

THE ISLAND OF TAHITI; OR FRENCH COLONISTS AND ENGLISH SWAD- DLERS.

It has always been a great point with the Independent missionaries to keep out Popery. Having put the Tahitian Bible (garnished with heresies of purely South Sea growth, in addition to those with which we are familiar in the northern hemisphere) into the hands of the profound theologians of the Pacific, even Tahiti, unless we greatly err, has not been without its heresiarchs; and it has been not without a good deal of management that the dusky Bible-readers of the coral islands have been purged of the leaven of private judgment, and drilled down into heterodox uniformity, of which the standard measure is kept among the other archives and curiosities at London Wall. Having this hard struggle to maintain at home, it was not likely that they would be very anxious for the assaults of a spiritual enemy from without. Accordingly, the subjects of Pomare have conceded to them the most unlimited exercise of private judgment, only they had better not construct new religions for themselves; and the very name of Popery must, if possible, be kept from their too credulous ears. The readers will now be in a position to understand something of the feeling of these worthy gentlemen when they learn that, in consequence of some disputes between the Queen Pomare and the French Admiral Thouars, the sovereignty of the island had suddenly passed into the hands of King Louis Philippe. Information has not yet been received of the precise causes of the dispute which has ended in this assumption of sovereignty on the part of France. For anything we know, the transaction may be as unjustifiable as most of our recent proceedings in the East. Sure we are that it cannot be worse. But let us waive all speculation on this point for the present, and attend only to the terms of the treaty by which the surrender has been effected.

TO THE ADMIRAL A. DU PETIT THOUARS
Because we are not able to govern in our own kingdom, in the present circumstances, so as to harmonize with foreign Governments: lest our land, our kingdom, and our liberty should become that of another, we, the Queen and principal chiefs of Tahiti, write to you, to ask that the shadow of the King of the French may be thrown over us on the following conditions:—

1. That the title and the government of the Queen, and the authority also of the principal chiefs, remain in themselves over their people.
2. That all laws and observances be established in the name of the Queen, and have her signature attached to them, to render them binding on her subjects.
3. That the lands of the Queen and all her people shall remain in their own hands, and all discussions about lands shall be among themselves. Foreigners shall not interfere.
4. That every man shall follow that religion which accords with his own desire. No one shall influence him in his thoughts towards God.
5. That the places of worship belonging to the English missionaries, which are

now known, shall remain unmolested, and the British Missionaries shall continue to perform the duties of their office.

6. Persons of all other persuasions shall be entitled to equal privileges.

On these conditions, if agreeable, the Queen and chiefs solicit the protection of the King of the French. The affairs concerning foreign Governments, and also concerning foreign residents at Tahiti, are to be left with the French Government and with the officer appointed by that Government, such as port regulations, &c. &c.; and with them shall rest all those functions which are calculated to produce harmony and peace.

The news of this surrender caused great consternation, and it was for the purpose of adopting measures urgently required by the recent aggression of the French on Tahiti, and for securing the general interest of the British missions in the islands of the South Pacific—that the great meeting of the saints was convened last Wednesday week in Exeter Hall. Lord Roden was to have been in the chair, but domestic affliction detained him in the enemy's camp at Paris. Charles Hindley, a Whig Member of Parliament, "was moved" into the chair instead of him, and after some unintoxicated Pecksniffs had favored the meeting with four verses of the 45th Psalm, "from Dr. Watt's collection," and a Wesleyan prayer had been offered up, Lord Roden's *locum tenens* opened the business of the meeting. We are not of course going to bore our readers with a full description of what followed this auspicious commencement, but one or two points we must notice.

Mr. Hindley began by giving an imperfect and not very exact narrative of the efforts of the Independent gentlemen to keep out popery from Tahiti. In the course of his narrative he took occasion (as a Whig Member of Parliament) to remark that he did not object to Catholic missionaries landing at Tahiti, and doing the best they could for their faith by the weapons of reason and argument. The promulgation of this sentiment caused some little displeasure, and the speaker was obliged to protect himself from his supporters by an interpolated disquisition on religious liberty. Mr. Hindley then returned to the course of his narrative, and wound up by declaring with muchunction, that

It was not because France was powerful that she was to be an oppressor; on the contrary, the more powerful a nation was the more it became her to be just. If a giant went along the Strand, and treated with cruelty every dwarf he met, would not every person cry out against him? But France, it appeared, was determined to colonise, and in that determination it did not mind acting on an unjust principle. He did not wish to drive our Government into a war on account of any difference on this subject, but he thought that they might press on the Government, while it preserved peace, to remonstrate with France. The question, he maintained, was not only an English question and a Protestant question, but it was a question interesting to Christianity, and

he was sure that if France committed injustice in order to possess colonies, she would not increase her moral power. (Cheers.)

