

## CONTEMPORARY OPINIONS.

**NATIONAL EDUCATION.**—Need we say, that the whole arrangement is faulty? To divorce the doctrine from the duties of Scripture in any kind of instruction is absurd and mischievous. To attempt to identify this generalizing of religion with the system of the British and Foreign School Society, is not candid: it is the plan of the Central Society of Education. It may be argued, that the deficiency is to be met by special religious instruction. But how? One of our contemporaries (the *Herts Reformer*) shall answer. "It is not to be expected, says the editor, "that Dissenting ministers would give up their time to educate, ten or twenty children in the government class-rooms." Roman Catholic priests (for obvious reasons) would be the only ministers appointed; and the result of the whole would be, supposing the model-school to be extensively imitated, the establishment of a large staff of Anglican and Roman Catholic Chaplains throughout the country, paid out of the public taxes." Another contemporary (the *Leeds Mercury*) anticipates as a possible result, the payment of many thousands of Episcopal chaplains by the state; arguing, and certainly with reason, that although it is not intended that the plan shall be forced upon schools receiving aid from parliament, yet, since the board will at least recommend other schools to act upon the same principles, and thus use its moral influence in favour of the plan, it is right to look at the scheme as designed for the nation at large. Dr. Kay's assurance, that "precisely similar arrangements are prescribed by the Poor Law Amendment Act, in clauses which were amended and modified at the instance of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishop of London," does not in any degree remove our objections or alleviate our fears. On the contrary, we join, and join heartily in "the protest of all the ministers and office-bearers (except one) of the Wesleyan Societies in the borough of Manchester," who, honourably distinguished from their brethren in London, have "waived their political views" in order to oppose this measure, not, as other Wesleyans have done, in a narrow, exclusive, factious and party spirit, but, as it appears to us, on sound Voluntary principles. We adopt, therefore, their words, "and most decidedly object to the intended scheme on the strong grounds of conscience, and of our right to full religious liberty. We protest against being taxed for the maintenance of systems of religion which we, in common with the vast majority of our fellow-countrymen, believe to be false and injurious." The ignorance of the Whigs, as to the extent of the religious feelings of this country, is really astounding. In this instance, it is inexcusable.—*Patriot*.

Our Whig contemporary is grievously concerned that the great Wesleyan body, whose history "presents a splendid and continuous series of the triumphs of freedom over bigotry," should now become the opponent of a liberalizing scheme of education. He forgets the untiring and open warfare waged by the founder of that respectable church against every thing Popish, and therefore bigoted. John Wesley was a better logician than to confound two things essentially dissimilar, and he did not, therefore, like the pseudo-liberals of our own day, forget to distinguish between the truth and men's opinions of the truth. God forbid that we should ever connive at the persecution of any man for his opinions, however erroneous, absurd, or ridiculous; but we maintain that, while we refrain from persecution, we ought not, in all fairness, to be expected to endow heresy, and especially that form of it which is antagonist to our Protestant constitution, and inimical to our very existence as a Protestant nation. If we do so, we open the flood-gates of superstition; and we may well fear the return of the Egyptian darkness of the plamy days Popery. Are we, for fear of being branded as *illegals*, to rush into

the *sin* of upholding and strengthening and extending the influence of that unchanged and unchangeable system of soul-destroying error? Our contemporary asks, if the Wesleyan body, which contributed so much to the defeat of Lord Sidmoth's Bill, has changed sides. We hope not; but there is this difference between them and the party making common cause with the Papists. They wisely know where to stop in their advocacy of liberty of conscience, while other dissenters are madly "going the whole hog" with infidels and Socinians, and thus blindly administering to the re-establishment of the worst tyranny that ever held in subjection the minds and consciences of mankind. Our contemporary's vituperation upon this subject, and his wily insinuation that the *Watchman* speaks the sentiments but of a small section of the Wesleyan body, will, we hope, meet with substantial refutation on the table of the House of Commons, ere four days have elapsed.—*Sheffield Patriot*.

**EXTENSION OF THE FRANCHISE.**—We must call the attention of the agricultural body to a serious danger with which it is threatened. The farmers of the empire are to be offered up as the first victims to the re-union of the Ministerialists and Radicals. A ministerial journal of last night announces, almost directly, that a project is on foot to confer the county franchise upon £10 householders. As the number of £10 householders (not being freeholders) who are engaged in agriculture is so small as to be properly rejected from calculation, this project is one for transferring the county franchise from the agriculturists to the shopkeepers and other unconnected with agriculture, who make up the population of country towns; and should it take effect the agricultural body will be no longer represented. Already the inhabitants of towns have a most undue preponderance in the House of Commons; but let the £10 franchise be extended to counties, and they will have the complete command of that assembly. What in that case, will become of the corn-laws? What security will the agriculturists then have that the unjust share of taxation to which, as weak, because dispersed, they have been ever exposed, will not be infinitely aggravated? The Radicals who press this violation of the Reform Bill upon the servile ministers well know what they are about—they know that the meditated blow will strike at once at the agricultural interest, the aristocracy, and the church.—*Standard*.

**THE POSTAGE QUESTION.**—A Uniform Penny Postage is to be adopted. The Chronicle distinctly announces that the plan is to be proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and that the right hon. gentleman stated as much to several members of the house "who desired to have all doubts removed on the subject." The Chronicle, however, adds a little comment of its own to this welcome bit of intelligence. "The determination of ministers," says that journal, "will be hailed by the country as an auspicious presage of practical reform." Will it? The decision has been forced upon ministers—they resisted it as long as they could; the question is one upon which all parties are agreed. If such only are to be their "practical reforms," the more we have of them the better. It is notorious that the measure would have been one of the first to have been introduced by Sir Robert Peel; no government could exist without its adoption—for it is a matter upon which there has hardly been a second opinion in the house or out of it, saving and excepting among her Majesty's ministers. We rejoice heartily that the plan is to be acted on; only a very obtuse intellect could have so long been insensible to the advantages it holds out both to the Exchequer and the people. Mr. Rowland Hill, although he found it impossible to persuade the Premier and the Chancellor, has supplied them with an argument far more irresistible than his own—the voice of the country.—*Britannia*.

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