

the state of education of Ireland at the commencement of the eighteenth century, and of the multiplied difficulties with which Catholics had in those days to contend, in their anxiety to educate their children—difficulties, arising not so much from the penal code as from the wicked prejudices of the ascendancy faction. By the occasional introduction of topics of this nature, Mr. Murphy has succeeded in placing in the hands of the reader, a work which is both attractive, instructive, and edifying; and it is no longer “a subject of regret that some act of justice was not ordered to the memory of her to whom her country and her religion are so much indebted.” He has rescued such literature from the imputation of “not being mindful of the individual excellence” and the production of this unpretending volume forms a creditable exception to that *general tendency of literature, of which he so justly complains.*

“We,” he says, “have acts of justice and tributes of gratitude in abundance, to those whose claims on public veneration are very questionable. Deeds of valor are perpetrated on the canvass, and heroism has become immortal in marble, and the pen of genius has been employed to commemorate the achievements of many a field where thousands have fought and bled. But for the meek retiring benefactress of her race, whose career of usefulness has been among the hovels of the poor, whose path of duty led her to the dingy cottage floor, or up the garret stair, that world of which she scarce was worthy, has “no stone or monumental bust,” and the eulogy of her virtues, if written, must be only by Him who has promised that one cup of cold water, given in his name, shall not lose its reward.”

The portion of this little work which has already appeared in the Dublin Review, may be considered as a stimulant preparatory to the more finished treat which is now afforded us, and therefore cannot interfere, but the contrary, with its circulation.

At the period when Miss Nano Nagle lived, early in the eighteenth century, there were no means for a Catholic of acquiring in Ireland the ordinary accomplishments which form part of a young lady's education. It was then the custom to send them for this purpose to France. Accordingly, we find that Miss Nagle was educated amidst the allurements of the French Metropolis, during a portion of the profligate Louis the Fifteenth's reign.

Mere accident—or rather providential design saved her, however, from its evil effects, and determined her on “devoting her life to God.” She resolved that Ireland should be the scene of her future labours in this cause, and the salvation of the children of the Poor, through religious education, the great object of her existence. She re-

turned to Ireland, and the following is a graphic picture of the state of that country at that period :

“About the year 1750, which was the period in question, the people were sunk in the lowest state of political degradation. The beginning of the last century was, perhaps, the darkest period in the history of the Catholics of Ireland. They were silent, and history makes no mention of their sufferings, but it was the silence of despair. Their valor in the field was rendered ineffectual by the pusillanimity of their leaders, or by national dissension, that demon that had ever blighted the destiny of Ireland. Their rights, secured by treaties and solemn covenants were trampled on with scorn, by the perfidy of their rulers. Even the corrupt and bigoted Parliament was quiet, not through any good will to the Catholics, but because its worst was done. From the beginning of the religious dissensions, it had been the policy of the Irish Government, aided by an obsequious Parliament, to discourage knowledge under the severest penalties. By the laws then on the statute book of Ireland, and as far as in them lay, rigidly enforced by the bigots in power, any one, whether parent, tutor, or guardian, who should send a child for education to any foreign seminary, or private family, as also the child so sent and educated, as well as the persons who had been accessory thereto, were to be for ever disabled to sue or prosecute in a court of justice, or in any action, civil or criminal, to be guardian, executor, or administrator; they were to be incapable of making or receiving any legacy, deed, or gift; and moreover to forfeit all property, both real and personal, during the term of their national lives. The education of a Catholic was in the eye of the law of Ireland, a crime of such enormous magnitude, as to require as the only fitting penalty, a total forfeiture of the rights of citizenship; and the person so guilty was to become an utter alien to all the privileges of civil society. Was it to be wondered at that a people subject for years to laws like these, should be reduced to the state in which Miss Nagle found them on her return to the continent. Religion, which could have remedied, or at least mitigated the evil, was even more rigorously proscribed. The same laws which made education a felony, denounced the pastor and set a price upon his head, and the few lessons which could be given were by stealth, as if they were some bad and wicked thing, and at hurried and distant intervals, such was the fearful insecurity of the times. They became like the seed sown among thorns and brambles, uncultivated and unattended to, and therefore bore no lasting fruit. The want of popular and religious instructions, was, therefore, great and pressing; but how difficult was it to be communicated? An effort on the part of Miss Nagle, with but little chance of being