

of her progress since she was stripped of all her temporal possessions, and deprived of all State protection and support, and sent forth amid a hostile majority to restore her constitution and resources; while, as years went on, even until now, the confiscating hand, which stripped her naked, has not for one day ceased to narrow by the same unhappy policy the possessions and influence of her people. Before the passing of the Act of Disestablishment, the Conservative Government of 1867 appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the temporalities of the Church of Ireland. According to the report of this Commission, there existed then 2 archbishops, 10 bishops, 1,509 incumbents, 500 curates, and 30 deans and chapters. This Commission recommended that the dioceses should be reduced from twelve to eight, the capitular bodies from thirty to eight; and as a result of their advice, the accruing funds would have been added to the revenues of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for augmenting poor incumbencies and other objects. The total annual revenue of the Church was estimated by this Commission to be from all sources, £772,574. We can now realize how disastrous it would have been if time had been given to carry into effect the recommendations of this Commission; but the Liberal Government, which came into power in 1869 set aside these recommendations and proceeded at once to the passing of the Act which disendowed and disestablished the Church. The confiscation of the revenues was complete. The first hopeful sign of a possible maintenance for the Church, thus stripped of all her possessions of pecuniary value, was the almost universal consent of the bishops and clergy to commute their annuities, thereby agreeing to abandon Government security for their annuities, and to accept the security of the Church Body, a body untried and inexperienced, under the control of the General Synod, which, being a popularly elected tribunal, gave, as yet, no indications as to its wisdom either in matters of finance, discipline, or doctrine. There is no record of any other transaction in all respects such as this. God guided the hearts of His servants in the ministry of the Church to this act of self-denial. The moment chosen by Mr. Gladstone to hew down the