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education

THOUGHTS
AND SUGGESTIONS
ON THE
EDUCATION
OF THE
PEASANTRY OF IRELAND.

London:

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By *Ó Driscoll of Cork, Barrister*

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Houses of the Oireachtas

TO

THE RIGHT HONORABLE

CHARLES GRANT,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR IRELAND,

&c. &c.

SIR,

THE following pages are respectfully submitted to your perusal: they attempt to throw some light upon a difficult subject; one which must have engaged your attention, as it is among the number of the embarrassments which surround the administration of Irish affairs. Upon these you have made the rare experiment of a steady application of sound principles. It must be the wish of every friend of Ireland, that

you should persevere. That you will succeed, cannot be doubted. You will possess, in return, the gratitude of that country, and the applause of Great Britain.

CHARLES GRANT,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR IRELAND,

Sir,

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THOUGHTS,

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MUCH of the public attention has been for a long time directed to the subject of Education ; particularly as applied to the mass of the people. Education is of two kinds ; the education of good habits, and the education of letters. The latter again may be considered in combination with religious instruction, or independent of it. The education of good habits is what obtains most in England. In Scotland, we observe the education of letters, in combination with religious instruction, to prevail generally. Ireland possesses, in some degree, the education of letters merely ; little religious instruction, and few good habits. Of the three nations, England only possessed all those advantages which impress good habits upon a people—a long settled order of things, a fixed government, defined and ascertained rights, property, particularly in land, unchanged for ages by war or violence ; religion, as established by law, the religion of the great majority of the people ; a resident government, a resident aristocracy ; liberty. All these elements entered into the mighty fabric of British

greatness. They went to create that love of justice and true perception of it, that obedience to the laws, that respect for authority—to form that sober and orderly conduct—which were, and which are, in an eminent manner, the peculiar characteristics of the people of England. They went also to build up that high prosperity, that comfort, security and abundance, which surrounded this people, and which, excluding every strong temptation to crime, left the individual free to collect round himself those feelings of personal respect, and of national importance, which, elevating the general tone of mind even of the lowest ranks of society, place them beyond the meanness and the guilt of petty delinquencies.

Scotland, less happily circumstanced, has found in the education of letters, and in a system of religious instruction suited to the wants and to the genius of her people, means to correct the evils of her condition, and to place her high on the scale of moral and civilized nations.

At the bottom of this scale is Ireland, unprovided with any of those wise institutions, those fortunate circumstances which impress good habits upon a people. She is, indeed, furnished in no mean degree, with the knowledge of letters. Perhaps, in this particular, she is at least equal with England, though inferior to her northern neighbour. And when the con-

dition of the lower Irish is considered, and compared with that of the other two nations, it will be seen how little the mere knowledge of letters is capable of effecting upon the humbler classes of society. This did not escape observation. It was observed too, that a mere knowledge of letters, when superinduced upon depraved habits, did no more than furnish a new and powerful weapon to the enemies of social order; we were referred to the dreadful shedding of blood for bank forgeries, and to the innumerable and ingenious frauds, the guilt of which the unlettered escaped. We were told, that we introduced a new vice amongst servants, and a new danger into families; that we opened a new and alluring view of society to him who is cut off from all its enjoyments; that we infused a new poison into the cup of indigence, and drew a new and broader line of division between the rich and the poor; making the alienation more complete, the discontent more inappeasable. If the objectors had been acquainted with Irish affairs, they might have added to their case the vast number of forged wills and leases, and conveyances of all sorts, which are every day fabricated in that country, and which lead to such frightful scenes of perjury and litigation.

We will not deny, that some of these objections are well founded; but they apply to the education of mere letters only: and even in this

case, the evil, however great, is perhaps compensated by the good which undoubtedly results from education in any shape. These good results are not forced upon our notice; they do not find an unhappy notoriety in the annoyance they occasion, but are lost in the mass of quiet and obscure felicities that dwell unheeded and unknown in the calm bosom of society. To education connected with religious instruction, these objections apply not at all, and this distinction appears to have been unaccountably overlooked in the, now almost forgotten, controversy on the expediency of education. Nor does it appear, that the mere capacity of reading has any tendency to increase the discontent, which it is in the nature of poverty to engender. Impatience of toil and privation, envy and hatred of the wealthy, take as deep root, and grow up as naturally and as rankly in the most neglected soils of human nature as where any labour of cultivation has been bestowed. And I believe, on the contrary, that any turning of the surface, however slight, will be found rather to eradicate those weeds than to favour their growth.

Ireland was not only infinitely more unhappy than England in all the circumstances of her condition, but in these respects she was much less fortunate also than Scotland. The latter country suffered, in her wars, less general, sweeping and frequent confiscations; she was not torn

by antipathies so violent; and her religious establishment soon ceased to be at variance with the prejudices and feelings of the majority of the people. It is not my purpose to follow out the train of calamitous events which placed Ireland in a more unhappy situation. Whatever they were, charged with whatever evil passions; marked with whatever errors; stained with whatsoever crimes—they have passed, or nearly passed. And it is to be hoped, that those wise and beneficent measures, which have justly endeared to the people of Ireland the memory of his late Majesty; which have, in a great degree, given stability to the present order of things, and made firm the foundations of society, will be followed up by the complete establishment, in that long-agitated country, of those principles of civil and religious policy, now universally acknowledged to be as sound, and as safe, and as wise, as they are mild, simple, and liberal.

These are no extraneous topics when we treat of the education of the people. The whole system of civil and religious polity is intimately interwoven with those habits, which either facilitate or impede the efforts of instruction. I would also touch upon these topics, in the hope that I may be able to turn towards Ireland some of those streams of benevolence, which have their exhaustless fountains in Great Britain, and which are fertilizing so many distant regions of

the earth. I would engage a portion of that beneficent spirit which abounds in England, to direct its attention to the wants of the sister country. I would convince the genius of Christian charity, that no where is there a field which will repay its labours more abundantly; no where one which more needs cultivation; no where one, to the toils of which it is called by so imperious a sense of duty:—in other fields its efforts are a generous and gratuitous offering—in Ireland there is a debt to be repayed, and injuries to be atoned for.

British connexion has been to Ireland the source of much good, and will be, I am persuaded, the fountain of much more; but it cannot be denied, that it has been the cause of distractions hardly equalled in the history of nations; of calamities never exceeded—mingling whatever was dear, and sacred, and holy—not untwisting gently, but cutting asunder the heart-strings of a fond and faithful people; every tie which bound them to God, their kindred, and their country—with an incessant action, with an unvarying violence, until patience was exhausted, and human nature, tired of suffering, sunk into a frightful abasement. Then was insult added to injury, and we taunted our victim with the ignorance, and the superstition, and the barbarity we had occasioned; and with the wild and senseless turbulence of that despair which we had produced.

With this, with all this, England is chargeable; it was not always her intention, but it was undoubtedly her interference which led to these evils. Will she not repair them?

