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INTOLERANCE OF THE PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.

TO THE RIGHT HON. T. B. MACAULY, M.P., &c.

Sir—Since the publication of the last number of the *Tablet*, I have read for the first time a letter bearing your signature, dated 25th October, and said to be addressed to the Secretary of the Anti-Church and State Association. In that letter you give your opinion on the Religious Equality movement in Ireland. You say that you "look on that movement with extreme suspicion;" you profess yourself—and I am sure with perfect sincerity—"not a friend of the Irish Church Establishment;" but "as a friend of civil and spiritual freedom" you "should be sorry to see the Protestant Dissenters of England and Scotland united in an unnatural coalition with men who defend those proceedings which have brought so much disgrace on the tribunals and on the Government of Tuscany."

"An unnatural coalition?" I have paid for some years past more or less attention to the proceedings of "the Protestant Dissenters of England and Scotland," and I am not sure whether, on grounds very different from those which weigh with you, the supposed coalition to which you refer may not indeed be described as unnatural; whether it may not be considered unnatural for us Catholics to seek for an alliance with men whose conduct has been such as I shall presently describe to you. I shall not, certainly, pronounce a hasty opinion on this point, but would rather refer it to your better judgment when you shall have read what I shall have written. The Tuscan tribunals and Government it seems have, in your opinion, disgraced themselves by their enforcement of the Tuscan law against the *Madiai*. Be it so for the present. But if it be so, and if your habit—as I have always been accustomed and desirous to believe—is to weigh things and persons in the same scale and with the same weights, then I respectfully solicit your opinion of the facts I am now to bring under your notice.

I need not spend many words in reminding you that since the year 1797 (the most flourishing sect of Protestant Dissenters had, in some of the South Sea Islands, the most flourishing of all the Protestant missions that have ever been founded for the conversion of the heathen.

The Polynesian researches of the Rev. Mr. Ellis—a particular friend of Sir Culling Eardley, and a gentleman of whom I desire to speak with respect—have made a large portion of the reading public well acquainted with many facts in the history of those missions, in which the whole body of Protestant Dissenters, and Low Churchmen, and—if I mistake not—the present Archbishop of Canterbury, have always taken a peculiar pride. In fact, as the only thing of the kind that could, with any appearance of plausibility be put down to the credit of the Apostolic gifts of Protestantism, their value extended far beyond the vulgar limits of dissent. They assumed a national importance. They were the only evidence extant to prove the prolific capacities of "our separated brethren," and they were cherished and made much of in consequence.

Founded with infinite labor, and all the appliances of a wealthy community, carrying to poor and naked but docile savages the arts and comforts of civilised life, these missions gained for themselves a sickly existence not promising a very durable life, but exceedingly grateful to the heart of their tender and loving parent. Upon the spiritual value of the Missionary labors I cannot presume to offer an opinion; but it is certain that in September, 1842, a number of British residents in Tahiti presented an address to the French Admiral Dupetit-Thouars, in which they express their happiness that, "to the disorder and mispractices that have hitherto characterised this port" . . . "an end is put" by the practical transfer of the government of Tahiti from British and Protestant hands to those of Frenchmen and Papists. The Missionaries, of course, give a very different description of their own work, and, without entering into the controversy, I will merely say that up to the year 1835 the independent missions of the London Missionary Society exercised complete control over the islands upon which their zeal had been employed.

During the latter years of this period, however, a new scene was witnessed in the islands of the South Pacific. The Supreme Pontiff had despatched Catholic Missioners—a Bishop and some Priests—to the same quarter of the globe, and the conversion of the savage cannibals of the Gambier Islands had been the first fruits of their pious labors. In a short time they were able to write to their superiors that, "with few exceptions, all the islands of the Gambier Archipelago are Christian. The inhabitants know love, and serve God, and keep His commandments;" and this change being on its way to completion, the Catholic Bishop bethought him of sending one of his

Priests to the Society Islands to make Catholics of the Tahitian converts to Protestantism.

