

Francis Xavier, one of the most remarkable men who ever lived, went to India. Even while we lament his errors, his missionary zeal commands our high admiration. But the whole subject of Jesuit missions forms a separate and a very instructive subject of inquiry.

(To be continued)

The Record.

CERTAIN PLAIN MAXIMS ON NATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE VOLUNTARY QUESTION

I. One of the fertile sources of error in reasoning, long ago pointed out by Lord Bacon, is that which lies in the ambiguity of language. An example of this meets us frequently in the use of the terms "voluntary," and "the voluntary principle." It is so plain to all minds, that what is done under the name of religion, or religious profession, should be voluntarily done, and that coercion in favor of such a cause may engender hypocrisy, that we are too easily induced to involve under the condemnation justly awarded to encroachments on true liberty of conscience, what may be shewn to be necessary for the very protection of liberty; and to discard, under the name of coercion, such an application of power for the general good of the community, as is defended or pleaded for only on the supposition of its being done with the national will. When the "voluntary" insists that in no case, and under no circumstances, ought the Gospel to be supported otherwise than by the willing contributions of individuals, he surely does not mean that the will, even in its freest exercise, is to be without law, or that the will of one may not defer to the will of others, and honourably acquiesce in some plan of common operation: nay, he cannot mean, that in any plans for the common good even of one individual congregation, no action should be taken, but with a unanimous concert of views on the part of all the members, of whatever age, rank or sex. We suppose, too, he does not insist that a congregation, while doing what it can for the support of the Gospel, by its own resources, may not accept aid from without—for instance, the bequest of a friendly benefactor, or the donation of a passing visitor. Now, the anti-voluntary again, or the friend of the principle of national religion, does not question that individual men, and individual congregations, should do all that they can for the support of the means of grace; only he sees no necessity to affirm that this is exclusively the way in which the Church is to be maintained. He thinks, that for the promoting of a great national interest, which the national mind ought to recognize as concerning the very being of a state, the national resources may be required at least to supplement what the voluntary liberality of individuals may effect but partially. Now, "the voluntary principle" is opposed to this; but the friends of Establishments maintain that this were still, in a most legitimate sense of that term, "a voluntary liberality." No wise friend of the Establishment principle will say that it is expedient to attempt such an application of public funds, without a legislature being duly authorised, as in

other cases, to appropriate the common revenue. But, then, as the object or interest contemplated in the diffusion of religious truth, is one which involves the good and safety of the whole community, he maintains that a nation ought willingly and cheerfully to warrant such a care of the public good; and that, though every individual were not concurrent, the act might justly be called an act of willing national homage to religion and to God.

II. Neither religion nor morality can be forced. Now in this both voluntaries and anti-voluntaries agree. Law cannot make a man religious; neither can it convert into an honest man him who is a knave. Still, in reference to this last case, it is admitted that law can and ought to restrain overt acts of theft. It might be alleged that the honesty compelled by coercion is not virtue. Still, it surely tends to virtue; if the honesty of some will but be hypocritical—this does not hinder our accounting legislation in favor of honesty a virtuous thing. Well, the advocate of national responsibility, who believes that open irreligion, by Sabbath desecration for example, or by blasphemy, brings down upon a land the wrath of God, and weakens the foundations of all social prosperity, does not suppose that men can be made religious by Acts of Parliament; but he believes that Acts of Parliament, by all means passed "voluntarily," may effect much towards the promoting of religion and morality, by the authoritative suspension of such labors, and public amusements and sports, as would present powerful temptations to the desecration of that sacred day, or would even render its observance by the well disposed all but impossible. But who would forbid legislation for the protection of the Sabbath? Well, many a religious voluntary hardly suspects that "the voluntary principle" forbids it; but, in consistency with this principle, all such legislation must be at an end. For, is not the Sabbath a religious Institute? Where but in the Bible is the authority for such a law to be found? Now, if we are not to approve of any legislation in favor of religion, lest men be tempted to hypocrisy—certainly it ought to be left to every person to do by the Sabbath as it pleases him.—But may not legislation in favor of the Lord's day be justified on political grounds? Certainly it may. But, if by that is meant that the Sabbath brings temporal and civil advantages to all, whether religious or irreligious; so, we may reply, does the diffusion of religious truth. No member of society fails to benefit by the general diffusion of religion in a land. The voluntary principle is this, that civil society has nought to do with the acknowledgment of one religion more than of another.—Now, on this principle, is not the enforcement of the christian Sabbath, even to the extent of a suspension of labor, an interference with the conscience of a Jew? Nay, is it not an interference with the liberty of the conscience of the Atheist, and Infidel, and Socialist? But it is good even for them to rest. Certainly: But you thus oblige them to respect religion against their will, and to pay a tribute to it; which they cannot pay "willingly." They will tell you that they do not believe in the Divine obligation of a Sabbath; and as for necessary rest, they say that we may not authoritatively prescribe to them in medicine any

more than in theology, and that they can recreate themselves far better, by sitting in a theatre, or amusing themselves in a bowling green, than by sitting in a church pew, or lolling in a chair at home.

Now, III. This leads us to make our third and last observation, that the question of national responsibility is concerned with many other subjects and interests than the support of a clergy. On the ground that society in its collective character, as well as its individual members, should acknowledge God, and honour His Son, who is King of kings, and King of nations—this principle requires that the whole structure of the political fabric should be based on a recognition of God's word, and of the christian law. This is the safety as well as the duty of a community. The purer principles of legislation, in reference to marriage, to polygamy, to divorce—whence are they to be deduced but from the Holy Scriptures? But the voluntary principle carried out to its fair logical consequences, forbids the recognition of any one religious standard—Bible any more than Koran—Protestantism any more than Romanism. It may indeed permit a majority to incorporate such laws as recommend themselves to their choice, by their supposed utility. But the Establishment principle (or the anti-voluntary) says—and, surely, rightly says—that a nation or its rulers, are guilty of a criminal disregard of the Divine authority, if they do not embody in their political codes the morality of God's word and the ethics of christianity. And as the christian law is one of mercy and love, as well as of purity and equity, they who oppose the "voluntary principle," plead that a state, by interesting itself in securing the religious education of the poor, acts more in the spirit of the gospel, and may more expect the blessing of God, than if by ruling on indefinite principles of expediency, it concerned itself merely with arbitrarily appointing laws, or defining crimes, and executing its penalties against such as violate the one, or perpetrate the other. They say—that to take measures to ameliorate the morals of society—and thereby prevent crime, is more just and more merciful, than to leave men in ignorance, and only deal retributively with the fruits of this ignorance as they develop themselves.

It may appear, then, how mistaken those are who confound voluntary liberality with "voluntaryism," or who imagine that the principle of a national acknowledgment of God is to be identified with the mere question of endowments.

The Presbyterian Synod of Canada, like the Free Church of Scotland, and like all unestablished Churches, believes that much may be done by private effort to diffuse the gospel; and it is willing to trust entirely (under God) to the voluntary liberality of congregations and individuals, rather than accept state aid, on wrong or injurious conditions; but it is not prepared to go into the principle that a public legal provision for the advancement of religion, is in all cases wrong, or that in other circumstances it might not have been justified in taking the benefit of such a provision.—Even while it did receive public—legal aid—it believed that this was given voluntarily: for the community, as well as individuals, has, or ought to