

[The preceding is indeed a remarkable document. It presents a most advantageous contrast with one lately issued by the Government at home, in which our Sovereign is made to speak thus: "And we do strictly charge and command that the said day be reverently and devoutly observed by all our loving subjects in Scotland, as they tender the favour of Almighty God, and would avoid his wrath and indignation." In one respect at least the former days were better than these. Oliver's enlightenment was marvellous for his period. But, after all, his views regarding civil and religious liberty were indistinct and hazy. He saw men as trees walking. His proclamation is not quite consistent with itself. It reminds one very much of the writings of Owen and others of that day, on the head of Magistracy in its relation to matters of religion.

JESTS UPON SCRIPTURE.

It is very common with some persons, says the *Christian Messenger*, to raise a laugh by means of some ludicrous story connected with a text of Scripture. Sometimes it is a play on the words, a pun; at other times a blunder; and not seldom, a downright impiety. Whatever be its form even when lightest, it is no venial offence, leading as it does to profane contempt of God's Word. Those who practise this have never been celebrated for genuine wit. The laughter which they call forth is provoked solely by the unexpected contrast between the solemn words of Scripture and some droll idea. There is no real wit in the case; and the dullest persons in society are most remarkable for these attempts.

The evils arising from this practice are greater than they appear at first. It leads, in general, to irreverence for Scripture. No man would jest with the dying words of his father or his mother; yet the words of God are quite as solemn. When we have heard a comic or vulgar tale connected with a text of Scripture, such is the power of association, that we never hear the text afterwards without thinking of the jest. The effect of this is obvious. He who is much engaged in this kind of false wit will come at length to have a large portion of Holy Scripture spotted over by his unclean fancy.

ANECDOTE OF JOHN NEWTON.

Two or three years before the death of that eminent servant of Christ, John Newton of London, when his sight was become so dim, that he was no longer able to read, an aged friend and brother in the ministry called on him to breakfast. Family prayer followed, and the portion of Scripture for the day was read to him. In it occurred the verse, "By the grace of God I am what I am." It was the pious man's custom on these occasions to make a short familiar exposition on the passage read. After the reading of this passage he paused for a moment, and then uttered this affecting soliloquy:—"I am not what I ought to be. Ah, how imperfect and deficient—I am not what I wish to be. I abhor what is evil, and I would cleave to what is good! I am not what I hope to be—soon, soon shall I put off mortality, and with mortality all sin and imperfection.—Yet—though I am not what I ought to be; nor what I wish to be; nor what I hope to be, I can truly say, I am not what I once was—a slave to sin and Satan; and I can heartily join with the apostle, and acknowledge 'By the grace of God I am what I am.' Let us pray."

METHODISM IN GREAT BRITAIN.

The returns of membership in the thirty-two "districts" of England, Scotland, and Wales, show a net decrease in the membership of the English Wesleyan Church of 3,121 during the year, there being a decrease in twenty-one districts of 4,376 and an increase in the other eleven of 1,258. The largest decrease—1,022—is in Cornwall, and is attributed mainly to emigration. The war in the Crimea has also drawn off during the year at least 1,000 male adult members of the Wesleyan Church.—*Exchange*.