

Co. of Oxford.--Intolerance.

[FROM THE EXAMINER.]

If we may judge from the tone of its organs the recent visit of the writer to the County of Oxford has caused not a little annoyance to the High Church Tory party. Not satisfied with systematically misrepresenting our political opinions, the Inquisition at Woodstock has thought proper to bring us to its bar to answer for our religious faith. It is indeed fortunate for us, that we live in an age when religious fanatics have no longer the power to persecute, for after the sample of bigotry and intolerance recently displayed by the mouth-piece of the Rev. Mr. BETTRIDGE and his party, it must be perfectly evident that the Right Hon. T. B. MACAULAY did not exaggerate when he described that party to the electors of Edinburgh, in the following words:

"The same persons who complain of the present government for administering the Catholic emancipation act according to its spirit, are those who, as far as they had the power, have done their best to prevent the repeal of the test act from being administered according to its spirit; and if they had the will, we should never see an English Presbyterian, Independent or Baptist elevated to the bench or to any other place of public trust (loud cheers.) You members of the church of Scotland would greatly deceive yourselves if you imagined that because you have the emoluments and the name of an establishment, the party whom I have designated the High Church party regard you with any toleration. To them the Kirk itself is a secession; its orders and forms are denied all validity; and while able and pious men amongst you argue, some for the claims of an establishment and others for the claims of dissent, the persons of whom I speak regard you as all dissenters alike.—While you argue for and against church extension they tell you that you have no church to extend—cheers. Whoever is familiar with the writings and speeches of that party knows that if the Catholics are with them idolaters you are in their phrase Samaritans. Your national worship—that decent and solemn worship endeared to you by the heroic struggles and sufferings of your ancestors, is spoken of as an unholy offering on Mount Gerizim—great cheering. The name of Bonner commands respect in their estimation compared with the name of Knox. Those parts of your history on which they love to dwell are those parts which relate to the old times when tyrants attempted to force upon Scotland an ecclesiastical policy and ritual which she abhorred. Their sympathies are reserved for that execrable government which employed the sword and the halter, and the frightful torture of the boot to protect the prayerbook & the surplice—which drove our fathers from the habitations of men to sing their psalms & listen to their preachers on the brown heath—loud cheers.—In the estimation of these men the great blot of the Revolution was, that the episcopal church of Scotland was swept away; and the memory of William the Third,—that memory which is pronounced to be glorious and immortal, when contemplated in connection with the degradation of Ireland, becomes at once infamous when they see it in connection with the religious liberty of Scotland.—The Union—the union between England and Scotland—which may God forever bless, as he has blessed it, and keep the two great nations indissolubly joined in the same free institutions, and under the same parental throne—that union is the object of their abhorrence, because in that union is recognised the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.—Such is their language even now; and "if these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry."—great cheers.—This is the language they cannot refrain from holding when your alliance is necessary. When they implore your aid to persecute others, they cannot conceal that they are burning to persecute yourselves."

But not satisfied with attempting to introduce a religious test as a qualification for a seat in Parliament, our opponents have resorted to the gross

est misrepresentation with regard to us. The "Cobourg Star" asserts that Mr. HICKS "is now acting the part of an itinerant preacher of radicalism and schismatical doctrines," while the Patriot's Woodstock correspondent declares that our "Arian dogmas cannot be digested in the County of Oxford." Now the sum and substance of our reply to the inquisitorial demands of our opponent was a declaration of our belief in Divine Revelation, that we took the Bible as our rule of faith and practice, and holding to the right of private judgment, we should be responsible to no human tribunal for our religious opinions. We believe that we shall be sustained in this position by the great mass of the people of Upper Canada, at any rate we seek support from no man who may think proper to dispute it. If the majority of the freeholders of the County of Oxford expect their member to regulate his religious belief according to the standard of Mr. BETTRIDGE, or any other man or body of men, we should scorn to represent them. We have no such opinion of them. We should be quite willing that our election were decided on this point alone, "the right of private judgment." We only desire that the question should be fairly placed before the public, not only of the County of Oxford but of the Province at large, and we shall lend our aid in doing so. We shall endeavour not to misrepresent and slander our opponents in the manner they have done us, but will quote their own language which we wish most sincerely could find its way into the dwelling of every man in Upper Canada. The following then is an extract from a pamphlet published a short time since by the Rev. Mr. BETTRIDGE:

