

FOR THE CATHOLIC EXPOSITOR.

THE PRIEST HUNTER,

A TALE OF THE IRISH PENAL LAWS.

BY T. D. M^C. GEE.

— The victim of that canting crew,
 So smooth, so godly,—yet so devilish too;
 Who, armed at once with prayer books and with whips,
 Blood on their hands, and scripture on their lips;
 Tyrants by creed, and torturers by text,
 Make *this* life hell in honour of the *next*.

MOORE.

THE most arbitrary queen that ever sat on the throne of England was Elizabeth. Every year of her rule in Ireland (like the hours of an April day,) was marked by some changing storm, some threatening tempest of the royal fury, whose only regrets, were the tears of bitterness shed over the frustrated projects of her revenge. Never since the days of Draco were such wanton deeds permitted and patronized by law, as under the detestable Irish Penal Code, chiefly instituted, and improved upon in that age. It was not deemed chastisement sufficient to take from the Catholic priest his dwelling, to drive the worshippers from the gorgeous cathedrals—monuments of the piety of their ancestry—but having reduced the anointed viceregents of heaven to the condition of hunted beasts which have no where to lay their heads, they pursued them with horse and dog into the mountain fastness, and sang a jubilee of praise at their deaths.

It was a fair May afternoon in the year 1593, and in a part of the county of Waterford, bordering on the Atlantic, that two young friends

sat beneath the shadow of a solitary tree on the brow of a hill, at whose base the western mail-coach road wound, and continuing its serpentine course was lost in the heart of the distant highlands. The fields undulating for miles around, presented a glorious velvet green to the eye, the air breathed thick of the incense of the primrose, the daisy, and blue bell, that studded every inch of ditch and meadow; the voice of the red-breast and the grateful skylark trembled through the young tender leaves; and surely if anything could make the peasant forget his starvation or the sick poor, their dolorous sufferings, it would be gazing upon such scenery. It wanted an hour or more of sunset, and the fantastic splendours of an Irish sky were seldom more prominent and brilliant. Men talk of the cloudless skies of Italy and Spain, but give me such clouds as break and refract the beams of the sun, that now command in their regal purple, and now attract in their silvery moonbeam aspect. In its evening changes an Irish sky is a lovely sight, whilst like the dolphin it becomes more