

whom the writer mentions, is, we believe, a missionary of the Irish Presbyterian Church.

Let our readers remember that what Popish Ireland is to Protestant Churches at home, that Popish Canada is to the Protestant Churches within the Province. We hope soon to be able to call the attention of our readers to our own duty to our own Popish fellow subjects, whether of Irish or French origin:

TYRANNY AND IGNORANCE OF THE PRIESTS.
To the Editor of the Witness.

Dromore West, County Sligo,
September 3, 1847.

DEAR SIR,—The contest between light and darkness continues and increases; but meanwhile the word of God seems to grow, and I trust that in the end it will mightily prevail. Last night I preached here, after a short notice, and the place was more than filled with a most attentive congregation, nearly all Roman Catholic. The people are earnestly bent on having a church and a Presbyterian minister; and if these are not provided, the door which the Lord has opened may be for ever closed. There is every facility for forming a congregation,—men capable of taking a lead in its affairs, themselves once Romanists,—a proprietor willing to grant a site,—a considerable population waiting for a centre round which to rally. This last statement is made on the testimony of men amongst themselves, capable of judging, and is confirmed by all that we have seen. There is no school here,—the preaching-station has not been six months opened,—there has been a sermon in it only once a month—yet there is already an excellent congregation, and at present daily increasing, being considerably larger last night at a week evening meeting than ten days ago when I preached on Sabbath. Were there a minister there, he would also be in an advantageous centre for other stations. If nothing else be attempted in County Sligo, his place should be occupied by the Protestant Church. It falls to the Presbyterians of Ireland to do it. If they neglect to do it, it should, nevertheless, be done, and that immediately. It is our duty, such an opportunity, are we not guilty of hypocrisy, in praying that the word of the Lord may have free course, and then refusing to send that word, when the Lord opens a door, amongst these enslaved idolaters, and moves them to cry to us, "Come over and help us!"

Throughout this whole district the priests are straining every nerve. Two days ago, the Bishop summoned all the priests of the diocese to a conference, no doubt on this matter,—and every altar is resounding with denunciations. Several of the schools and congregations are considerably thinned; and in one village we had a pretty violent, but very innocent scolding from some of the people. In one instance also, I am sorry to add, we found the rector and the priest combined, or at least loudly threatening to combine, against the word of the Lord. Nevertheless, the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth, and he is saying to his beloved Son, "Thou art in the midst of thine enemies." Yesterday afternoon I preached at Tullylin, where the priest encountered, or rather shunned to encounter me, ten days ago; and we found that he had now mustered greater strength, and did not decline an interview. Happily in both cases the occurrence was not on the Sabbath, to break its solemnity. The school is situated not far from the chapel, and being near the borders of the parish, is attended by many children of the next parish, and is "convenient" to the dwellings of both parish priests. One of these seems to be a quiet reasonable man, and is said to be fonder of hunting hares in the fields than of chasing poor children out of the schools. The other is fierce and boisterous, and resolved to go through with his work. According to his description of himself, in one of his characteristic speeches, "I'll fasten on you like a fly on a sore, till I have banished you all from the school." Although he had interrupted Mr. Arnot on Sabbath, and had since been disturbing the school, we had no expectation of meeting him or his neighbor yesterday; but when we had put up our car,

and were proceeding to the station at the hour of sermon, we saw one of them standing on the road. We returned to our cabin, committed ourselves to the Lord, and then, in the phrase of this country, "went to the god." One of the priests entered along with us, said a few things very quietly, took out two or three young people belonging to his parish, and went and called the other, who seemed to be selected as the champion of the church. By and by they both returned, and nothing in the whole proceedings surprised me so much as the change which ten days had produced on the feelings of the people. At first, the sight of the priest's horse on the road had produced the greatest trepidation and confusion; and now we had two priests, with their clerk and their greyhounds, all inside the house, yet there was no commotion or appearance of alarm, but rather of curiosity. An animated conversation ensued, in which Mr. Brannigan took the principal part on our side, and the main topics of which may be reduced to four heads, though it must not be supposed that there was anything like order sustained or regular argument, for it was mere noisy assertion on the part of the priest without any show of reasoning. "The beginning of the words of his mouth was foolishness, and the end of his talk was mischievous madness."

1. His first position,—to which he constantly reverted throughout the discussion, which lasted perhaps for three quarters of an hour,—consisted in the denial, not only of all revelation, but of everything divine. Thus, I understand, is common with Popish priests; and their object will probably be known to some of your readers; but in this instance, I confess, I could not discover the design. He seemed like a man into whose hands a weapon had been put by others, which he did not know how to use. He never once stated that he took the passion for the sake of argument; and never attempted to draw any argument from it in his own favour, and against us; but persevered, with noisy vociferation, to make the loudest professions of scepticism, and so consistently, that when Mr. Brannigan asked, "Who made you?" he replied, "Nothing made me." He kept continually calling out,—*"I am an infidel,—I am a pagan priest,—I am an atheist,—I deny revelation,—I deny Jesus Christ."* We told him that, if he came in his own character, as a priest of the Church of Rome, we should reason with him; and at one time finding that we could make nothing of him, I charged him severely with the sin and folly of his conduct,—a mode of address which seemed to take him by surprise, and to which he made no reply.