Mr. Hindley was succeeded by a Parson of the Church of England, whose speech is thus recorded:—

The Rev. Mr. Maberly, who was announced as Vicar of Fenborough, Suffolk, rose to express his dissent from the opinions of the chairman, that the Roman Catholic missionaries ought not to be opposed. He thought the spread of Roman Catholicism ought to be opposed in every way.— He considered the Roman Catholic faith as the direst superstition, the direst idolatry, the direst usurpation, and the direst tyranny that had ever existed in the world. He admitted the force of truth, but he contended that men must take means to enforce it. They lived under the protection of Providence; but if they did not bar their windows at night, they would not find their property safe in the morning.— (Cheers and interruption, and calls of "Fair Play.") So it was with truth, and they must take human means to secure its ascendancy. The Roman Catholic religion sought to extinguish truth and liberty. For 1200 years it had allowed no truth to be heard in Spain, and he would defy the Roman Catholics everywhere. He contended they ought not to be allowed to go to Tahiti, which had been Christianized and civilized by Mr. Williams, one of the most extraordinary men that ever lived. He was delighted at the opportunity of bearing his testimony to the character of that estimable man, and he declared that he would rather see this country go to war than see it supporting the missionaries of the Roman Catholic Church.

Our readers may fancy that this Mr. Maberly is a wild mad-headed creature, to whose words no weight is to be attributed; but we shall show presently that this marplot is the real exponent of the views of those in whose interest the meeting was convened.

Dr. Vaughan was the next speaker, and moved a resolution which contained a strange medley of nonsense and falsehood. It pretended to "repudiate the principle of restriction and coercion towards other systems of religious belief," and it protested against "the establishment by force of the system of Popery" in Tahiti—the establishment of Popery in Tahiti being, as Dr. Vaughan very well knew, nothing more than the removal of those very "restrictions" and "coercions" which he had pretended to repudiate. The resolution also stigmatized the doings of M. Thouars "as evincing the spirit of Protestantism rather than the power of Christian benevolence." This is an odd jargon.— Seriously, we should like much to know Dr. Vaughan's interpretation of the word "Proselytism." After several spunkers had addressed the meeting, and in particular after the Rev. D. Alder, Secretary of the Wesleyan Missionaries, had resolutely asserted that they did not "come there that day to object to the peaceful labours of French Missionaries," and after the chairman had pledged himself, that

since 1830 "the Catholic Missionaries have had equal liberty with others," the Hon. and Rev. Baptist Noel more honestly avowed that "It was not the act of deporting two French Missionaries, but the law which prevented the settling of Roman Catholics in Tahiti, which had occasioned all the evils they deplored, and had given rise to irritation in France."— We cannot follow the report of this meeting any further, except just to say that it was a meagre one, and not by any means unanimous; for it appears that when at the close of the proceedings a Mr. Miller volunteered to ridicule the paying so much attention to distant lands while thousands were starving at home, "many persons in the meeting seemed to concur in the justice of the remark." On the whole, then, we may pronounce the affair to have been a failure in point of numbers and unanimity, and to have been a ludicrous failure in the matter of common consistency.— We have now a word to say on the state of things in the South Seas which this meeting was intended to prop up; and which indeed formed the main object of the meeting.

The principal Protestant Missionary in Tahiti is a Mr. Pritchard—Piritati, as the natives call him—who has constituted himself prime minister of the island and secretary of state for foreign affairs. In a letter to the Belgian Consul, on December 3, 1836, he says, "All business transacted by this nation and foreigners is transacted by me." This person is, indeed, the real king of the island. The old society has been overthrown, and a new system reared, of which the key is held by the Europeans. From this new system, even should it gall them in some respects, the natives would now find it very difficult to break loose. To suppose that the Queen, as she has been described by Protestant navigators, cares one single sixpence whether Catholic missionaries visit her island or not, is an absurdity rather too gross for credence. But Piritati does care very much; and caring very much, he having the whole affairs of the island in his hands, dragoons his plaything of a queen—confessedly against the wish of several of the chiefs—into obeying his orders, and shipping off all persons whom he dislikes, no matter whether they are British or French subjects. Tahiti, as our readers know, is a very important point in the South Pacific Ocean; is indeed a sort of station at which vessels touch, and passengers are put on shore, waiting for the arrival of other vessels to carry them to their destined ports.

Mr. Pritchard, however, claims a right of determining (through the Queen) who shall be allowed to stop and who not; and thus to render it altogether uncertain whether a passenger arriving at Tahiti, and intending to wait there and take the chance of a vessel onwards, can be allowed to do so. If Mr. Pritchard takes it into his head that the passenger is a dangerous one, he has either to remain on board and be carried to the destination of the vessel—to North America perhaps, instead of South—or he has to pay the Captain an enormous gratuity for going out of his course to land him at the desired haven.

To be Continued.