On the 21st of May, 1835, Father Columban Murphy arrived at the Island of Tahiti—the Rev. Mr. Pritchard being then the chief person in the island, over the Queen, and in his double capacity of British Consul and Protestant Dissenting Missionary bound by two titles to respect the rights of conscience, freedom of religious teaching, and unlimited toleration of the differences of creed. The tolerant Whig Government—the colleagues of your political life—were then in office, and we may therefore be sure that however the frailty of the Missionary, tempted by his own interests and those of his employers, might lead him to diverge from the broad path of justice, yet that no officer of the British Crown could hope, unbuked, to speak another language than that of universal toleration. I believe you were yourself in India when these things happened, and you will be surprised to learn from me for the first time that these reasonable anticipations were not verified.

The vessel—(Captain Swethin)—had scarcely cast anchor when Mr. Consul Pritchard came on board, and appeared very glad to see the rest of the ship's cargo; but when told that a Popish Priest was on board, he "changed his tone," and after an abrupt departure, returned again to say to the captain that "the Queen would not allow me to land." After a great deal of Missionary opposition Mr. Murphy was allowed to land, but it seems that he was not permitted to remain, and after a few days he sailed to Valparaiso, content with having broken the ice in opposition to the friends of unlimited toleration.

In the meantime the Rev. Mr. Consul Pritchard remained exceedingly anxious lest other Catholic Priests should succeed in effecting a settlement within his preserve, and accordingly he made Queen Pomare to write, and wrote in his own name, letters, dated the 18th and 19th November, 1836, eagerly seeking the countenance, direction, and protection of the Whig Foreign Office. The letters were, in some respects, frank enough. That of Queen Pomare informs the Whig Secretary that she wishes "to inquire the opinion of the British Government." Under Mr. Pritchard's direction she states the case as one of the intrusion of Catholic Missionaries. It is not a question of French aggression upon a settlement of Englishmen, but of Catholic aggression upon a Protestant mission—nothing more, and nothing less. The Queen is made to complain that "the Roman Catholic Missionaries are obstinately bent on coming to reside at Tahiti;" she informs Lord Palmerston that "it is by no means agreeable to us to receive these Roman Catholic Missionaries; we have a sufficient quantity of teachers on our land; we agree well with them; they do not trouble us." In a word, Queen Pomare—the strings of the puppet being pulled by the Protestant Dissenting Directors of London Wall—enacts to perfection the part of Grand Duchess of a Tuscany of the South Pacific. The Rev. Mr. Consul Pritchard plays the character of Prime Minister with equal adroitness. He introduces Queen Pomare to the Foreign Office. He asserts loftily the independence of her copper-colored Majesty. He refers to the text of the Tahitian law, of which, probably, he was himself the author—in this, having the advantage over the Tuscan Prime Minister, who merely enforced a law enacted before he was born. In conclusion, Mr. Pritchard expresses the gist of his complaint in these words:—"At present there are several Frenchmen who are determined to land and reside on this island, as Roman Catholic Missionaries." The objection is thus formally expressed, not to the Frenchmen, but to the Missionaries.

As I presume you to have been hitherto unacquainted with the particulars of this transaction, you will naturally expect that the Whig Cabinet, having received from a British Consul a proposal so utterly at variance with "the freedom of religion," must have directed Lord Palmerston to administer a severe rebuke to the Rev. Consul, and must have insisted that he should not tarnish the glory of the British name by anything that could wear the appearance of religious intolerance. Innocent man that you are, if you entertain any such preposterous idea! The reply of Lord Palmerston was more suited to the genius of a Whig Minister. He begins by declining all responsibility, and ends by ingeniously pointing out to the Reverend Consul a "dodge" for the accomplishment of his purpose. In an ordinary case, he says, it looks inhospitable to refuse foreigners permission to "take up their abode" in a country "provided they do not infringe the laws of the land;" but, "of course, every government has a right to refuse to any foreigners permission to reside within its do-

* Correspondence relative to the proceedings of the French at Tahiti, 1835-1843. Presented to the House of Lords by command of her Majesty in 1844.

minions, if the presence of such foreigners is considered hurtful to the State."