As the situation of Ireland has precluded all those agencies which impress good habits upon a people, the more urgent is her need of the education of letters, combined with religious instruction. Here, however, we encounter a difficulty, which is not a little embarrassing. How are we to communicate religious instruction to a people, towards whom our conduct has been invariably such as to inspire them only with jealousy and distrust? How, if we manage their political prejudices, are we to deal with their religious ones? To get rid of this embarrassment, it has been proposed to give up all attempts at religious instruction; to confine ourselves to the mere education of letters and such moral lessons as may be free from all objection. This plan would have some advantages—would not fail to have some good effects—but it would be wholly inadequate to the exigencies of Ireland.

We have stated that a mere knowledge of letters is not rare in that country; it is not what is wanted. In fact, every village has its school; and there are few parishes that have not two or more, either permanent or occasional. Reading and writing, and some knowledge of arithmetic are, in this way, acquired by those

who are able to pay the very small stipend of the schoolmaster. But this kind of education, whatever may be its occasional effect upon individuals, produces no general good result: the people are not improved; their manners and habits continue unaltered; these little muddy streamlets, though numerous, are not sufficient to water this great desert of society, they stagnate, and are lost in its wild wastes. Hither must be brought the great waters of life, and then will the "desert blossom as the rose."

The country schoolmaster is independent of all system and control; he is himself one of the people, imbued with the same prejudices, influenced by the same feelings, subject to the same habits; to his little store of learning, he generally adds some traditionary tales of his country, of a character to keep alive discontent. He is the scribe, as well as the chronicler and the pedagogue of his little circle; he writes their letters, and derives from this no small degree of influence and profit, but he has open to him another source of deeper interest and greater emolument, which he seldom has virtue enough to leave unexplored. He is the centre of the mystery of rustic iniquity, the cheap attorney of the neighbourhood, and furnished with his little book of precedents, the fabricator of false leases and surreptitious deeds and conveyances. Possessed of important secrets and of useful ac-

quirements, he is courted and caressed; a cordial reception and the usual allowance of whiskey greets his approach, and he completes his character by adding inebriety to his other accomplishments. Such is frequently the rural schoolmaster, a personage whom poetry would adorn with primeval innocence and all the flowers of her garland! So true it is that ignorance is not simplicity, nor rudeness honesty.

It will be admitted, that nothing good can be expected from an education conducted under such auspices. It will be said, that a better system may be introduced; a degree of superintendence may be established; teachers of good character may be employed, and sound morality may be inculcated. And the object may be thus attained, without coming in contact with the impracticable prejudices of the people. But will the object be attained? Mere morality, which addresses itself to the understanding only, will have little effect upon the poor, where the circumstances with which they are surrounded address themselves much more forcibly to the passions. And to what a race of men do they address themselves in Ireland? How sunk in poverty, how full of ancient and bitter remembrances, how impatient of annoyance, and how beset with difficulties! Encumbered with their own numbers, struggling with the evils of their condition, and with the laws of the land as with an old and mortal

enemy. In this bustle, in this conflict, will the calm, cold voice of morality be listened to?

And what are the obligations she proposes to bind a people, whose intellect, though extremely acute, yet is generally conversant with present objects only;—who are impatient for immediate gratification, and oftener deride than respect the calculations of prudence and forethought;—with whom too, the sanctions of law lose their terror and their force?—They spend their power in vain upon hearts that know no fear, and are attached to existence by no comforts or enjoyments:—to whom life is labour, labour uncheered by any of those rays which in other countries warm the whole land, and gild and gladden even the lowliest cottage. Their national pride has no gratification;—for them the glorious victory won by the blood of their countrymen has been achieved in vain;—they feel it not, they have no part in the triumph. They put all this down to the account of Great Britain. England is still to them a foreign country. How long will she continue to be so?—They feel her power, and they can understand the partiality of the laws which apply to them as Roman Catholics; not that the peasantry know or care any thing for the few places or privileges withheld from the rich of their communion; but that, mingling the favouritism of the laws, which they can very well comprehend,

as it regards them as a sect, with other circumstances, and with past remembrances, and considering themselves rather as a nation which has been crushed, than as a sect which is discouraged, and never extending their views to a comprehension of the two islands as forming one empire, but looking constantly to both countries as distinct in all things,—they are apt to set the account as between them and England, as one of strength merely, and to feel degraded in their own weakness.

Will your morality break up the habits of thought, and overthrow the long established prejudices of such a people, and under such circumstances? I fear not. Not even if a wiser system of legislation were to co-operate with the teacher, and by liberal enactments aid his powers of persuasion. Not even if, by a magic which no legislation possesses, the fearless peasantry of Ireland could be brought suddenly to lay aside their prejudices, to divest themselves of their ancient alienation of mind, and to mingle cordially, with a common feeling and a common sympathy, in the mass of the general population of the empire. To this task you must bring the powerful engine of religion; and by a long, and laborious, and persevering process, aided by the education of letters, you will effect much, even under the disadvantage of a system of law calculated to keep alive jealousy. Religion offers a

motive of endurance and forbearance, which cannot elsewhere be supplied. It calls away the attention from the human agent, and fixes it upon that Power which is over all supreme. It disarms anger, and even conciliates benevolence towards those, who, even in their injustice, can be no other than the instruments of God's will. Religion soothes, restrains, consoles, and establishes, by sanctions which belong to her only, the relations of sovereign and subject, and of man with man.

But it is asked, is there not an ample provision for religious instruction in Ireland? Is not this the peculiar province of another class of persons, prepared and fitted for the important task? It is true. No nation pays more dearly for religious instruction than the Irish; none values it more, and none obtains less of it. It supports two heavy establishments: from one, the mass of the people may be said to receive no instruction; from the other, little that is of value. The established Church of Ireland is a great corporation, exceedingly well paid, for the ministration of the Gospel. It collects its revenues from the whole population of the country without distinction of sects; but it confines its instruction to a very minute portion of the people. It is a spring at which all, indeed, are at liberty to drink; but the guardians of the fountain, careless how many or how few taste of the

waters, exact payment from all; from those who loathe the beverage, and from those who set no value upon it; as well as from those who esteem it highly and drink of it abundantly. This is, no doubt, the law of the land, and we do not quarrel either with the law or the practice. But we are of opinion, that this is not an ordinary case, where we are at liberty to use the privileges which the law confers upon us, without any more thought of the matter; where we may eat and drink, and be filled with the good things of the world, and draw round us all the comforts, and all the enjoyments, and all the luxuries of life, without any consideration at all, whether we have given value for what we take. True it is, that the law calls us to no account; there is no earthly tribunal that concerns itself in the inquiry. But there is another law and another tribunal, which takes cognizance of these things, where no plea will be received that is not a plea of merits; where it is required that value be given for what is exacted, and that the last farthing be paid.