Whatever his design may have been, it was certainly of the Lord that his foolish heart should be darkened on this occasion, for nothing could have more effectually damaged his own cause than the course he pursued. He may really hold the opinions he professes, and he may prefer that his people should become infidels rather than enlightened Christians; but his blasphemies only shocked his honest hearers, one of whom remarked, that his priest would have been offended if he had likened him to the devil, but he had made himself worse than the devil, who believes in the existence of God.

2. His second position was the denial of the present existence of the word of God, on the ground that every copy of the bible had been burned.—Here I imagined, at first, that he was about to bring the argument to some practical bearing, and expected him to assert that the Church of Rome was now the sole conservator or restorer of the true bible, and that ours was without authority.—He did not, however, make the least distinction between his own bible and ours, but continued asserting that the bible was burned, by which I believe he meant that there is no bible anywhere now extant. Filing to elicit the argument, I was resolved to expostulate the fact; and, after several unsuccessful attempts, contrived at last to push the inquiry to a termination. "When was the bible burned?" "In the persecution." "What persecution?" "The persecution of the Christians." "By whom?" "By the Romans." "When?" "By the Roman emperors." "At what time?" "At all times!"

In the course of this discussion Mr. Brannigan reminded him that the Apostle Peter, to whom he deferred so much, declares that the word of God liveth and abideth for ever; and at another part of it a respectable female, thinking that we questioned what could not be denied, stepped forward and said,—*"With your leave, the bible was burned, for the priests have burned it often."*

3. The next point consisted in the denial, on the part of the priest, that the Church of Rome sanctioned the worship of images, for Mr. Brannigan rather adroitly drew him out of his generalities for a little, and made him defend himself on that ground. He offered to bring it to the test by an appeal to the people, and, pointing to a man who had once been a Romanist, inquired, "Did you ever adore the images?" The man very modestly replied, "I did most sincerely perform the stations, and from my heart worshipped the images, as I was instructed to do." The priest turned it off with a laugh, remarking aloud,—*"I see I have put the olive branch into the wrong box."*

4. The last topic discussed was a text of the bible. The priest, meaning to quote against us the passage in 2 Peter respecting unlearned and unstable men wresting the scriptures to their own destruction, gave it incorrectly (although, to do him justice, he certainly had it in substance), and Mr. Brannigan replied that there was no such passage in Peter. "Then," said he, "it is in James," which Mr. Brannigan denied, at the same time offering him the bible. "Then it is in the Second Epistle of James." "There is no Second Epistle of James." "Has your bible no Second Epistle of James? You see what a bible you have got, that wants the Second Epistle of James." Luther may have undervalued the Epistle of James; but it was a new charge to be taxed with destroying a Second Epistle, in which Peter's words were to be found; and it now seemed all time to close the discussion, more especially as the priest complained that he had a headache. "This was his chief reply throughout to many things with which Mr. Brannigan pressed him, varied by the assertions, 'It's all words,—it has been answered a hundred times.'" He now professed his willingness to depart, if he got his people along with him; on which Mr. Brannigan warned him that the manner in which he had been interrupting our services was illegal, and that if he repeated it he might be compelled to institute proceedings against him, but gave him liberty to take his people, informing them, at the same time, that they were welcome to remain.—*"Let me see,"* said he, *"who are my people, and, in the name of God, I'll pack them all out. Come out, all of you that are my people."* Not a creature stirred. The young people looked this way and that, to avoid his eye, but not one moved, though the place was full (for very few had left at first,) and almost all belonged to one or other of the two priests. Having tried it once and again, without effect, he changed his tone, and turned away. "I see there are none of my people here,—they are all Protestants;" and so they both left us to finish our service. As we proceeded to the next station, the people on the road called out to us, "The Lord prosper you!" whilst others smiled in evident enjoyment of the priest's discomfiture. I am aware that many of them will smile on the minister and on the priest alternately, and that others have had their eyes opened to the character of the priests, but not to the character of Popery, and that others still have ceased to be Papists in heart, becoming the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. Still, such scenes as these are entirely new in this country. The word of God cannot run, so long as the priest stands in the place of God; and although the word itself can open its own way, by the help of the Lord, the present opening of the Lord's providence for the word must not be despised or neglected. With many there is merely the conviction that their priests are hard-hearted, unfeeling men; and they say, "Sure, if there had been any good in them, it must have come out at such a time as this." But, oh, that we were wise, to step in at such a crisis, and show them "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!"—I am, dear Sir, your's truly.

A. MOODY STUART.