

reasons. As I said before, no matter as to the soundness or unsoundness of the doctrines on which these pretensions were founded, such were the doctrines, and such the pretensions and during their prevalence in England, arose our churches, our parishes, (or priestships,) our cathedrals, and bishops' sees; all those monasteries which have since been suppressed and destroyed, and, along with the rest, our universities and their colleges.

For a Parliament to meddle with a Church like this; to question the rightful power of a Parliament, consisting of laymen, to meddle with the possessions of a Church like this, having its head totally separate from the temporal sovereignty of the country, to question the rightful power, of a body of laymen to meddle with the property of a Church like this, whose Divine origin, and Divine mission and authority, had been universally acknowledged for above twelve hundred years; to question the rightful power of a Parliament in such a case, was not a thing so very unreasonable, but, on the contrary, the questioners had reason on their side, especially as these doctrines had prevailed during so long a period, and as the country had been so free, and so happy during the greater part of that period.

But, Parsons, had your Church any such pretensions? I have a high opinion of that quality in you, which is usually denominated "brass"; but do you pretend that this establishment was founded by Jesus Christ and his Apostles? Do you pretend to hold your possessions immediately by a grant from God; and that they are as much yours as my life and limbs are mine? Why, yes, you are, at this time (very curious to relate,) endeavoring to set up a something of these pretensions; and are positively asserting that you hold your possessions, and to the exclusion too of all other Christian sects, by a right of prescription; that is to say, a right which existed before all human laws. This was distinctly stated by Sir Robert Peel, during the discussion of the question relative to the admission of Dissenters to take degrees in the Universities. Quite enough had been written and published by me, long before, to show that it was rapine, on the part of those who took the Church property from Catholics and gave it to Protestants; that it was an act of rapine, and not an act of rightful power, on the part of the Parliament of that day, unless the present Parliament had the rightful power to take the property from its present possessors and dispose of it at its pleasure. Perceiving the irresistible force of this argument Sir Robert Peel, forgetting all about the lay impropriations, discovered that the Catholic Church had a prescriptive right to its possessions; and that the Parliament had never meddled with that prescriptive right: that the Established Church was still, in fact, the Catholic Church, and was merely reformed; and that it was in the possession of all the prescriptive rights which had ever belonged to "Holy Church!"

If these were so; if you were merely a reformed Catholic Church, and the regular successors of the bishops and priests of the Roman Catholic religion; then all the lay estates, in tithes, or in lands, which were formerly possessed by your predecessors are wholly destitute of a title; and the owners may any day, be legally ejected by the King's Attorney General; and the King may order the estates to be returned to you.— However, we are now going to look at the reality; we are now going to see, that to tithes, to oblations, to bishops' lands, to any thing that you possess, as clergy of the Church, you have no prescriptive right, any more than the Duke of Wellington has to his estates of Strathfieldsaye, which he possesses in virtue of an Act of Parliament, and solely in virtue of that Act of Parliament. Indeed, what are the names, style and title of your Church? Why, "The Protestant Church of England, as by law established;" not as by Christ established; not as established by the Apostles. The King's coronation oath binds him to support the Protestant Church "as by law established;" and this description was invented too, for the express purpose of distinguishing the tenure of your Church from that of the Roman Catholic Church; the tenure of which was, by prescription, independent of all written law. In short, yours is a Church founded solely on Acts of the Parliament, sitting at Westminster; and we are now going to see what those Acts of Parliament were; under what circumstances they had passed;

and the sort of men by whom they were passed; together with the manifest motives and objects of those men.

The Roman Catholic Church had begun to have its authority disputed, in some parts of Christendom, about the year 1520. At this time Henry the Eighth, for the purpose of gratifying his own wicked passions, joined those who had begun to deny the authority of the pope as head of the church, though he had before written a book in defence of that authority, for which he had received the title of "Defender of the Faith," which our laws retain to this day, though by their coronation oath they solemnly protest against that very faith, of which Henry the Eighth was the Defender! This monster of cruelty proclaimed himself to be the Supreme head of the Christ's Church in England; and he put to death hundreds of the most virtuous and excellent persons because they would not take an oath recognising his spiritual supremacy. Finding his most strenuous opponents to be in the monasteries, and, at the same time, eager to get hold of the possessions of those monasteries, as the means of bringing over to his side the most powerful men in the country he suppressed; that is to say, he confiscated and took possession of, all the monasteries and all their immense estates. This was not done without Acts of Parliament. Two Acts were passed; one in the 27th year of his reign, and in the year 1535; the other in the 31st year of his reign, and in the year 1539. These Acts of the Parliament granted to him, also a very considerable part of the great tithes of the parishes; because the monasteries had become both the patrons and incumbents of the benefices of the parishes. Thus, more than a third part of the whole of the real property of the kingdom was granted to him by the Parliament, with power to him to give it away to whom he pleased; to sell it, or to exchange it. Those who passed these acts knew very well that they would have the chief share of the spoil. He was compelled to divide this spoil amongst the noblemen, gentlemen, and all persons of great power and influence in the country in order to bind them up in the same girdle with himself. This he did without loss of time and we are now going to see the prodigious effect of this division of the spoil; and especially we are going to see its great effect in the producing of this present Church of England, "as by law established."

Amidst such assaults as these, it was impossible that the Roman Catholic Church should remain unshaken.—When men saw those monstrous acts of what had hitherto been deemed sacrilege, committed, not only with impunity, but under the sanction of law; when they saw a mere layman assume the spiritual supremacy of the Church of Christ; when they saw innumerable persons put to death for refusing to swear, that they believed that which they had always been taught to disbelieve, when they heard this new head of the Church proclaiming one sort of a creed one day, and another sort of creed another day; when they saw him burning Protestants and Catholics at the same stake: and still heard him call himself a Catholic king, and a spiritual head of the Church at the same time: amidst all these things it was impossible that men could retain anything like an unity of faith, it was impossible that the nation should not be split up into a diversity of sects; that each man should not claim a right to think and decide for himself in religious matters; and this actually was the state of England in this respect, at the time of the death of this merciless tyrant, which took place in the year 1547, when he expired in the fifty-sixth year of his age, and in the thirty-eighth of his reign, the most unjust, hard hearted, meanest, and most sanguinary tyrant, that the world had ever beheld whether Christian or Heathen. As long as this tyrant existed, the holders of confiscated Church property, which were also the patrimony of the poor, at the same time were safe in their possessions, under his sort of mongrel Catholic Church; but, when his son, Edward the Sixth (a mere boy,) succeeded him, and the government was to be carried on by guardians and trustees, there was a great danger that the people would resume their rights, at any rate, that the Pope would in a short time, resume his power in England, where the parish priests were still Catholic; and if he resumed his power, the sharers in the plunder were in a perilous state, as far as related to that plunder. Therefore, in order to obviate this danger, it was necessary to abrogate, to put down