In Ireland there is a broad line of distinction running between the great bulk of the population and the established church. Shall the church then forego its tithes?—It should at least make some return to the people; to a people burdened with two orders of clergy. Will it be said that the priesthood of the establishment

can make no return ; that the people reject their services, and abhor their heresy ; that nothing is in their power ? They have, themselves, proved that this is not the case ; in some few, indeed, some very few and solitary instances. Let it not be thought that the hearts of the Catholic population are so shut against kindness and Christianity, that the spirit of a gentle and holy ministration, though Protestant, could find no entrance.

You may not be able to separate them from their own church. They are connected with it by too many ties,—ties, which wherever they exist, bind strongly the human heart. Their church makes a part of their history ; it has shared in all their vicissitudes of good or evil fortune ; it has drunk deeply of their almost exhaustless cup of bitterness. It has clothed itself with their best affections ; it has nestled in their tenderest sympathies, and intrenched itself in their most cherished recollections. Against such a church you can hardly expect to prevail, supported as it is too, by the still existing discouragements of the law. You must wait till time shall lay asleep suspicion, and untie the attachments of the people ; and until a better system of policy shall cease to uphold, by vainly attempting to discourage and stigmatize this great communion. Till then it will remain inexpugnable. But though you can do little against the church, you may do much for the people.

There is a vital spirit of Christianity, independent of all dogmas; and there are innumerable means within the power of the Protestant pastor, which, leaving his Catholic flock unmolested upon the ground of their ancient faith, might be made mightily efficacious for its diffusion. Is this without his province? Beyond the range of his obligations? Is he not the minister of the Gospel, even, rather than the organ of a sect? Is there not one fold to which all sects belong; the fold of the Redeemer? Happy would it be for Ireland, if the clergy of the established church were sensible of the obligations they incur towards the people committed to their charge, and from whom they derive such vast revenues: happy if they could think that those obligations can never be cancelled by the mere circumstance of sectarian distinction. Shall we be required to point out what they should do?

We might reply that such an indication is unnecessary; that the means by which their duties to their Catholic flock may be wisely and effectually discharged, are every where at hand, though varying according to circumstances; that zeal would discover them, as it would apply them, and that without zeal our indication would be vain. It is every where in their power to promote education; even upon Catholic principles, if it cannot be otherwise, 'tis better than no education at all. The mere

education of letters will do good, under proper direction ; it will break the soil, and prepare it for future cultivation. But we have known much more than this to be done. We have heard of one or two of the ministers of the established church, who, not content with promoting such plans of education as met the scruples of their Catholic parishioners, thought it their duty also to care for their spiritual welfare. Looking into the books of Catholic divinity, they chose some of those tracts of sublime piety with which they abound ; had them printed at their own expense, and extensively distributed. We have known where the minister would seek in his cottage, him whose religious profession did not permit him to attend at church ; and having won his good will by a thousand little acts of kindness and good neighbourhood, for which the casualties of life are ever making room, would breathe the spirit, and cultivate the feelings, and instil the doctrines, which are not of the Church of England, or of the Church of Rome, but of the Church of Christ. There is not so wide a difference between these two churches, as that the Protestant clergyman should be entirely cut off from his flock ; and there is so much ground, so wide and far stretched a space which they both occupy in common, that there is abundant room, without any interference, for the exertion of all the energies, and

the employment of all the industry, and all the zeal of the most active and most devoted individual.

Here, then, might the Protestant priesthood labour without exciting any jealousy, without creating any alarm; here, too, would they find a useful, and if they choose, a cordial fellow-labourer in the Catholic priest; a character little known beyond the sphere of his toils, and seldom estimated according to his real merits. His good will is cheaply purchased, his kindness is easily conciliated, and the dark prejudices, the gloom, and the unsocial bigotry which encompass him, in our imaginations, will, upon a near approach, be found entirely to disappear. How happy would it be, if, "agreeing to differ" upon points which ever must be left at large, the various great denominations of the Christian priesthood were to direct their efforts, not to procure an impossible uniformity, but to promote that spirit of the Gospel, which lives in every province of the Redeemer's kingdom. Then would not that kingdom be torn by foolish divisions, and disturbed by vain efforts; but its united power might be led, where it ought ever to be directed, against the common foe.

There is a broad and visible line running through all the regions of the earth, marking off on one side the children of the Redeemer, and on the other, those who deny his divinity and power. It

is true that the former are marshalled under many banners, and divided into many companies, but they are all the soldiers of one leader, and there is not one sub-division amongst them, which has not produced its hero, not one which cannot boast that it has advanced the general cause, and shew the ornaments and the proofs of high and acceptable achievements. Wherefore then, this excessive spirit of uncharitableness and disgust towards those who fight by our side, and in whose ranks we discover, beyond question, those who are undoubted and especial favourites, and true soldiers of the great commander? If there be error or insubordination in any of these battalions, why not leave it to him who leads them, to rectify, and who will not be pleased that we interfere with his proper duties? Has he not the means, has he not the power? Or has he commissioned us to perform this service? If he had we should not have failed in it, as we have notoriously done; we should not have employed devices, which he has ever proscribed and abhorred. No; no commission has gone forth for such a service. He reserves to himself his peculiar functions. He will bring up in order his broken columns, and restore himself that discipline which the warfare of this world may have impaired; already the order has sounded, and all will be arranged without conflict, without violence; there shall be no humi-

liation, no triumph in the camp of the Redeemer, but over the common enemy. Meantime he is commander over all, and every division and subdivision of his troops; he is indifferent to none, and forsakes not any who bear the glorious ensign of the Cross.

We have ventured to hint at some few of the means which are in the power of the Protestant clergy of Ireland, and by which they may relieve their consciences, and discharge their obligations towards those of their flock, who profess the Roman Catholic faith. Others will be suggested by circumstances, and will be discovered by zeal. It is to be lamented that it has remained for any individual to open a field of such obvious obligation, or to point to the few and solitary footsteps which have marked it. This has not occurred, because the clergy of the established church in Ireland, are in any respect inferior or less zealous than their brothers of the Church of England, but they have been differently situated. In England there is no clergyman without some congregation, in Ireland this is often the case; and when it happens it is wont to call off the attention entirely from the nature and duties of the trust undertaken. It occurred too, because of the old alienation, and the old antipathies between the sects; antipathies which found in the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, abundant nourishment, and an in-

conceivable bitterness and pungency. These combinations have brought about, and impressed more of a secular character, perhaps, upon the Protestant clergy of Ireland, than elsewhere is to be observed. They have also occasioned, possibly, that there is less of that motive, which we should always hope, and expect to find, entering largely into the inducements which lead an individual even into the comfortable profession of a state established church, discoverable in that of Ireland, particularly in the western and southern parts of the island, where the population is chiefly Catholic.