"As loyal men meddle not with those who are given to change. In our civil institutions fairly administered we need no change, and least of all such change as Radicals and Rebels and Democrats would bring us. In our religious institutions we certainly need no change. The Church of the Empire is, blessed be God, the Church of Christ, the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. Your Sovereign has sworn to maintain it to the utmost of her power. As churchmen you are bound to do the same. Do it then in an unobtrusive but quiet spirit. Listen not to the spurious liberalism of the age, that would rob you of your dearest birthright, of your highest privilege. Insist in all lawful way on the maintenance of your Church in full efficiency; insist as Britons and as Christians on liberty of conscience and free and full toleration to all. But beware that your toleration do not degenerate into infidelity. A crisis in the affairs of this portion of the Empire is at hand. Measures which must affect your present and eternal interests will soon be discussed and decided. YOUR CHURCH AND HER ESTABLISHMENT WILL BE ASSAILED. It is in your power to influence the decision whether your Church is still to continue the CHURCH OF THE CANADAS or be degraded to the level of the numerous sects of the Union. The time must soon arrive when in the exercise of your elective franchise, you may demand that the individual who may solicit your votes SHALL MAINTAIN THE CHURCH TO THE UTMOST OF HER POWER AND SECURE TO HER THE POSSESSION OF HER LAWFUL RIGHT.—THE CLERGY RESERVES."

Such is the language of the Rector of Woodstock and it is but the open expression of the real opinions of the Robinsons, Macaulays, Drapers, Gambles, Sherwoods, Cartwrights, Macnabs, Bethunes, and other members of the High Church Tory clique, but which on the eve of a general

election they have not the hardihood to avow.—Dissenters from "the Church" are to be allowed free and full toleration!—liberty of conscience! but should they be candidates for political office they are to be subjected to an examination before an inquisitorial tribunal as to their religious faith. Let it not be supposed that it is to any particular class of Dissenters that Mr. BETTRIDGE is wanting in Christian charity. Every page of his pamphlet bears testimony to his bigotry and intolerance.—The Baptists, or as he terms them, the "Rebaptizers" are charged with "heresy & schism" and his readers are warned to "avoid them." According to the Methodists, we find these words:

"Instead of exhorting men to repentance and to cleave to the Church, their utmost efforts are used to seduce men from the church. They may feel themselves at liberty to wage this impious war of calumny & deceit & falsehood against Christ's Holy Church; but we might at least expect that they should not do it under the hypocritical mask of friendship. These sappers and miners I cannot away with. * * * * The Wesleyans in this neighbourhood at least are the very worst kind of Schismatics, for they have not even the plea of a scruple of conscience either as to the doctrine or discipline of the church."

We shall make no comment on the extraordinary style employed on such a subject, in the following extract, but earnestly request the attention of our readers to the sentiments of the teacher of Christianity at Woodstock:—

"With respect to the one hundred and one other sects—the Shakers and Quakers; Jumpers and Tunkers; the Ranters and Caners; the Mormonites and Menonites, and all the other heresies and jansenisms, &c. &c. and so forth, who all affect to cry "Lo! here is Christ; Lo! there is Christ;" I can only implore you with all faithful solemnity, go not after them, enter not their assemblies, RECEIVE THEM NOT INTO YOUR HOUSES, bid them not God speed. They cause divisions and strife and ill will, and therefore as the Apostle himself exhorts "Avoid them."

If such is the Christianity inculcated by the Rector of Woodstock, we thank God that it is not ours. We believe too that such is not the religion taught by Christ and his Apostles. It is not our desire to enter more at length into this subject. The Rector of Woodstock and his friends together with that portion of the press which share his intolerant views, may stigmatize us as an infidel or a heretic. We have the consolation of reflecting that the Divine founder of Christianity to whom all professing Christians look up as their Lord and Master, was reviled as a blasphemous heretic by just such bigoted fanatics as our present assailants, and that the Great Apostle of the Gentiles declared "after the way which they call heresy so worship I the God of my fathers."

We are bound to state that at every meeting at which the mouthpiece of the intolerant and bigoted High Church party at Woodstock attacked us on the ground of our religious opinions, the most marked disgust was shewn by the audience. On one occasion Mr. Carroll's brother-in-law, and another of his active supporters, openly declared their disapprobation at the introduction of such topics.

We deem it quite unnecessary to notice any of the other points alluded to by the Patriot's correspondent. The approaching Elections will test the opinions of the freeholders of Oxford, and we shall not venture to anticipate their verdict.