

From Hours of Sorrow.

REST FOR THE WEARY.

Has earthly love deceived thee?
Has earthly friendship grieved thee?
Has Death's strong hand bereaved thee
Of all most dear below?
A love which never changes,
A Friend no time estranges,
A land Death's shaft ne'er ranges
It may be thine to know.

In vain have men asserted,
To cheat the weary hearted,
That powers by sin perverted
Themselves can calm the breast.
One Hand alone unfailling,
Sin grief's dark root, assailing,
O'er all within prevailing,
Can give the weary rest.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

In the British Magazine we find among many other spirited and seasonable articles on the present state of Church affairs in England, "A Letter to the People of England; by the Rev. I. E. N. Molesworth, Editor of the Penny Sunday Reader."

CHURCH-RATES are not a tax, and to call them a tax is a miserable trick, tending to deceive the people, and to mislead their judgments, by appealing to their prejudices. Church-rates are not a tax charged upon the persons, but a rent-charge on property, "older by centuries than the title of any estate on which it falls." They are a rent-charge, subject to which every proprietor or occupier, whether dissenter or churchman, and his forefathers, before dissent, as now constituted, was heard of, purchased, inherited, or rented property, as the case might be, and according to which he calculated his purchase-money or his rent. If the church-rates had been called into action after the appearance of dissent, and imposed on them specially as dissenters, or with a view to depress them, and exalt the church, then they might have had reason to complain, and to call it a tax. But when it was apportioned (from remote antiquity, and before dissent was in being,) by the whole nation, for national edifices of religious worship, it would be only demanding a premium upon dissent from that worship, to require either a special exemption in their favour, or even a general confiscation for their pleasure. The real object of the revolutionary abolitionists is, to induce a Christian nation to overturn an establishment for teaching Christian doctrines, and rob its religious edifices of their ancient means of support. But before they can do this, they must deceive the people, and persuade them that it is a personal tax, contrary to their national liberties.

It is evident that the general advantage, not that of this or that body, or individual, who may choose to make exceptions, must be the principle on which the revenue of the State must be applied.

And if the general good of the State be a legitimate object, I affirm that the good conferred by the church is of the highest and most important character, and that the means at her disposal bring forth fruit to the State, of the excellence and abundance of which no parallel can be found in the returns of any part of the national expenditure. There may be some hardy enough to deny this; but I assert it, relying upon the echo which that assertion will find in the bosom of almost every candid and religious-minded man. For, I feel assured none such (though he may prefer his own mode of worship) can for a moment doubt, that the nation must derive inestimable

benefits from the appropriation of these sacred edifices to the service of Almighty God—from the gospel of Christ continually read and preached there—from the weekly assemblage of rich and poor—from the ministrations of an highly educated, and, I will say, pious and exemplary, body of clergy—and from all the various religious, charitable, peaceful, and pure feelings, cherished by the Sabbath services of ten thousand parish churches. The man that can lay his hand upon his heart, and before God say, My country derives no advantage from these—that man's intellect must be of a strange mould, or his prejudices must have acquired a most dangerous power.

He then quotes the following testimony of Dissenters—"If it be lawful to institute Christianity, it is lawful to perpetuate it. Because there is a decayed beam in the roof, is it necessary to pull the barn down, when it can be removed, and a sound one substituted? It is much better to heal, if possible, a diseased limb, than at once to amputate; and I call upon the advocates for church annihilation to point out an equal substitute for it. With anything less than its utter destruction I am fully persuaded that neither popery nor infidelity will be satisfied, and I implore my brethren to keep an equal distance from them both: they stand not in need of their assistance to advance and carry their claims. The people of God have but one common interest; many a holy devoted minister in the establishment is labouring to promote the glory of God in the salvation of souls; and it is but solemn mockery to bless God for their success, and to pray for its increase, while their hands are stretched out to unroof the building that covers them. If the church be a field, the taxes are not to be rooted up to the destruction of the plant. Where there is one faithful minister of the establishment, I would to God there were a hundred. Churchmen and dissenters, we should all find enough to do. Because my fellow-shopman gets more custom at his counter than I do at mine, that's no reason that I should quarrel with him, so that the master gets the profit."

