

don; and I believe there is not a lawyer of any mark, nor a judge of any repute, who would not say that the finding was just.

Does your Grace think that such a conflict between three Episcopal tribunals would conduce to the peace or order of the Church of England? Bad enough that an English bishop should propound Romish heresies in a cumbrous charge; a thousand fold worse, if he coerced his faithful clergy to subscribe to these unfounded dogmas.

I take another illustration, and I take this, not from different dioceses, but from one diocese; I select a bishop, whom all will admit to be well acquainted with the law and qualified by his ability, when unbiassed, to decide it fairly. This at least is a case fairly selected.

Your Grace may remember nine years ago that a church scandal occurred in Berkshire, which at the time was much talked of. A clergyman in that county, well known by his writings for extreme Romanizing opinions, had a Curate as zealous, and rather more indiscreet than himself. Mr. Gresley, having long advocated the Confessional, the Curate brought it into practice, and he applied the nostrum in the most preposterous case imaginable, under circumstances so absurd and yet so gross as to occasion a general excitement. The clergy took it up as a reproach to their profession, and the laity as an insult. The Bishop of Oxford, interposing, as was indeed unavoidable, in a case which had scandalized his diocese, wrote an elaborate epistle, designed apparently to cloak the culprits, and smother the charge. But the clergy were not to be satisfied, and the public could not be silenced. The local newspapers, and the London press rung with the story; and at length, coerced by public opinion, admonished (if I mistake not) by legal warning, the Bishop of Oxford at length named commissioners, and put the offender on his trial. So vehement was the public voice against the offensive practice of auricular confession (the wealth, yet the opprobrium of Rome) that the Bishop of Oxford finally pronounced his sentence in the following words:—"I hold that the Church of England discountenances "any attempt on the part of her clergy to introduce a system, of habitual "confession, in order to carry out such a system, to require men and "women to submit themselves to the questioning and examination of the "priest."

Nothing could be more explicit than this declaration; all that was wanted was that the Bishop's practice should be consistent with his profession. But this consistency was wanting. For when another case arose in a diocese, with which by residence and property the Bishop of Oxford is connected—a case of all others the most objectionable, because there the practice of auricular confession was applied to boys of tender years by masters who can compel attendance; in that case, which attracted attention at the University of Oxford in 1862, was enquired into by the late Bishop of Rochester, and by him strongly condemned, was noticed in the last words of Bishop Lonsdale, who denounced it firmly; yet of these schools, and their opprobrious practices, the Bishop of Oxford stood forward as the champion, and remains to this day their zealous but inconsistent defender.