There is no where a more highly respectable and exemplary body of men, than the Irish Protestant clergy. They are particularly useful in those parts of Ireland where there are few resident gentry; they supply in some measure, the place of these, and are indeed, more in the nature of country gentlemen living upon their tithes, as upon their estates, than of a Christian priesthood busied in the peculiar duties of their vocation; in which, as far as regards a Protestant flock, they may have little or no occupation. The ceremonial of worship is performed, perhaps, in a decent manner, and with somewhat of the air and aspect of a formula; indicating simply the *modus* or tenure of a life-estate. Alms, it may be, are distributed to the poor, and medicines given to the sick. The courtesies and the

charities of a village life, observed with more than ordinary exactness, bring out the figures of the piece, and shew you the contour and the proportions of highly useful and respectable country gentlemen, but little or nothing to remind you of a superior ordination. Placed frequently, in remote districts, and surrounded by that class only of gentry, if I may call them so, who are known in Ireland by the name of middlemen, the rector is decidedly the first gentleman in the parish—in his style of living, in the superior fashion of his wife and daughters, and perhaps in the envied luxury of a carriage. To all this he generally adds the secular dignity and the bustle of a justice of the peace; and there have been instances where he has accumulated the, one would think, incongruous honors, the splendid arrayment, the scarlet and the gold, and the glittering steel of a yeomanry captain.

We are far from denying his usefulness in all these capacities, some of them too have devolved upon him almost of necessity. But we are obliged to contend for the truth; that they do injure and retard the advancement and cultivation of religion, and of Protestantism in Ireland. Let it be supposed, that there is more light and truth, more of the genuine, unmixed spirit of the Gospel, in the faith and forms of the reformed church; by what channel is it to reach the cottages of the peasantry? Whence is it to proceed? Is it

from the fine house, and the gaily furnished apartments, and the handsome plantations, and the decorated grounds of the most important personage, and the finest gentleman, and the most fashionable family in the parish? Is it the justice of the peace, surrounded with all the dignity of office, with law books, and legal precedents, and acts of parliament, and informations and oaths innumerable; every faculty engaged in the protection of the game, and the punishment of trespasses,—that is to convert the people from their ancient errors? Is it the rich experimental farmer, busied in making a fortune for his family, that is to put away his plough, and his pigs, and his thrashing machine, to set about such a business? Is it the man whose ingenuity is employed, at the utmost stretch, to come decently out of the odious squabble, the urgent endeavour to wrest his dues from the hard grasp of the reluctant peasant? Is it such a man, that is to turn upon himself the tide of the affections, and the religious feelings and anxieties of the people—to forego much of his dues and all his occupations, that he might enter into competition,—with whom? With that vulgar person, living in a mean house, with mean accommodations—the Romish priest. Shall he degrade himself; shall he bring himself down, from his lofty and commodious elevation, to so low a level? shall he submit to such sacrifices and

humiliations, and after all, perhaps, obtain but a small portion of that influence and power, by which the hearts of the people are unlocked and opened to the reception of divine influences?

We say it is scarcely to be expected, that persons should do all this, and submit to all this, who enter the ministry, perhaps, with far different views and objects. As country gentlemen, they are generally very valuable persons, and mostly superior to the common average of that class. As justices of the peace, they are very useful, but they possess few or none of the lineaments of a priesthood. It does, indeed, require considerable power of mind, to resist that moulding of the character, that action which is carried on round about us, and upon us; by which, as wax, we receive the impression of the situation in which we are placed, and the circumstances by which we are surrounded. It has been often asked, why the Protestant church makes no progress in Ireland? why it rather loses ground? We answer, without interfering with the respective merits of the two great churches which divide that country, by pointing to the penal statute book, which is ever in your way, by pointing to the clergy of your reformed church, and with all their good and their estimable qualities, their peculiar unfitness. Opportunity is lost upon them, and every change and variety of occurrence comes in vain.

The poor of the Catholic persuasion, if their priest should lose their confidence and sink in the scale of moral character too low, in their opinion, to be worthy the ministration of the Gospel—a circumstance, which, though very rare, yet has sometimes occurred—yet do they never turn their eyes towards the Protestant priest: from him, in no case, do they hope to derive any religious consolation. Such an idea, if suggested to them, would appear monstrous and unnatural. It may be imagined, that sectarian prejudice is sufficient to account for this, for that wide space which separates the Protestant pastor and his Catholic flock. But we are persuaded, that though this principle enters somewhat into the account of the matter, yet it enters but for little. The mass of the items are of a quite different character. They know but little of the peasantry of Ireland, who deem their attachment to the church of Rome, to be grounded solely upon religious prejudices. This attachment is compounded of very various ingredients, and it is one of these, that the priest of this communion is the only one they know, who has upon him the marks of a clerical character. He is the only one possessing these marks, not only in their eyes, but, strange as it may appear, frequently, also, in the eyes of the Protestant peasantry.

There are to be found, in some of the most Catholic parts of Ireland, numerous scattered

families of peasants of the Protestant communion. These, though they may be punctual in attendance at church; though they may, all their lives long, profess an abhorrence of popery, yet in sickness, in the hour of death, when they turn round the languid eye in search of that consolation, which the prejudices, the antipathies, nor the partialities of this world can no longer bestow—they look only to the priest—the Popish priest—the priest of that superstition they were in the constant habit of reviling. He is sent for, and the dying Christian, rather than be without all spiritual aid, submits to renounce the religion, which perhaps he yet prefers. He dies a Catholic. This is by no means a rare case, it is one of every day occurrence; and we believe, we account for it correctly, in attributing it to the absence of every thing clerical in the character of the Protestant clergyman; to his possessing, in the eyes even of his own proper flock, nothing more than the simple characteristics of a well-bred and perhaps humane and charitable country gentleman.

The Catholic priest is sought for, because he has about him all the signs of his important vocation, and none other. He is seen to be occupied wholly, and devoted exclusively, to the ministrations of his office; he has no other pursuit or employment. There is more of sympathy too between the order and condition

of the peasant and that of the Catholic priest; the latter is used more to the humilities of life, he can hear with more patience, and understand with more distinctness, and enter into the story of his sins and his sufferings with more tenderness and feeling, than the dignified gentleman, who is surrounded with so much of the pomp and circumstance of life; who is lifted up so much above the poor peasant, that there is nothing in common between them; and whose experience is so rare in ministrations of this sort, and whose multiplied avocations of another class have impressed upon his character so much of another feature and bearing, that, whatever may be his merits in other respects, the spiritual necessities of poverty will rarely seek relief in his bosom.

The Irish Catholic priest brings to his pastoral duties many great and peculiar advantages. He is one of the people, speaking their language, and intimately acquainted with their manners and habits. The laws of the state disclaim him; he performs his sacred functions in the midst of whatever reproach and discouragement the institutions and establishments of the land can pour upon him; and this disclaimer and discouragement serve but to increase his influence with his flock, and to add to the power with which he wields their affections. He is always found in his proper place, and is never otherwise

engaged. He is seldom a farmer, never a justice of the peace, and is not at all encumbered with the various and laborious officialities which the law imposes upon the Protestant clergyman. Having no legal claim upon the property of his flock, he is relieved from the disgust, and the cabal, and the litigation, and the estrangement of the tithe system. Nay, more; as he depends for his subsistence chiefly upon the voluntary contributions of his flock, he has the benefit of that principle of our nature, which calls forth our regard and benevolence so abundantly upon those who are in a state of dependence upon us. He is the minister of a religion revered for its antiquity, and loved for its connection with the history and misfortunes of the country. So armed and prepared, with such a wonderful apparatus of great and accumulated means, does the Catholic priest go forth to the ministry of the Gospel.

