

ECCLESIASTICAL EXEMPTION.

APROPOS of the modern agitation against Exemptions which, as we take it, is in reality nothing more or less than a flank movement against Church property, it may not be uninteresting to consider how these things were viewed in those Catholic ages which, by some, are called the Dark Ages, *because* they were the Ages of Faith. In order not to offend our friend the *Gazette*, we will give chapter and verse as much as in our power lies, (though we are not a walking encyclopedia) for every author we quote. (Will the *Gazette* kindly give us chapter and verse for *his* quotation from "Pope's imitation of Swift," as we deem it a right to be on an equal footing with him in all things. What is sauce for the goose ought to be sauce for the gander.)

The Church that "city of the poor," as Bossuet (somewhere) calls it, possessed great wealth almost from the beginning. Even before the time of Constantine she had *virtually* acquired much property, for we find that Emperor ordering all things, which had been unjustly taken from her, whether houses or lands, to be restored, at the same time making it lawful for all persons to leave property to her by will, (Thomassinus de vet. et nov. Eccl. Discip. Pars. III. L. I c 16), nor do we anywhere find in those days that *illiberal* enactment of our modern *liberals*, that any bequest made to her within six months previous to the death of the testator shall be invalid. "A free Church in a free State" was *as yet* in vogue. St. Augustin (In Psal. iv. 46) presses upon the laity their obligation to support the Church, and warns them to beware lest the silence of the clergy should reprove their illiberality. He also (Serm. 219 de Temp.) and St. Jerome (In Matt. xxii.) prescribes tithes. The maxim was "Laicorum est antevolare cleri necessitatibus," (it is the duty of the laity to forestall the wants of the clergy.) The maxims of those days were good, though the latin, if we are to believe Hallam, was bad. Charlemagne, without regard to the remonstrance of several of the clergy, established tithes *by law*, (Cap. Car. M. ama

801-89 Tom. I. Col. 355.) The laws of Justinian (vid. Thomassinus III. L. I. cap. 19) would not allow a church to be constructed unless it was also endowed. Tithes thus became a matter of contract between man and man, the clergy being "the parties of the first part," and the laity "the parties of the second part."

Time sped on and the Church acquired fresh wealth, for the givers gave to God, and their gifts were often guarded by the most solemn imprecations against those who should dare to violate the gift. "We beg and pray by the terrible name of God," runs a certain charter of a certain monastery in England, (Hist. Ramesiensis, cap. 18—Gale. Hist. Brit. Tom. II.) "that no one whosoever will dare to give, sell, or alienate in any way whatsoever this land from Holy Church, which should any do, may he be accursed and removed from all joys of this present life or of the life to come, and may his resting place be amongst the demons of hell whose flame is never extinguished, and whose worm never dies."

Even long after the change of religion in England this desecration of holy places and things thus so solemnly dedicated to God was looked upon as a horrid and fearful thing, even by many of those who had lost the faith. Some indeed, like Sir John Russel, had temerity enough to turn a dissolved monastery into a dwelling house, and its church into a stable. Such men were the worthy progenitors of our modern anti-exemption liberals; but a great portion of the people, thank God, held aloof with awe and fear from these unholy spoliations. "The people," says Sir Henry Spelman, (Hist. of Sacrilege, p. 245) "were fearful to meddle with places consecrated to God." Jeremy Taylor, and many Protestant Preachers held a similar opinion. The Catholic idea of tithes was, that they were given to the clergy as shining in their divine mission of representing Christ, (Thomassinus Pars. III. cap. 4) "whence it followed, that they were not to enjoy them, but to use them religiously, piously and sparingly." "The Church Tribute," says a Canon of the Irish Church in the 8th century, published by Dacherius (Cap. Canon Hibern. cap. 30 Spichileg Vol. IX.) "is according to