"There are thousands and tens of thousands of holy devoted people in the establishment, and who there received their first impressions, many of whom would be deprived of those means if the churches of the establishment were swept away; and I again repeat, that to sweep them away is the great object to be obtained by the combined operations of infidelity and popery."—*Letter of D. Warr, dissenting minister of St. Leonard's near Hastings.*

"We cannot, Sir, be silent spectators of the haughty and ambitious proceedings of the dissenters generally, seeing, as we do, the Papists, the Deists, the Unitarians, and, we regret to add many who call themselves protestant dissenters, all join in one common league against what they call one common enemy, and by which, by their conduct, they appear to mean the established church. We cannot but express the alarm we feel, and, as Christians, enter our solemn protest against their presumptuous proceedings.

"We beg to assure your majesty we dare not join with infidels, and those who deny the divinity of Christ, nor with those who acknowledge a foreign supremacy—no, nor with those who treat with contumely the doctrines of the church of England, the leading articles of which we view to be in accordance with the scriptures, which are the foundation of the protestant faith."—*Petition of Protestant Dissenters of Brick Chapel at Leeds. 1825.*

The author then notices the third plea advanced against the payment of Church-Rates, namely "Conscience."

If the church-rate be, as we have said, a rent charge, that must be a very convenient conscience which directs a man to pass it into his own pocket what belongs to another. But, again, suppose it a tax.

Is it really a matter of conscience that the State under which you live shall not apply its revenues to the maintenance of national places of worship set apart to teach the gospel of our common Lord, because you happen, in some minor point, (many do not know what point,) to differ from the national church? Is your hatred and intolerance of this church such, that your very conscience is afflicted, because the nation should keep up its public edifices? If you were at Rome, would your conscience make you resist the taxes, because part of them went to maintain the popish worship?

Is your conscience to be governed by nicer rules than those of Christ and his Apostles, who paid, and enjoined payment of taxes, not only to maintain the then corrupt church of the Jews, but to those very heathen governments by which idolatrous worship was supported? Alas, for those tender and raw consciences! We should commiserate the torments of their sensitive owners, did we not at once perceive that in them, as in the productions of nature, there is that principle which naturalists call compensatory, which makes up for the defect of one faculty by an increased power in another. So we often see these dreadfully delicate consciences become vastly accommodating, like the gullets of the Pharisees of old, which would strain at a gnat and swallow a camel. While they shrink and shudder, like cats skinned alive for profit, at the slightest contact with the parent Church of the Reformation, they can hug the papist and the infidel as comfortably as though they were clad in the hide of a rhinoceros or the shell of a tortoise.

The author winds up with this searching appeal—
If any man, after reading these observations—if any religious dissenter—especially if any Churchman, can believe he is doing his duty as a christian, in joining such a league, I have only one request to make to him, which is that before he acts, he will fall down, privately, on his knees, and pray God's Holy Spirit, through Christ, to direct him aright; and then, remembering whose eye beholds him, and before whose judgment seat he must again have the question put—ask himself—Am I promoting thy Glory, O God? Am I O Saviour! seeking the Salvation of thy Brethren?—Am I aiding to increase the Knowledge of thy Gospel?—Am I, in a word, actuated by christian motives, in endeavouring to induce the Legislature of my Country to rob the ministry, and the Buildings of the National Church, of a rent-charge appropriated to them by common law, and by a title so ancient that "Memory of man runneth not to the contrary?"

I. E. N. MOLESWORTH.

"In 693, Ina, King of the West Saxons, enacted payment of church scot by assessment. In 928, Athelstan, and his Parliament, granted the tithes of the whole kingdom to the clergy; and, by a separate decree, ordered payment of church scot. Edmund and Edgar both distinguish and confirm tithes and church scot. Canute also confirms the statutes of Edgar, and declares that, independent of tithes, all people are bound, by right, to assist in repairing the churches."

"The Owens, the Howes, the Baxters, and their descendants, till the nineteenth century, could contemplate the existence of this law free from all the throes and convulsions of conscience which torment the modern dissenter. Indeed, the crisis of the disorder has arrived most rapidly and unexpectedly, for a twelvemonth has scarcely elapsed since the dissenting body, by their delegates, formally acceded to the bill for the commutation of church-rates first suggested by Lord Althorp, then sanctioned by Sir Robert Peel, and subsequently adopted by Lord John Russell: but the concessions already made have caused grievances to rise in the market."—*Corres. of the Brit. Mag. for Dec. 1836.*