But taken as he is, almost exclusively, from amongst the sons of the lower class of farmers, he is himself, perhaps, tainted with the vices of the populace; to a near contact with which he was exposed in early life. Or, if he escape this, he has often to contend with the greatest difficulties; he has to combat the best feelings of his nature, if he be indeed sincerely devoted to the higher duties of his station. He is to shut his heart against the love of kindred, and to appear dead even to the obligations of gra-

titude. Perhaps, the whole course of his education for the church was a severe infliction, and a heavy burden upon his family: to place him in this high situation they deprived themselves of the comforts of life, and submitted with cheerfulness to the visitations of a voluntary poverty. But they have done all this with the full confidence of being amply compensated for their sacrifices. Now is the day of their triumph. The priest is to lift them into consequence, and to open for them overflowing springs of profit. His influence with the people is to be exerted to procure business for those of his connexions who are in trade; the piety of his flock is to be taxed with fortunes for his sisters; and in the event of his death, his family are to be enriched by his accumulations. If the stream of bounty which is supplied by the tenderness of the people for their pastor take its natural course, and is permitted to flow out again upon the needy and the destitute of his flock, he has a host of angry and clamorous relatives reminding him of past obligations. They can see nothing in his conduct but folly and ingratitude, because they had no other object in the struggles they made for his advancement, than to gratify their own vanity, and to promote their views of profit. It is but too natural that the priest should fall in with those views. His heart is then opened indeed to the claims of his kindred, but closed against

the paramount duties of his calling. His connexions rise into importance, but his flock have the marks of neglect.

Their habits do not shock his taste, not elevated by the spirit of the Gospel, nor refined by polite association, and he is content to leave them in those vices in which he found them. He is satisfied if things are not glaringly bad; he looks upon projects of improvement as generally hopeless and chimerical, the troublesome fooleries of visionary men; and he regards the barbarity of his flock as too long established for change. He has beside an undefined idea, that improvement of any kind must tend to endanger that power over the people, which he values as the basis of family or personal aggrandizement. He adopts, in all their extent, the prejudices of his church against innovation, and does not scruple to oppose this dreaded enemy with arms of a doubtful character—the dubious legends of the saints, or the fabulous miracles of the dark ages. But the Bible is the spectre, the most appalling in the eyes of this pastor; he is forevermore in arms against this mighty innovator; he disputes every inch of ground, and is no sooner dislodged from one position, than he takes up another, for which he contends with the same spirit and devotedness. We have known men of this class sustaining themselves by worse than doubtful measures; assuming to perform

miraculous cures, and practising the grossest deceptions upon the poor and ignorant.

We have given to the character we have attempted to sketch, a motive in its original formation, and in its declension towards wrong, which we have sometimes observed, and which is ever an amiable one; but it is truth to say, we have seen it where this was wanting. But let it not be supposed, that, though this be a character sometimes met with in the Catholic church of Ireland, that it is of very frequent occurrence. That church counts amongst her members, characters of the most exalted piety, and of the purest disinterestedness, and which do honor to human nature. How is it then, it will be asked, that the darkest clouds of spiritual ignorance still lie thick upon the Catholic population of Ireland? In this region all is stationary. You meet the same wild ideas, the same crude notions, and absurd imaginations, now, and yesterday, and for ever. Much advancement is observable in the arts of life, but the great interests of eternity stand still. With this deep debasement in spiritual things, with these strayings of his flock, the priest is generally supposed to be chargeable. We think often erroneously. He keeps his rude people in tolerable order, and it is frequently all he can do.

The religion of the Catholic priest is a religion of forms; it is overlaid with ritual and ceremonial observances, with various stated and indis-

pensable matters of sacred routine and forms of prayer. Of these, every day brings its peculiar business and burden, its proper addition to the general mass. These occupy a large portion of time. It is true, they may be slurred over, they may be irreverently and rapidly disposed of, and from the necessity of the case, this often occurs; but they are still a wonderful incumbrance. They lie heavily upon the man whose armour should fit him tight, who should be loaded with no unnecessary weight, and embarrassed with no unwieldy apparatus, when he goes forth to the active controversy, and the doubtful combat of both worlds. While his movements are clogged and impeded by a thousand antique trammels, he is at the same time required, perhaps, to extend his superintendence over countless multitudes, over the rude and swarming population of one, or possibly two large parishes. This union of parishes takes place because of the poverty of the people, which does not always permit that each should be provided with its pastor. The high rents, the tithes, the county rates, the church rates, the small farms, divided and subdivided without end, leave so little for the numerous and impoverished people, that they give grudgingly, even to the priest, his humble dues. Christenings, and even marriages are frequently performed where the parties are too poor to af-

ford the clergyman a few pence. So improvident is poverty.

If the priesthood could be so multiplied as to meet the spiritual necessities of the multitude, they would be felt as an intolerable burden, nor could they procure wherewithal to live. The priest does all that can be done; he sees that crimes are not committed, or are punished; that religious worship is attended, and ceremonies observed; and he adds as occasion requires, counsel or exhortation. Little of this, however, can be afforded, even in confession, which offers such opportunities for particular and individual instruction. It is a business which must be rapidly dispatched, else the priest could never get through the crowd. The penitent falls in with the views of the pastor, and is anxious to get absolution as quickly and as cheaply as possible. He is told, indeed, that the form of words pronounced is vain, unless he has the correspondent dispositions of contrition and reformation; but he is apt to entertain a much higher opinion of the power of his priest, and to consider this caution as only intended in kindness to secure his obedience and good conduct; and this idea is confirmed by the difficulty he finds in comprehending the distinction attempted to be taken.

The priest has, indeed, a sort of individual superintendence over the multitudes of his parishes. A superintendence always employed

for the best purposes, ever readily applied in aid of the public peace, and of the law of the land; from this the Protestant derives his best security, and private property its surest guarantee. But it is, from the nature of the case, almost necessarily limited to general conduct, it can rarely extend to the purification of the heart, or the correction of the monstrous errors which obtain so universally in the country parts of Ireland. These errors have taken deep root, and would require more time and more patient and particular agency for their destruction than the priest can bring to the task. He feels the utter impossibility. Day and night, without rest or intermission, in the summer heats, in the cold and the storm, in the rain and the snows of winter, he traverses the mountain and the bog on foot and on horseback, in the ordinary course of his ministration. He returns to his humble dwelling fatigued, exhausted, and finds perhaps one or more messengers from distant parts of his extensive parishes, requiring his immediate attendance upon the sick; if he hesitate they entreat; if he is obstinate they threaten, and he is forced to comply. In the morning he has a *station** upon the brow of some distant hill; here multitudes on multitudes come crowding to be confessed, and night brings him home

* Some cottager's house where divine service is performed, and the neighbouring people confessed.

again, if he be permitted to sleep, only to renew with the morning, in a more distant quarter, the labours of the past day. On Sundays mass is to be celebrated at two or more chapels perhaps many miles asunder, no matter how bad the weather, the roaring torrent, or the broken way. The last mass and service, and sermon, are not finished till late in the day, and till then the priest is not permitted to taste food; no matter though he be old, or sick, or infirm. Can such a life of labour and exhaustion afford means or opportunity for the improvement of the people?

