of kindness, or of coercion?—on the principles of forbearance, or of retaliation for ancient wrongs?

Hence, a christian minister cannot preach the gospel without preaching what some will construe into politics. He cannot exhort his flock to love and pray for their enemies, to overcome evil with good, or to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us, without conveying a rebuke to the intolerant, and inculcating principles of true liberalism. Religion is not to be reserved for Sunday, nor confined within the walls of a church, but is to be carried into practice in our every day transactions with our neighbours; and her ways of peace are to be exemplified in all our intercourse with society. In a certain sense, then, it will be seen, that while the minister of the gospel is to keep aloof from party violence, he, and every christian man, ought to be a living witness and example of liberal principles.

But whatever may be said of other subjects of discussion, the vital question of national education in Ireland must be admitted to be a fit subject for the serious attention of the clergy. To the consideration of this all-important topic, I now proceed. I shall confine my observations to Ireland; but I think you must admit that if a liberal system of national education may be adopted in this country, without a departure from christian principle or a compromise of the truth, *a fortiori*, a liberal system embracing members of different religious denominations may consistently be introduced into England, where the differences are, generally speaking, of less magnitude.

I will not stop to discuss points connected with education, upon which we are fully agreed. We agree, then, that it is important that the children of the poorer classes should be educated; that the state should provide for their education; that it is desirable that the children of all religious denominations should receive united instruction; that to education of a more secular character should be united a sound moral and religious instruction; that such an education must be founded on the

revelation which God has given of his character and will ; that such a revelation we have in the works of creation, in part, but especially and more fully in the volume of inspiration ; that, consequently, the holy Scriptures must constitute the ground-work of all true moral and religious instruction ; and that *the entire word of God should be free and accessible to all.*

In all these essential points we are fully agreed ; and to none of these is the Irish system of national education opposed. To the principle last mentioned, and which I have marked for distinction sake, it is true all the members of the board do not subscribe ; and without some restrictions, you and I know, many members of our own church would refuse their assent to the proposition. But I repeat, that there is nothing in the rules of the commissioners, or in the principles of the system, opposed to the free use of the Scriptures ; while the whole plan is founded upon the other principles which I have laid down, as admitted by all parties. Nor can there be a greater calumny, or a more unjust misrepresentation, than that contained in the imputation against the supporters of this system,

of hostility against the holy Scriptures, or even of want of zeal in the dissemination of the word of God.

It is true that many of the advocates of this system are opposed to the general circulation of the Bible; but it is no less true that amongst its supporters are to be found warm advocates for the free and universal distribution of the sacred volume. Many, on the other hand, who have signalized themselves as denouncers of the Irish national system of education, have been no less distinguished as opponents of Bible societies; and yet it would be most unjust to charge all who are adverse to the national board with opposition to the dissemination of the Scriptures. To make support of the system and opposition to Bible circulation convertible terms, is no less unjust than it is untrue to predicate of all opponents to this system that they are lovers of the Bible.

You will be ready to ask, if these things be so, wherefore all the outcry against the system? Wherefore, then, did the orangemen of Ulster, in answer to the appeal of their grand master, in reference to this system, pull out their Bibles and

exclaim, that they would part with them only with their lives ! It is very natural that you should so inquire. But if you suppose that there is always just cause of complaint where there is loud clamour, you will often judge erroneously of Irish subjects. On both sides, you must make large allowance for the violence of contending parties, the extravagance of Irish orators, and the extreme excitability of their hearers. The protestants of the north are easily persuaded that under the mask of liberality towards "the papists" is concealed an attack upon their rights ; and in the case before us, they easily arrived at the conclusion that not to force the roman catholics to read the Bible was to meditate the prohibition of the use of the sacred volume to the protestants—nay more, to snatch it from their possession !