While this correspondence was being transacted Mr. Pritchard was not idle at Tahiti. The letters to Lord Palmerston had been written, as we learn from other sources, on the receipt of intelligence that MM. Caret and Laval were on their way from the Gambier Islands to make a second attempt on the Protestantism of Pomare. When these gentlemen arrived towards the end of November, 1836, Mr. Pritchard and his confederates did their utmost to keep them out of the island. The American Consul took them under his protection. Many, if not most, of the native chiefs desired them to stay; but Mr. Pritchard was inexorable. He would not allow the Queen to receive the little presents of the poor Missionaries, and on the 11th of December he had five or six men with ropes in their hands sent to the house where MM. Caret and Laval resided with orders to break the door, bind them, and turn them out of the island by force. This was actually done. A protest was lodged at the American Consul's, but without avail. By the orders of the London Missionary Society's agents and Lord Palmerston's Consul the Catholic Priests were seized by the head and feet, carried by main force to a canoe, put on board an English vessel, and shipped back to the Gambier Islands.

On the 26th January, 1837, MM. Caret and Laval again arrived at Tahiti to try their luck once more. But this time the Protestant Dissenters of England would not so much as allow them to go on shore. After repeated efforts they were obliged to forego their intention, and to pay the captain of their vessel three hundred dollars to change his route and land them at Valparaiso.

After repeated endeavors by the Catholic Missionaries to land in peace, and repeated refusals by the Protestant dissenting advocates of free trade in religion to allow them to land, the French Admiral in those seas took the matter in hand, and by a series of steps, which I shall not discuss, compelled Queen Pomare, or rather the English Protestant Dissenters, very much against their will, to sign a convention. "Frenchmen of every profession" were allowed "to go and come freely," and to live in Tahiti in perfect freedom.

This result, you may be sure, was not attained without some notable attempts at resistance—all which the Rev. Consul duly confides to his dear Whig Secretary in a letter dated, "British Consulate, Tahiti, Nov. 9th, 1838," comprising four enclosures. These documents are perfect gems in their way, coming, as they do, through the hands of the political and spiritual friends of civil and religious freedom all over the world. With that part of them which concerns the negotiations between Pomare and the French Admiral, I shall not trouble you; but the concluding paragraph in the letter of the Rev. Consul to Lord Palmerston is too rich to be omitted.

"I have also," he says, "enclosed a copy of a law passed by the Tahitian legislative body, by which your lordship will perceive that the Protestant Faith has now become the religion of the State."

The "Tahitian legislative body" is a cant term for Mr. Pritchard, his friends and instruments. The law which this legislative body enacted was their law. And if the law were not theirs at the beginning, it became theirs by the adoption which Mr. Consul Pritchard gave it when he sent it to Lord Palmerston as part of his case.

But before enquiring what this law was, I must beg your attention to the phrase "the religion of the State." Mr. Pritchard and its friends are the patrons of the voluntary system; enemies of all adulterous connection between Church and State; abhorers of endowments; haters of everything that interposes a human motive to influence the free soul of man in the relations between it and its Maker. Yet here we have a "religion of the State" extemporised by Mr. Consul Pritchard as a means of protection against the abominable inroads of the Catholic religion.

The title of the law which establishes this Protestant, voluntary, tolerant, persecuting Faith, is quite worthy of the purpose and of the men. It is entitled—I quote Lord Palmerston's printed copy—"A law concerning the propagation of tenets inconsistent with the true Gospel." The true Gospel, of course, is Pritchard's gospel; the gospel of the Independents; the gospel of the Protestant Dissenters of England and Scotland; and, specially the gospel of London Wall.