We assert, that the mere official duties of the parish priest are more than enough to fill every instant of his time. To those acquainted with these duties, it is not matter of surprise, that he does so little towards the moral and religious cultivation of his flock; but that generally he does so much. The sum of the matter is, however, that like the clergyman of the established church, he is overwhelmed with officialities; and though they are of a description more properly belonging to his station, yet from their weight and number, they leave him time for no other concern, except that general control of the people which is so indispensable. To this useful exercise of power he brings a mighty machinery, though not quite an unexceptionable one. But it were vain for him to attempt to use another apparatus, it would not succeed; and he

has not time for the long process of such an experiment.

The power of the priest rests much upon his personal character, somewhat upon the means at his disposal of inflicting disgrace or punishment. But there is a power which he is supposed to possess, and which it would be vain for him to disclaim ; he is supposed to wield at pleasure the favour or the vengeance of heaven. His anger is visited upon the offending party, in the death of children or the loss of cattle, or bad crops ; while heaven bestows its blessings upon those he loves. And this interference in his behalf will take place, though he were utterly passive or unwilling.

Both churches, with, we believe, the best intentions, have failed of instructing the people. They have both laid their united burdens upon the neck of this unfortunate nation ; while every event of its history, by a remarkable fatality, has tended to weaken, and darken, and brutalize it. The ignorance and the superstition of Ireland has been a theme of reproach in the mouths of the thoughtless and uninformed. But what nation has ever suffered as Ireland has suffered ? What Christian country is there with two such heavy establishments ? In what land shall we meet with such a combination of unhappy occurrences tending to excite every bad passion, and to impress every evil habit ? A

land from which the marks, and the remembrances of its civil broils have not yet passed away ; poor, and oppressed with burdens ; drained by its absentees ; without industry, and swarming with a most improvident population. A people, full indeed of zeal for religion, alive to every thing kind and generous, hospitable, good-humoured, and sincere of heart. But with what melancholy combinations do they possess these fine qualities ?

They can combine them with dissoluteness and depravity, with fraud and deceit, with an habitual disregard for truth, and frequent violation of the sacred sanction of an oath. Their religion is the observance of a few idle ceremonies and terror of the priest. Their allegiance is terror of the law. But they have a law and a religion which is neither of the priest, nor of the constitution. And which restrained in its exercise, is strongly enough seated in their hearts, to bid defiance to both. The leading doctrine of this code, like that of the Koran, is, that God is good. That it is right to enjoy the good things of the world, which he has made for the use of all, and which are the common property of mankind ; that if prevented by arbitrary laws and regulations, it is right to evade them ; that the soil is equally the patrimony of all, and belongs of right, if to any, to those only who till it ; that property in the crops is acquir-

ed by those whose labour produces them ; that the spontaneous product of the earth, which God makes to grow without cultivation, as timber, is free to all. That temptation is, like every thing else, of the appointment of God ; that it is natural to man to yield to it, and therefore he will not punish him. That God is not severe, but must intend that they should enjoy what he puts in their way, and that eternal punishment would be disproportioned to any offence that could be committed in this life. Nothing but the strong arm of the state restrains the deluge of calamity which these notions are calculated to let in upon society. That arm, indeed, stays the mountain torrent, but sufficient of these wild waters find their way into the vale of society, to render all, in this region, unsafe and uncomfortable. It is wonderful, that while legislation has been busy with its penal enactments and its innumerable interferences ; while it has been anxiously looking about for new mounds and defences with which to surround the rights of property ; it has but casually and carelessly adverted to the only efficient protection, the religious and moral education of the people. Without this there is no safety. Acts of parliament will become waste paper, should the great machine of the state receive but a momentary shock, or its power be loosened for an instant. It is not, that the peasantry concern

themselves with the declamation upon the Catholic question, though they can understand very well, and be offended, that they are not upon equal terms with other parties in the commonwealth ; nor is it that they have any care for the triumphs of their church. But they would establish their system. They would be relieved from the burden of rents, and the incumbrance of landlords. They would free themselves from every wholesome control, as well as every troublesome annoyance. From every just claim, as well as every unfair exaction. This strange system may appear to be nothing more than the monstrous imagination of a fantastic depravity, and no doubt, it has the lineaments of wickedness and folly, and of an impatient and extravagant character ; but there is discernible also, even in its wildness, some of the features, disfigured and distorted as they may be, of the old Brehon law. If this be the case, it is a curious and interesting circumstance, and would open a field of observation which we shall not now enter upon.

It may serve us to remark, however, how little is still known of the diseases of Ireland. How little of a patient and honest attention has been given to her case. The peasantry, who are the might and the power of the country, and no country ever possessed a more formidable power, with all their strange peculiarities are almost unknown even to those who

are born and live amongst them. The gentry, for the most part, seldom find time for such inquiries; the peasantry who live around them, are sometimes the objects of fear, but more usually of contempt; they may be enemies to be guarded against, creatures to be despised; but never subjects of research or consideration. Their turbulence was always formidable, generally incomprehensible, but there was an easy remedy for that: the insurrection act; military aid; application to government. This was always successful as a temporary process, but it effected no cure; on the contrary, its tendency was to render the disease inveterate. It acted in two ways. The peasantry saw that the real hardships of their condition were never inquired into. Their complaints were met by an appeal to force; the impatience of severe oppression was extinguished in blood. This served to harden their hearts; it alienated them from the established order of things; it threw them back upon their own devices, and made them place their only confidence in their wild schemes of future retaliation. Neither would they decline entirely the law of force, under every disadvantage of their situation. It was a law they understood. They considered themselves as waging a kind of warfare, only in covert; their parties committed what we should call murder or assassination; with them it was a legitimate operation against the enemy;

and when they died for those deeds, they died with the calmness and the intrepidity of heroes and martyrs in the most glorious cause. And as such they were regarded by their relatives and their party: no disgrace was connected with their names or with the story of their death. Meantime the blood that was shed stilled perhaps the spirit of the petty warfare, and it slept, but was not dead. It acquired, on the contrary, in every disastrous and defeated conflict, a more fierce and fixed abhorrence for the laws and all the institutions of the country.