Beyond all doubt, much of the opposition to the Irish national system had its origin in political feelings. Although the noble lord by whom it was first proposed is now a favourite with the "conservative" party, it is to be remembered that at the time he brought forward this plan, he was a leading member of the then whig administration ; and

at that period Earl Grey and Lord Stanley were not less the objects of dislike and dread to the tories, than are Lord Melbourne and Lord Normanby at the present moment. When I speak of Lord Stanley as the proposer of the plan, I do not mean to say that the system originated with him. All the principles of the present system of national education, and many of the details, are to be found in the reports of the Education Commissioners of 1812, and in the more recent report of the "Commissioners of Education inquiry," of 1824-7. With the latter of these boards I was myself officially connected; and in their employment I had abundant opportunity of learning the views of all parties on the subject of education in Ireland, a question which I have always considered as one of vital importance.

Had the tories continued in office, it is more than probable a system of education similar to the present would have been introduced by the government; but the circumstance of its having been brought forward by a whig administration was sufficient to excite the most violent opposition to it. A fanatical crusade was preached up against the

system. Influential men and popular preachers declaimed against it. By these it was at once denounced as iniquitous, unscriptural, anti-christian, popish, infidel, &c. &c. No one dared so much as to take the plan into consideration. One of the gratuitous secretaries of the Bible Society was obliged to resign his office, because he became a member of the board. Any protestant clergyman or dissenting minister who ventured to speak so much as doubtingly on the subject, was maligned, and soon found himself preaching to empty benches. It has come within my own knowledge that many of the clergy had misgivings as to the grounds of all this opposition against the system; and that they felt an inclination at least to weigh the arguments *pro* and *con*. And I am persuaded, that nothing kept back many from giving in their adhesion to the board, but the fear of being branded as apostates, together with an apprehension that a system must be wrong which was so violently opposed by so many good men.

But you will probably demand—Is there then no difference between the advocates and the adversaries of the national system? To which I reply, there

is a difference ; and the question in dispute resolves itself into this.—Are we to force the Scriptures upon those who object to the use of them in the schools ? Are we to maintain a national system of united instruction on such a model as shall effectually exclude from the schools the children of the majority of the people, and of that very portion of the population who stand the most in need of education ? Shall we offer to these the advantages of secular, moral, and religious instruction only on terms which we well know they will reject ?—To these several interrogatories, the opposers of the present system practically give an answer in the affirmative. To say nothing of those who insist upon the introduction of the church catechism, the more liberal lay it down as an unalterable rule, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, in the authorised version, and without note or comment, shall be read by all who have attained a suitable proficiency in reading. Those who will not comply with this regulation must not enter the school. Such shall not have *any* instruction, because they will not have a scriptural education according to our interpretation of the term. Such

shall not even learn a portion of the Scriptures, although that portion be "able to make wise unto salvation," because they will not consent to read the entire of the sacred volume; although, in point of fact, we never mean that they should read the whole!

On these principles, in times past, were the great mass of the roman catholic population excluded from the benefits of useful education; left to grow up in absolute ignorance; or to seek to the hedge schoolmaster, for instruction in morals to be derived from the history of the "Irish Rogues and Rapparees," and the "Adventures of Philander Flashaway;" for training in principles of subordination, to be gathered from political ballads and tracts not of the most loyal tendency; for information and enlargement of ideas, to be obtained from the oft-repeated perusal of the "Universal Spelling Book," if the master were fortunate enough to possess one; and for a practical system of discipline and self-control, to be learned from the impatient curses and angry cuffs of the irascible pedagogue!

There was, it is true, another alternative, to

which, however, I doubt not, the opposers of the national system would object still more than to the "hedge school." The roman catholic children who were refused admittance to our schools, because they would not read the entire Bible, had as a resource the priest's school, held in the chapel, and taught by the chapel clerk; which could not have been otherwise than very defective in point of general education, owing to the want of qualified masters, and suitable books, and of means to procure them; while the religious instruction was, of course, exclusively roman catholic, and too frequently of an uncharitable character.

I pray you to bear this fact in mind. To insist upon the reading of the Scriptures as the only condition upon which education will be given to the children of the Irish poor, is to exclude from the schools the roman catholic children almost universally; or if a few are found to attend, it is from motives bordering upon constraint—either through fear of displeasing a landlord, or simply because education, which the peasantry are desirous to obtain for their children, can be had on no other terms.