The law concerning the propagation of tenets inconsistent with London Wall Christianity is, of course, a law of pains and penalties. The first clause is a sort of statute of uniformity, and is expressed in the following classical English:—

"Let Tahiti, and all the islands of Queen Pomare,

Valine the First, stand unique under that Gospel which the Missionaries from Britain have propagated ever since the year 1797—that is, these forty years past."

The second clause is a warrant for the Tuscan Government to banish from the territories of the Grand Duke the "Foreign Preachers" who organise the distribution of English tracts from the Christian Knowledge Society within his dominions, I must not curtail a syllable of this precious text:—

"When foreigners come from other countries to this, on their landing let this law be put into their hands, that they may know if such persons persist in teaching tenets which are inconsistent with that true Gospel which has been of old propagated in Tahiti; if they build houses for worship—if they congregate followers in uncultivated places, that they might teach them all kinds of strange doctrines; if they trouble the usual modes of worship, and propagate strange customs for the sake of amusing, that do not comport with the written Word of the God of Truth, such person has been guilty of breaking this law, and will be judged and awarded. This shall be his award. He will be sent to his own land, and shall not reside in Tahiti."

As I transcribe this law I can hardly bring myself to believe that it did not meet with a vigorous and indignant protest from your friends, the Protestant Dissenters of England and Scotland. I can only say that I have no recollection of any such protest having been made. My attention was specially directed to these circumstances at the time they occurred, and all I can call to mind is that the sympathy of the English public was loudly invoked for Consul Pritchard and his Missionaries; that Sir Culling Eardley was very prominent on the occasion; that it was pronounced a very cowardly act of the Catholic Priests to interfere with the Protestant missions, and that the feeling of the country was very decidedly expressed in favor of the British Dissenters and against their Papist and persecuted rivals.

But the next clause is the cream of the whole business, and must certainly have been before the mind of the Grand Duke when he ordered the prosecution of the *Madiai*. Hitherto the Reverend Consul's law has dealt with foreigners; we now come to the treatment of any native Tahitians who shall dare to "think for themselves."

"If any Tahitian shall propagate doctrines inconsistent with the Gospel of Truth, such as are called *Mamaia*, because they are doctrines inconsistent with those which have been taught by the Missionaries from Britain, and with what is found in the written Word of God, that person has violated the law. If he be a person of rank or a common man, it is the same; he has broken the law, and will be judged and awarded. This will be his award. He will be sent to his native land (district?) to accomplish the sentence of the law in [it.] If it be public road, fifty fathoms; if any other work, such as is found written in the laws. If he persists in refusing to do it, he will be judged, and new work imposed on him. Tahiti, 8th November, 1838."

Here again I can hardly exclude the supposition that the Protestant Dissenters must have indignantly protested against these doings of their own officers, though I have no recollection of any protest, nor do I believe that such a protest was made. To impose the hard and ignominious work of a Yorkshire navigator on a lazy "person of rank" for venturing to teach "doctrines inconsistent with those taught by the Missionaries from Britain," is certainly a very hard measure; very much at variance with civil and spiritual freedom as the words are generally understood; very inconsistent with the voluntary system; quite as severe as the sentence of the *Madiais*; and reconcilable with no principle that can be supposed to have any application to this case, except the principle that all things are lawful against the Church of God. However, it is very certain that this course of procedure by a Government official met with no condemnation on the part of the Whig Cabinet. Lord Palmerston, by a despatch, dated the 9th September, 1839, gravely acknowledges the receipt of Mr. Pritchard's road-making act of uniformity, expresses "Her Majesty's deep concern at the difficulties under which Queen Pomare appears to labor," and declines to, take Tahiti under British protection solely from a regard to the convenience of Great Britain. Now, I beg your particular attention to the fact that the difficulties under which Queen Pomare labored, arose not from French ambition, not from any secular or national cause, but from the deliberate, resolute, and persevering determination of the Protestant Dissenters, headed by a British Consul, who enjoyed the fullest sympathy of the Whig Foreign Office, to exclude the teaching of the Catholic religion by all forcible means, and to tolerate no form of worship except that of the Protestant Dissenters themselves. I beg to remind you also