

FREEDOM OF RELIGION.

A great dinner was given to Mr. O'CONNELL at Birr, at which he spoke with his usual eloquence. We give a long extract from his speech, which is likely specially to gratify the friends of Religion, Ireland, and Repeal.—*Catholic Herald*.

"Ireland, or the religion of the people of Ireland, could not be considered free as long as it was obliged to bow its head to the Dagon of any other power, or to contribute by its money to the support of any other persuasion whatever. I don't say this of the Catholic alone, but I say it equally of the Protestant, and Presbyterian, and Dissenter. You have had an invasion of Presbyterians one time or another among you here (laughter). And this I say, that it is as unjust to make those Presbyterians pay for a Protestant Established Church as to make me pay for it; and it should be equally unjust to make a member of the Established Church or a Presbyterian pay for the support of the Catholic religion. There is no freedom of conscience or freedom of religion unless that greatest of all persecutions was abolished—namely, being obliged to pay for the annunciation of doctrines they do not believe to be true. Custom and habit reconcile men to bear those things, but if people were now called upon for the first time to pay tithes they would recoil from it with horror. If persons never heard that Protestant Parsons were paid tithes by Catholics, and some person came to them and said, the Catholics of Ireland must pay the Protestant parson in future, why, if he escaped being torn by the nails of the children and boys he would not escape being spit upon (cheers). Ye Catholics are obliged to pay the parsons, and there is but one cure for it—it is a secret—I will tell you what it is—it is the Repeal (cheers). But I have been told frequently that Ireland is not capable of governing herself; that she is too weak; that she has not the features of a kingdom, and must therefore be content to be a province. Has she not so? What feature of a nation does she want? Population, is it? We are eight millions. That is as large a population as is possessed by many of the independent nations in Europe, and there are some nations that have scarcely one-half that population. I will go over the head-roll of them for you. Portugal is an independent nation, with her own sovereign, and her own people—she has not more than three millions of inhabitants. Spain with her great extent of territory, has scarcely a million more than Ireland—we are eight millions, and they are about nine millions. Sicily and Naples, with four millions of inhabitants, are independent countries. Tuscany, with four millions of inhabitants, is an independent country. The Papedom, with 1,200,000 inhabitants, is independent. Switzerland, with from 1,500,000 to two, of inhabitants, is an independent nation—setting at defiance, for centuries, the powers of Europe. Bavaria, with three millions of inhabitants, is independent. Belgium, with about four millions of inhabitants, has thrown off the yoke of Holland, and is now an independent country. Hol-

land has been an independent country for centuries, with only about four millions of inhabitants. Denmark, with about two millions of inhabitants, is independent. Sweden and Norway, together, has scarcely four millions of inhabitants, and they are independent. Wirtemberg, with about a million of inhabitants, is independent. Hanover, with her gracious king (hisses)—what an affectionate regard you have for him! (laughter)—Hanover, with about two millions of inhabitants, is independent—and, God knows, I pity them (laughter). Prussia, until lately, had not seven millions of inhabitants—she has now twelve or thirteen millions. They were rather a source of weakness to her during the reign of the late king, who persecuted his Catholic subjects—but the present monarch had the good sense to do justice to his Catholic subjects—and probably there is not so powerful or popular a monarch in Europe as he is. I show you all those independent nations, although there is nothing to separate them from powerful neighbours but an imaginary line, the track of a ditch, that would not bound two farms here. But Ireland has her boundary from nature, and nature's God, and the extent of her power is limited by the encircling ocean. I will remind those who tell me that steam vessels afford facilities for English invasion of Ireland, that a farthing candle would light the troops of a foreign power across any of the dominions I have been speaking of. They tell me that Ireland is insufficient for self-government. I am not setting up Ireland as a separate state, but asking for her legislative independence. I want not to shake off any allegiance to the throne—I am quite content to be bound to England by the golden link of the throne, with the same Sovereign to rule us, and equal rights of protection. We do not want more, and we will never be content with less. It is in vain for them to hope that the apathy which spread over Ireland during the last year will last, or when dissipated, return again. I promise you for one that as long as I live it shall not return. I have shown you to demonstration, because nothing speaks like facts, that Ireland does not want the material elements of actual independence—still less of legislative independence. I would indeed be mocking you and idly wasting your time if I thought it necessary to add one word more than this, that there are several independent nations in Europe that have not more than one half of our population. But you may ask me what the prospects are of carrying Repeal—are we not told that the English will resist it to the death? Oh, I tell them it is much better for them to remain alive (laughter and cheers). England to be sure, I may be told, has evinced a great hostility to Ireland. So she has, and whenever she is safe she exhibits that hostility. She entered into the treaty of Limerick, promising to give equality of civil rights to the Catholics of Ireland; 28,000 of as fine a soldiery as ever sharpened sword or elevated musket, went out of Ireland, on the faith of that treaty. Marlborough achieved victories on the Continent which gave to England

an accession of power and authority, and she immediately passed the penal laws, and violated the treaty of Limerick (oh, oh). The Duke of Wellington gained a great victory at Waterloo, but times became changed, and the Irish people, instead of submitting to the power of England attained by that victory, fought the victor and defeated him. I mention that as an instance of Ireland bearding England in her most palmy day of power, and extorting from the greatest of her captains and craftiest of her statesmen, that emancipation, which four years before she had refused to grant. * * *