To any species of coercion, and to a practical exclusion of the roman catholic children from the schools, the supporters of the Irish national system feel a strong objection. Notwithstanding all that has been so eloquently spoken and written upon the subject, I cannot see on what principle a christian is permitted, much less bound, to *compel* people to read the word of God; and let it be observed, it is practically an attempt at such compulsion to visit the refusal with the penalty of ignorance. I do not consider myself justified in refusing education to the ignorant, because they will not receive the Bible at my hands, any more than I should feel warranted in denying relief to the destitute for the same reason.

If we would have a national system, under which all religious denominations may receive united instruction, it must be by choosing some common ground. It is evident that on this principle, catechisms and other books inculcating the peculiar doctrines of the different churches, cannot be made a part of common and united instruction. The introduction of catechisms in the schools, as the *sine quâ non* of national education is now very

generally given up in this country ; and I cannot but hope that this point will be, ere long, conceded in England also. But this does not meet all the difficulty in Ireland. In your country you would, generally speaking, have the Scriptures in common. Here, alas, we have not this common ground. The church of Rome does not sanction the universal reading of the whole word of God, without note or comment. Happily our church does. Another point of difficulty arises from the difference of translations used by the two churches. And to these may be added the further difficulty, that even if we were agreed to have the whole of the Scriptures used in the schools, there would still remain the difference between the churches as to the books to be reckoned as comprising the entire of the sacred volume ; inasmuch as we reject several books as apochryphal, which the church of Rome includes as canonical Scripture.

These considerations will lead a candid mind to acknowledge that there are many difficulties in the way, such as those who will look only at one side of the question cannot be aware of. One who will adopt the maxim—*audi alteram partem*, will per-

ceive that in order to find common ground, there must be concession on all sides. The question for us to consider must be—is the concession consistent with christian principles, and the honor due to the word of God?—I think it is; and let me beg of you calmly to consider it.

It is demanded of us, then—1st. That we should agree to the adoption of extracts from the Scriptures, drawn from both versions, and from the original tongues; to be used by protestants and roman catholics alike. 2dly. That these extracts shall be the only book of direct religious instruction to be used in common, although moral and religious lessons are conveyed in other books, the principles of which shall be in accordance with the word of God, and deduced therefrom. 3dly. That for further religious instruction in the peculiar views of doctrine held by the different churches, stated times, as frequent as we please, shall be set apart for the communication of such instruction by the clergy of the different persuasions, or by persons authorised by them; but that the roman catholic children shall not be compelled to receive the instruction of the protestant

minister, no more than the protestant children that of the roman catholic priest.

By the adoption of such a system, the roman catholic children receive instruction in a portion of the Scripture (and is not this better than none?)—and the protestant children have the same portion in common with them; while they have ample opportunity of receiving further instruction in the word of God, as well as in the church catechism, from their own minister or a person approved by him, at the time set apart for separate religious instruction. Add to this the Sunday school, open to all who choose to attend. Thus the roman catholic children may derive much, both of scriptural and general education, while the protestants lose nothing which they could possess under any other system.

Let it be remembered, the use of the Scriptures is open to all the children whose parents or guardians desire it. There is no *exclusion*, but neither is there any *compulsion*. No one can desire more earnestly than I do, that the entire word of God should be not only in the hands,

but in the memory, the understanding, and above all in the heart, of every human being—young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, protestant and roman catholic. I could not therefore support any system which did not *allow* to all the free use of the Holy Scriptures. But I have no power (and if I had, I have not the inclination) to *compel* any to receive the bible, by any other means than by moral suasion. If then I find that, unhappily, the vast majority of those to whom I wish to communicate the benefit of education will not read the entire Scriptures for me, am I to deny them all education, and any portion of the word of God, because they will not receive the entire bible at my hands?

It has been objected that the parent's authority, however great, as well by divine as by human laws, should not extend so far as to interfere between a child and the word of God. But whatever we may think on this subject, parents *will* exercise their authority, and children *must* obey. Thus the parents have, in point of fact, the power of effectually deciding

the question, by preventing the attendance of the children at our schools altogether. Hence, we must either give the people education on the best terms on which we can induce them to accept it, or we must leave them altogether uneducated. However unwilling we may be to acknowledge it, the matter must, after all, depend on the people. The only alternative would be the establishment of a protestant Inquisition, to compel the parents to send us their children, and to force the children to read the bible when they had come !