The gentry, of a lofty and disdainful spirit, intrepid and tyrannical, divided from the people by old animosities, by religion, by party, and by blood; divided also frequently by the necessities of an improvident expenditure, which made them greedy for high rents, easily to be obtained in the competition of an over-crowded population, but not paid without grudging and bitterness of heart. The extravagance of the landlord had but one resource—high rents. The peasant had but one means of living—the land. He must give what is demanded, or starve; and at best he did no more than barely escape starving. His life was a struggle against high rents, by secret combination and open violence. That of the landlord, a struggle to be paid, and to preserve his right of changing his tenantry when and as often as he pleased. In this conflict the

landlord was not always wrong, nor the peasantry always right. The indulgent landlord was sometimes not better treated than the harsh one, nor low rents better paid than high. The habits of the people were depraved; and the gentry, without attending to this, and surprised that no indulgence on their part produced an immediately corresponding return of gratitude and punctuality; perhaps impatiently gave up the matter as beyond their comprehension, and the people as incapable of improvement.

We would say to the gentry, educate the people; take up their own numerous and ill-regulated schools; establish new ones; but let all be placed on a proper footing: the mere instruction of letters will not do; mere moral teaching will not do. Religion only will reach this deeply seated disease. Let it be, if it must be, the Catholic religion; teach it to them; but let it not be the mere Catholicity of forms and ceremonies. Take care that they are imbued with the spirit of Christianity, which is of that church, as of all other Christian communions. Let them have the written word of God; this is new to them, and it will do much of itself. You will be opposed, but not always; and you will succeed, if you persevere. Do this, and *then* do not expect an instantaneous result. Be patient, and be satisfied that the good effects are certain; that they will come in due time,

and give peace to the country, and security to property, and stability to the foundations of society.

We would say to the government, be not on all occasions an instrument, at the pleasure and at the caprice of a greedy and careless gentry, with which to whip and to goad the people. They will clamour and talk big, and enlarge upon the grievances and hardships of their case. The remedy is in their own hands. Let them educate the people; let them be kind and considerate landlords. They will tell you, they are not safe in their own houses; they cannot take the air but at the peril of their lives. Ask them, is his Grace the Duke of Devonshire safe when he visits his Irish estates, and goes freely among his tenantry? Are his agents every where in safety, in the house, and on the hill, and in the valley? Then let them go and do likewise. And let not the government of the country, the common protector, as it ought to be, of the poor as well as the rich, forget its dignity and its duty, lending itself upon all occasions to the passions, and the rapacity, and the indolence of an arrogant gentry. Leave them to the consequences of their own misconduct, and they will be compelled to act right. If they find that government is no longer disposed to be a servant at their command, with whip in hand, to chastise the beggarly and vulgar hinds that

dare to mutiny; they must even try these troublesome and inconvenient means of education and good treatment.

Even while we write, we have been in apprehension. The north-western counties are disturbed, and the usual application has been made to government and to parliament for the scourge—for the old, and the obvious, and the vulgar policy of which a late Secretary was the great patron and the great legislator; and by means of which he acquired so much of an ignominious popularity with certain classes in Ireland. Even the Catholic gentry, disposed, as much as any other, to carry themselves with a disdainful deportment, and a high and a hard hand towards the peasantry, could for this overlook his hostility to their claims; could compliment their antagonist with an address, and be complimented in turn; and meet, at least, upon this ground, with a cordial and thorough sympathy. But we were speedily relieved by the good sense of parliament; and by the manly and honest feeling of Mr. Grant, and his firm and stedfast adherence to sound principles. The application was scouted. Let Mr. Grant not be driven out of his course, he may not obtain favor with this or that party, but the voice of all Ireland will be with him; and more than a nation's voice, the approbation of his own conscience. Let not government deviate from this line of wisdom, they will be re-

warded ere long by improvements long wished for, but almost despaired of in that country.

Every thing points out the necessity of education in Ireland—the necessity of that religious instruction, which both churches have failed to communicate. We are asked how was Christianity propagated in the early ages, without all this reading? And we answer, the universal effusion of the spirit of God supplied every want. Books, in the present age of the world, are obviously the most efficient means of instruction. They are always at hand; they are with us in our most retired moments; they talk to us when the business and bustle of the day have withdrawn their vanities and their excitement; and they speak a language we would not always bear to hear from living monitors. Books are the apostles of this age—they have gone, and they are going over the whole earth, teaching all nations; and not only all nations, but every individual of every nation. By what other agency could this be accomplished? The preacher comes, and preaches and goes away; shortly the recollection of his words escapes from the memory, and the impression of his discourse is effaced from the heart. But the book is always with us, it does not grow old, it does not die, neither is it a man that it should change its doctrine.

The power of this great instrument is beyond

imagination. It is only now beginning to be known and to be appreciated. It is true, that it has a power also for evil purposes; but it is limited and inconsiderable. As the capacity of reading extends, so also will sound principles and right judgment, and a general improvement of the human understanding: for mind acts upon mind, and nation upon nation, with an insensible, but great, and at intervals, very observable power. And evil as is the world, where there is an extensive communication, and a wide field of intellect, the good is sure to predominate. Error and evil exist in corners, and in small compartments, and may maintain their ground even in the midst of much partial illumination; but in the broad blaze of day, and on the great arena of the universe, they must perish. It is matter of too much interest, not to observe, that the high station which England holds in the world, her wide spread dominion, her mighty influence, her command upon the ocean, all tend to spread over the continents and islands of the globe, those principles of civil and religious liberty, that pure morality, those treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and that light of the Gospel to which she owes her greatness,—this, her high destiny.

As books are the best means of instruction; so, among books, the Holy Scriptures are the best standard of faith. We know this is disputed ground, and we will not enter upon the

controversy. We state our opinion. We have seen the minds of the peasantry perplexed with difficulties. They feel that the doctrine of one priest is not the doctrine of another. They are quick enough in noticing the peculiar colouring which individual character gives to the dogmas of the church or the precepts of the Gospel; and they confound these, perhaps inevitable, shadings, with indistinctness and uncertainty in the substance itself. They have nothing that is unchangeable to refer to. Hence, regarding religion, at one time, as a thing so lax that they may play with it at their pleasure, something loose and accommodating to human frailty; at another time, seeing it exhibited with a terrible and menacing aspect, frowning upon every human indulgence, and denouncing the most tremendous visitations. Their ideas are confused, they know not what to think, and they take refuge from these dilemmas, in the persuasion that it is a thing not to be understood; and they supply the want of an unchangeable Scripture by the steadfastness of their own errors. They know no religion but the priest. But, the priest may have vices, he probably may have weaknesses; may they not indulge these in themselves, which exist in the very bosom of religion? Does he preach a doctrine different from his practice, does he sustain his doctrine with awful and alarming sanctions, surely the rule of

his practice is the right one? He intends to frighten them, for their good, to be sure, but it is a story that he does not believe, and which they may disregard in their turn. Such is the want of a standard.