In the year 1825 they refused us Emancipation. I left my family and profession to go to England to beg and apply they would emancipate us, but they treated us with scorn and indignity—I remained until the division took place in the House of Lords, and when the majority of 39 (I think they were called the 39 articles) (laughter), was declared against us, poor Jack Lawless said to me, "O'Connell, pikes on the shoulders, and wigs on the green" (laughter). I have never lent my heart and soul to carry the question until now, I thought I had until this morning, I feel I have done nothing, but I will begin now, and we will make them emancipate us (hear, hear, and loud cheers). We left the pikes unmade, and the wigs on our own heads, and came back to Ireland, and in four years they struck to us. I am in the middle of Ireland, and I here proclaim this: I will implore them, in this year and the next, to give us Repeal, and if they do not, in four years I will have it. I gave you the instance in which Ireland achieved one great portion of political liberty, and I have given you that instance in which you achieved that great victory by your own native strength, and without any extrinsic depression upon England; and let me remind you that, whenever England was depressed and in want of our assistance, a sense of justice came over her, and she kindly condescended, when she could not help it, to grant Ireland redress. The year 1778 was remarkable for two instances of it. The people of Ireland wanted a free trade with all the nations of the earth; for up to that period an Irish vessel could not sail with a cargo from Ireland any where but to an English port, and there they should unload to have the cargo transmitted by a British vessel to a foreign port, or even to the British colonies.—The people of Ireland wanted free trade as well as the Scotch, for the Scotch bought free trade for themselves by selling their country at the time of the Union. The Irish nation wanted a free trade, and the Irish Catholics wanted emancipation. They were ground to the earth. The Catholic could hold no office in his native land. When I was born it was so. That was the year '75—the year the American war began. In the year '78, the Catholic could not be a lawyer, or attorney, or justice of peace, or member of a corporation—he could not be put on a grand jury—he could not be a magistrate—he could not even be placed on a petty jury, except there was not a sufficient number of Pro-

testants. No question between a Catholic and Protestant could be tried by anything else than an exclusively Protestant jury. No Catholic could buy an acre of land. An uncle of mine agreed to purchase an estate for £2,000 that would be worth to me to-day, £2,500, when a Protestant gentleman wrote to him to say, that if he bought the estate, he would file a bill of discovery against him, and he would lose his money (oh, oh). No Catholic could take a farm for a greater term than thirty-one years, and if he were able to realize six shillings and eightpence in the pound profit on it, a Protestant could take it from him (oh, oh). If a Catholic had a horse worth more than £5, any Protestant in the community might take it from him on giving him five pounds, even if it were worth one hundred pounds (oh); and if the Catholic attempted to hide that horse to prevent the Protestant from taking it from him, he forfeited twice the price of the horse, recoverable before a justice of the peace (oh, oh). They bore all that patiently: blessed be heaven we would not bear that now. A more cruel, blighting persecution than the English Protestant power exercised in Ireland was never known from the days of Dioclesian to the days of the emperor Nicholas. It was not my purpose to advert to this subject at length, but I am not sorry that I went a little at large into it, for it is no harm to remember those things (a laugh). In the year '78, General Gates, an American with an odd name (laughter), commanded a body of Americans, and there was opposed to him General Burgoyne, a beautiful English aristocratic name (laughter); but Gates, who was called a general, and became one in 48 hours from the time he first entered the army (laughter) with his American force—they called them provincials—defeated his adversary. And how were those Provincials spoken of before that period? Why, an Irish member of Parliament said, "if the Americans are going to war with us, give me the watch of St. Andrew's parish, and I will walk from one end of America to the other." However, notwithstanding this boast, when Burgoyne's beautiful army encountered the despised Provincials, they found it convenient to lay down their arms to General Gates at Saratoga, and the moment the intelligence reached England, George the Third, who was a positive man in other subjects, sent word to the government here to give the Irish nation free trade. Thus by the defeat of the British troops at Saratoga, Ireland obtained free trade, and the Catholics acquired the right of buying property. To be sure they limited the right to the acquisition of property less than a freehold; they might buy it for \$99 years, but they could not acquire the freehold. * * *

Well, what occurred next? The French flag floated triumphantly in the channel—the British flag was obliged to hide itself in port, and what was the result? Another message came from the King to give further rights to the Catholic people in Ireland, and they then got the full rights of property. They likewise obtained the privilege of receiving education; for, up to