It is often said—this system is one of *expediency* ! Now I suppose every rational man will allow that we must adopt the most suitable measures for effecting the object which we have in view ; and many things “lawful” may not be “expedient” (1 Cor. x. 23). Principle, indeed, must not be sacrificed to expediency ; but neither must we cling to theories to the neglect of practical results. But it is not more upon the ground of expediency than of *principle*, that I would abstain from the use of compulsion in matters of religion. Protestants disap-

prove of the roman catholic clergy interdicting the free use of the Scriptures; we deny altogether their right to do so. But I cannot see how we have any better right to compel the people to read the bible. The roman catholic clergy may in their consciences deem the unrestricted use of the Scriptures dangerous, (and too many of our own clergy have been of the same opinion,) but they are not therefore authorised to withhold what God has freely given to all. I, on the other hand, in agreement with the true principles of protestantism, deem ignorance of the word of God highly pernicious; but yet I have no authority to use coercive measures to enforce the reading of the sacred volume.

On the principles, then, of justice, liberty, and charity, and with a view to a practicable means of extending education, and eventually the spread of the Holy Scriptures, I can conscientiously and cheerfully co-operate with a system of education, which, while it gives the word of God to all who desire it, does not deny the benefits of education and civilization,

to those who, unhappily, are taught to refuse the boon which I desire to communicate to them.

The schools of the recently established "Church Education Society for Ireland," may answer very well for the children of members of the established church, whose parents desire for them instruction in the scriptures and in the church catechism; but it is manifest that it must altogether fail of extending education amongst those who most stand in need of it—viz. the great majority of the people, consisting of the roman catholic population around us. By such an association, a clergyman may provide means of instruction for the tens or twenties of the children of his poor protestant parishioners, but the hundreds and thousands of the children of the roman catholics of his parish will be left uneducated. On the other hand, all the good that can be done by the plan proposed, could be effected by the national system; under which, provision is made for the instruction of the children of members of the established church, in the church catechism and other books of peculiar religious instruction, as well as in the scriptures.

Under either system, it all comes to this same point—those who wish for the use of the bible, may have it ; and those who do not, will lose the benefit of it. The national system will give scriptural instruction to all those children whose parents desire it, and no other system can ever effect more. The difference consists in this, that under the plan called “the scriptural system,” those who will not read the whole bible, in the authorized version, shall be left without any portion of it, in any version ; and must continue destitute of education altogether, so far as they are dependent on the supporters of such a plan ; while, under the national system, those who will not accept the entire volume in the version which we prefer, may yet have a portion of the word of God, partly in another version, together with all the benefits of general education. Not to touch upon other advantages, the rising generation will, under the national system, possess the ability of perusing, and, as far as human means can reach, of understanding the holy scriptures, after they have left the school ; while a perseverance in the old system will ensure the

continuance of that ignorance of the word of God which so unhappily prevails.

And now, my dear Sir, let me ask you, where is the awful departure from protestant and christian principle, in all this, of which you have heard so much in speeches and sermons? What is there so evil in this system, that every protestant who supports it is denounced as an apostate, and charged with sacrificing christian principle to mere political expediency? What was there in this plan to cause apprehension in the minds of the protestants of Ireland that it was the design of the government to deprive them of their Bibles!