The want of education and religious instruction for the poor of Ireland, has been felt in that country and in England, and something has been attempted towards supplying it. Somewhat by individuals, somewhat by the state, and more by benevolent associations. The efforts of individuals need not be noticed here. The charter schools, with which the government are chiefly concerned, are an enormous abuse, and in their original design were impolitic and unjust. They are at present only an expensive job.* Among the associations which have directed their efforts to this end, we will notice the "Dublin Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor of Ireland." This society has done much good. Yet it does not appear to have been as useful as the zeal and integrity of the members, and the funds at their disposal, would permit us to expect.

The Baptist society, which is, we believe, chiefly English; with very inferior means, have been more active and successful, and appear to have directed their exertions with great patience,

* See Mr. Stephen's excellent work upon the Charter Schools of Ireland.

judgment, and effect. They have about a hundred schools in Ireland, chiefly in Connaught, and are beginning to extend themselves in the southern counties; but their operations are greatly impeded by the spirit of proselytism which accompanies them. This creates jealousy, rouses opposition, and multiplies the labour. It is much to be lamented that a society, having such an earnest desire to do good, should fall into such an error. To convert the people from the Roman Catholic persuasion, may appear to them to be an important object. But we conceive it is one of much higher interest to make them good Christians; and we know that this may be done very effectually, and upon a very extended scale, without any interference with the religious profession of the people. Proselytism narrows the sphere of action, and introduces needless divisions and bad humours into society. It will not be contended, that the spirit of genuine Christianity has not existed within the pale of the Church of Rome. To feed, to foster this spirit, then, should all our zeal be directed, and it should all be limited to this. The noiseless, but resistless impulse of the age, the light of the Gospel in its universal diffusion, will not fail to overthrow, and to expose and correct whatever there may be of error in the Roman Church. To this quiet but certain process it ought to be left. What is the value of Pro-

testantism, if the spirit of the Gospel be not there? And does it matter much, what are the forms of worship, if the spirit exists? We think these considerations ought to weigh with the Baptist society, and induce them to confine their plan, and extend their views, simply to the instruction of the poor in letters, and in the knowledge of the Gospel. They might even cultivate a spirit of piety, by the distribution of extracts from the Catholic fathers, in the shape of tracts, free from all doctrinal points, and avoiding the objections which attach to those originating with the separated churches.

We would say even to the advocates for proselytism—"Do not proselytise." Even to the zealots for Protestantism, "Let the people continue Catholics." At this moment you cannot succeed; but if the truth is indeed with you, then shed abroad the light of the Gospel, and by and by the people will open their eyes, and in that light they will see it.

The "London Hibernian Society" has been fortunate in the adoption of a plan more suitable than any that has yet been tried to the circumstances of Ireland. They do not interfere with the religious profession of the people; but they give the Gospel to all who are willing to receive it: and they insist upon having it read in their schools, by children of a proper age and capacity. Upon this ground they have had to en-

counter, as is always the case, much difficulty. But they have persevered. They meet one class of objectors, by giving, where it is preferred, the Catholic version of the bible without comment or note. They disarm another, by putting the schools, where they can do it, under the superintendence of the Catholic priest. But with all this they have met persons who could not be satisfied, and suspicions that could not be lulled. Persons little anxious that the poor should be educated, by any process, yet who carry their tender concern for their Catholicity to an amazing extreme. And while they are so anxious for this faith, pay it the extraordinary compliment of their opinion, that it is much more consistent with an ignorance of the Gospel than a knowledge of it; and much more compatible with an ignorance of letters, than an acquaintance with them. It is clear that no arrangement can satisfy such persons, that they are bad Catholics and worse Christians.

The plan of teaching adopted by the society is excellent, and their system of constant inspection and superintendence of their schools, insure their usefulness. The profits of the schoolmaster are made also to depend, not upon the number merely, but as well upon the proficiency of the children. Acting upon principles so wise and excellent, it would be reasonable to expect, that this society must have made great progress;

and accordingly they have been eminently successful. Their schools are to be met with every where in Connaught, and they are extending themselves rapidly in other parts of Ireland; their number is about five hundred, and the number of children instructed about sixty thousand.

We would say to those who still object to the plans of this society; between whom and the Gospel, in any shape or form, there can be no reconciliation,—“ ’Tis well; only adopt your own plan. Let the poor be taught. We do not object to your teaching; we object to your neglect. You rely upon the authority of the Papal rescript. So do we. That rescript insists upon education. We insist upon it. If you neglect the rescript which enjoins education; neither are we bound by its authority, where it excludes the Gospel. Where you teach we will not interfere; but we will occupy the waste ground. Otherwise, your system would be a sentence of perpetual barrenness upon the land—of perpetual ignorance upon the people.”

To such a sentence we cannot submit. The Protestants of England, the Protestants of Ireland, will not consent to it. The Catholic laity of Ireland will not obey it. The people must be instructed. To this field of glorious labour we summon all hands. Here is space enough for ambition: here is safety for the timid, surety for

the prudent, and occupation for the busy. For those to whom Ireland has any interest; for the people of England who would repay the injuries of ages; for those whose generous bosoms pant to do good,—here is a thirsty soil, that will drink the dews of their benevolence, and return a thousand fold. The dews of the earth, of this arid and impoverished soil, are indeed collected on the brow of the husbandman, but they return not: they are condensed in another climate, and descend upon another land. The non-resident proprietor is the medium of this unnatural and exhausting process. We offer him means by which he may repair so great an injury; by which he may spread over these wasted regions a gladness, and a vigour, and a vegetation, which no combination of circumstances could destroy. Nor has he to grope his way through unexplored intricacies; nor has he to consider and to calculate and to adjust the action of an untried machine, to a dark and impracticable subject. All is plain and open, the levels have been taken, the land has been surveyed, the powers of the machine have been proved, and its adaptation has been demonstrated;—all is in readiness—in motion; and the process, and the toil, and the expense, and the experiment, has not been the work of the people of Ireland merely; not of proprietors of Irish lands only, but of many Englishmen, of Scotchmen, unconnected with the country by

any tie but that of benevolence, by any obligation but that of the Gospel. They will succeed, perhaps, without our co-operation. But shall we refuse to pay a just debt? Shall we neglect the opportunity of going forth in the train of the conqueror, of sharing in his triumphs, and covering ourselves with the glory of his victories?

The Hibernian school society is better adapted to the circumstances of Ireland than any other; but this very adaptation, as it enlarged the sphere and the power of its usefulness, so it has checked its career in midway. Its funds have failed, debts have been contracted, the advances of its respected Treasurer have swelled beyond all reason.

Need we say that this noble debt ought to be repaid?—Need we repeat that by the agency of this society, or by some other agency, the people of Ireland ought to be instructed? Shall we again urge this pressing topic upon the government of that country—upon the government of England—upon the proprietors of Irish estates, resident and non-resident? We have not exhausted our subject. We might still draw a picture of frightful wants and woeful necessities, of which education only can be the remedy:—We might point to dangers, which would alarm—we might dwell upon obligations which must be satisfied, here or hereafter; but we have done.

There is in the government of the country, a disposition upon which we rely. There is in these islands a spirit of benevolence, that cannot be wearied, and in which we have full confidence.

FINIS.