Does the sin consist in the use of extracts from the scripture? Alas for the national schools of England daily using Mrs. Trimmer's Selections; they too must come under this condemnation, as well as all our Sunday schools, and all our scriptural education society schools, and all our private schools; yea, and all our nurseries!—But is it in the departure from the authorised version that the apostasy consists? Alas then for the Bible Society, which circulates the scriptures in various

languages, and consequently in different versions ; this noble institution comes under the same condemnation, as does also our Church, which retains another version of the Psalms and of other portions of scripture in her book of Common Prayer.—But lastly, is the abandonment of principle to be found in having separate religious instruction by the respective clergy, permitted after school hours ; and not insisting on all reading from the entire Bible in our own version, and receiving religious instruction at the hands of the protestant clergy ? Alas, in that case, for our protestant University of Dublin, which affords secular instruction without such conditions to the roman catholic students ; for she is in the same condemnation, as well as our diocesan schools, and every school for the education of the children of the higher classes in Ireland, of which many are conducted by protestant clergymen, and nevertheless roman catholics are admitted and allowed to receive general education, and yet are permitted to receive instruction in their religion from their own clergy on Saturday, and to attend their own place of worship on Sunday.

I do not know what your views may be as to the advance of intellectual knowledge amongst all classes—whether you consider general secular education, suited to their station in life, to be in itself a blessing or a curse to the lower classes. I know we are agreed in desiring a *scriptural* education for all, and we agree in considering education itself as valuable chiefly as tending to the spiritual good of the people. But many go farther than this, and do not hesitate to pronounce education as injurious, and a positive evil, unless it be a strictly scriptural education. Now I must confess, that, warm an advocate as I am for the diffusion of scriptural knowledge, I cannot bring myself to subscribe to the doctrine that education is in itself so evil and dangerous a thing as some maintain, although it should unhappily be education unaccompanied by the reception of true and vital religion. I apply to this question the same argument that I urge in favour of Temperance societies. Many pious persons object to the Temperance society, on the ground that, inasmuch as nothing but the power of the Gospel divinely applied can change the heart of man, it is not

only useless, but derogatory to the Gospel, to employ any other means for his moral improvement. They urge that temperance will not save a man's soul, and that the man who gives up drunkenness may be no nearer the kingdom of heaven; nay more, some will not hesitate to maintain that by reforming the drunkard by such means, and stopping short there, you render him a more dangerous member of society, inasmuch as you give him moral power and self control which he may use to bad purposes, and you put a hindrance, humanly speaking, in the way of his spiritual conversion, by making him self-righteous and proud of the reform which is the result of his own efforts! To which I answer, that although I know mere morality does not constitute christianity, and that temperance of itself will not save a man's soul, yet I know it will do him and his family and society great temporal good; and in a spiritual point of view I can have more hope of the sober man than of the sot.

As an advocate of the temperance cause, you will agree with me, in the propriety of doing the lesser benefit, in this case, although we cannot perhaps effect the greater good which

we desire; and here, at all events, you will allow that it is lawful to do the good we *can*, though we cannot accomplish all the good we *would*. I anticipate your acquiescence, on calm consideration, in the application of the same principles with respect to the analogous case of secular education. — Drunkenness is scarcely a greater obstacle to the reception of divine truth and the saving influence of the Gospel, than is ignorance. You think you have achieved something, if you have removed the one barrier, although conscious it is not every thing. I look upon the removal of ignorance in a similar light. We hear much of making religion the basis of education; it appears to me more correct to make education the basis of religion.

The argument of those who denounce the spread of secular education would prove too much; for if knowledge be in itself so dangerous unaccompanied by true religion, and it is therefore unlawful for us to communicate such instruction, then we must not venture to impart even scriptural education, inasmuch as a mere head knowledge of the bible will not save the soul, and we

cannot be sure of communicating more than this. If, knowledge being power, it is dangerous to put it within the reach of the lower classes, unless it be "sanctified knowledge:" *a fortiori*, scriptural knowledge being the greatest power, it is the most dangerous unless a saving knowledge of the truth be imbibed. But we cannot be sure of this; and, therefore, to communicate the knowledge of scripture is dangerous, in proportion to the excellency of a saving knowledge thereof! It will be said—But in this latter case we use the means, and we can do no more; we must leave the result with God. And so I say, in reference to education; let us use the best means within our power, and though we cannot command success, we may hope for good fruits. If we do no good, we do no harm; unless it be maintained that a civilized man is less susceptible of religious impressions than a barbarian, and the ignorant more accessible to argument and more open to conviction than the educated!

That "ignorance is the mother of devotion," was a doctrine well suited to the dark ages; but we might have hoped that it was discarded at

the present day. Your Oxford friends, however, who evince so great a love for antiquated forms and doctrines, have not omitted to revive this ancient, and therefore "venerable" maxim. Thus speaks their great organ:—"The age is all light; therefore the church is bound to be—we will not say dark, for that is an ill-omened, a forbidding word,—but we will say, impenetrable, occult in her views and character. Nay, we will not object to a certain measure of light, so that it be of the dim and awful kind." . . . "We are now assailed by science, and we must protect ourselves by mystery."*

Though the Oxford tractarians have not many disciples in Ireland, there are some of our friends at this side of the water who have an equally religious horror of "science" and the advance of "light" amongst the mass of the population. It may serve to shew you to what a pitch this dread of knowledge has arrived amongst us, to hear the language of one of our most popular preachers, a distinguished controversialist and

* British Critic, No. xlviii.

very celebrated and much admired speaker at public meetings. This reverend gentleman is reported to have thus spoken in a sermon preached to a Dublin congregation :—“ It is a system “ now constantly taught, (no doubt by the suggestion of Satan,) that man is benefitted by “ knowledge which does not make wise unto “ salvation. I firmly believe, and I would commend it to the prayerful consideration of all “ whom I address, that it is a principle which is “ gathering a gloomy and portentous storm to “ burst over this empire, unless God awaken “ men to their duty. Education, normal schools, “ march of intellect, penny cyclopædias, newspapers, steam-presses, rail-roads, power-loom, “ science, concentration of vast masses of a “ dense population, with the principle spread “ that knowledge is power and union strength, “ the people the source of all power— “ these are the watchwords, and these the “ principles which Satan is spreading on all “ sides !” *

* Dublin Record newspaper, Feb. 15th, 1838.

Here we find rail-roads ! and power-looms ! placed in the same category with penny cyclopædias, newspapers, march of intellect, and education ; and all placed in the preacher's *index expurgatorius*, and denounced as undoubted devices of Satan for the destruction of empires and the ruin of souls ! It cannot be denied that education may be abused and intellect perverted, and steam-presses used for the diffusion of that which is wicked or foolish, and even penny cyclopædias may do mischief if they teach what is bad, (just as money, the love of which is "the root of all evil," may be abused, although no crusade is therefore carried on against that useful commodity,)—but what connection, the most distant, can possibly be established between rail-roads and power-looms and the spread of infidelity ; or in what sense rail-roads can be a "watch-word" of Satan, I am altogether at a loss to discover. Perhaps, however, this may throw some light on the opposition to the measure proposed by the government, last session, for the introduction of these diabolical engines into Ireland ! It would be worth while to ascertain

whether the reverend preacher himself ever travels by the "railroad" to attend meetings at Exeter Hall ; or allows his sermons and speeches to be printed by "steam-presses." Certain it is that, with a strange inconsistency, he is in the constant habit of occupying whole columns of "newspapers" with letters on controversial subjects !

It is curious to observe how extremes meet. The controversial writer, to whom the editor of the "Dublin Record" attributes, with the highest eulogium, the above quoted declamation, has, in a sermon which he has published, attacked geology on the very same principle as that on which poor Galileo was condemned by the Inquisition !

I could give you other melancholy examples of the fanatical spirit in which the subject of education is treated in this country by excellent men, who exercise great influence in "the religious world" here, which would sufficiently account for the continued opposition to the national board. But I forbear.

Before I conclude, I must notice one more

charge brought against the system. It is said that it is most improperly designated "national," inasmuch as it does not meet with the approval of a great and influential portion of the people of this country. And in reference to this its designation it is demanded, "how many protestant children attend the schools established by the board?" It may be observed in reply, that there are at least as many protestants attending the *national schools* as there are roman catholics attending the *national churches* in Ireland! Those who speak thus forget that this system, like the protestant church in this country, is justly described as "national," because it is sanctioned, established, and upheld by the nation as represented in the legislature of the country. If the Irish system of education is disapproved of by a large body in Ireland, it meets, notwithstanding, with the support of the nation, testified by overwhelming majorities in both houses of parliament, and by men of all political and religious creeds; and it cannot stand an hour longer than it meets with this sanction. In like manner, though the Irish protestant church does not meet

with the approval of a very large body in this country, it is upheld by the nation, represented in parliament ; and deprived of this support, it could not continue for one hour in the character of an establishment. In each case, however anomalous or paradoxical it may appear to the objectors on either side, the term "*National*" is justly and with strict propriety applicable.

As a short and easy method of settling the difficulties to which I have adverted, in connection with national education in Ireland, many say, " We must not think of the difficulties ; a protestant legislature and a protestant government should act on protestant principles ; and inasmuch as protestants are agreed that the bible is fitted for universal circulation, the bible, the whole bible, and nothing but the bible, must be used for religious instruction in the schools founded by a protestant state. And if the papists will not have education on these terms, let them remain and perish in their ignorance !"

All this declamation might have been applicable to this country in former days ; and all

this was long acted upon, with what effect let the proportion between the protestant and roman catholic population, and the uneducated state of the great mass of the people, testify. But it seems to be forgotten that the legislature is no longer exclusively protestant; and it is evident that we cannot expect that the measures proceeding from it will be of an exclusive character. If indeed the people were all of one religion in this country, the question of a national system of education would be easy enough; but we must deal practically with every case according to existing circumstances, and not theorize according to our own fancies. Whatever private individuals may do in this way, no wise government will suffer generation after generation to pass on in a state of ignorance, and consequent degradation; or allow a country towards which Providence has been so bountiful and man so unjust, to be any longer a thorn in the side of England, and a bye-word among the nations; without making an effort for her regeneration, by a patient continuance in a course of just and enlightened policy, in the

administration of equal laws—providing education for the young, employment for the able-bodied, and relief for the aged and infirm. And this, “through good report and through evil report,” unmoved by the taunts and clamour of their enemies, or the unreasonable demands and threats of professing friends.

The labours and motives of such statesmen may not be duly appreciated, their designs may be misconstrued, and their principles misrepresented. But they will have the reward of witnessing the improvement of a long-neglected country; while, in the gratitude of a warm-hearted people, and the approval of their own consciences, and the anticipation of justice being done to them by the historian, they may find more than sufficient to counterbalance present reproach, the rancour of party opposition, and the strife of tongues.

And now, my dear sir, I entreat your calm and dispassionate consideration of what I have advanced in this correspondence. I feel that it is quite unnecessary to deprecate an uncharitable judgment against me on your part, on the

ground of the views and principles which I maintain, and maintaining shrink not to avow and advocate. I know that the christian candour of your character protects me against all injurious imputations. I would that I could say as much for many of my Irish brethren; some of the highest religious professors amongst whom too often substitute abuse for reasoning, and resort to the imputation of the most unworthy motives as the answer to the plainest and most candid statements and arguments. And yet I rejoice to think that a more tolerant and liberal spirit is beginning to manifest itself even in this country. The extreme violence of many of the opposers of liberal principles has tended to disgust the more reasonable of the "conservative" party; while the uncharitable spirit generally exhibited by controversialists has produced a similar feeling in the minds of many, who, though firmly attached to the protestant faith, have not so learned the Gospel as to lead them, in its defence, to depart from the spirit which it inculcates and the conduct which it enjoins. This more moderate spirit which begins to shew itself

encourages me to hope that we may soon find a more dispassionate consideration bestowed upon the various subjects connected with religion and politics in Ireland, than those topics have heretofore met, and a more charitable construction put upon the motives of those who maintain the true christian and "protestant principles" of equal justice, forbearance, and conciliation, than the advocates of those principles have hitherto experienced.

In conclusion, I have to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to your country, inasmuch as to my extensive intercourse with good men of all parties in England, I feel indebted for more enlarged and liberal views on the subjects upon which I have dwelt in these letters.

Believe me to remain,

My dear Sir,

Ever yours most faithfully,

E. N. HOARE.

Deanery-House, Achonry.

Sept. 30th, 1839.

By the same Author,

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