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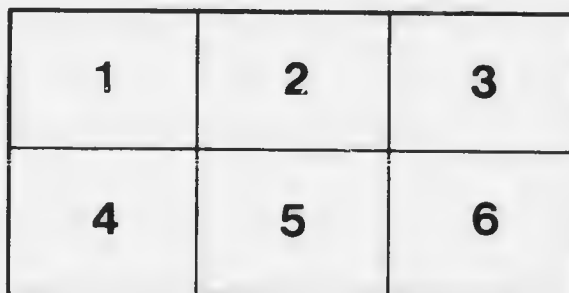
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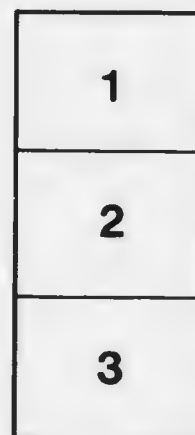
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LETTERS

TO THE

RT. REV. JOHN HUGHES,

ROMAN CATHOLIC BISHOP OF NEW YORK;

BY

KIRWAN.

FIRST SERIES.

TORONTO:

PRINTED FOR THE CANADA TRACT SOCIETY,

107, YONGE STREET.

1849.

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LETTERS

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RT. REV. JOHN HUGHES,

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TORONTO:

PRINTED FOR THE UPPER CANADA TRACT SOCIETY,
DEPOSITORY, 47, YONGE STREET.
1849.

PRINTED BY J. CLELAND, TORONTO.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THE pages that follow were written in the form of letters to Bishop Hughes, that they might readily gain the attention of those for whose benefit they are designed. The writer is a gentleman who has never taken any part in the Romish controversy; but having been educated in the Church of Rome, by parents of that faith, and having remained in that communion until mature years and patient thought enabled him to judge for himself, he became calmly, but decidedly convinced that he must leave it, and seek the religion of the Bible among Protestants.

In these pages, the result of his own experience and observation, he gives the reasons that compelled him to abandon the Church of his fathers, and the reasons why he cannot return to her embrace. The letters are written with great courtesy, frankness and ability, with the sprightly humour of an Irishman to an Irishman, and with an eloquence and earnestness that often remind us of some of the most celebrated passages from the Irish bar. They were first published in the *New York Observer*, and were thence widely copied into other papers. They have been extensively sought for by Catholics who are beginning to inquire after the truth, and by others who wish to put them into the hands of those who are willing to read.

The temper of the letters commends them to a candid perusal, and the clearness of the argument and illustration will carry conviction to the minds of those who have the indepen-

dence to decide for themselves by the light of the Bible and common sense.

The letters were furnished to me under an injunction of secrecy as to the Author's name, and having been requested by many individuals and societies to give them to the public in a form for preservation and further circulation, it is proper to say, that the writer's character is an abundant guarantee for the fidelity of all the matters of fact here stated, and that he is prepared to maintain them if they should ever be called in question.

SAMUEL I. PRIME,

Of New York.

KIRWAN'S LETTERS

TO THE

RIGHT REVEREND JOHN HUGHES,

BISHOP OF NEW YORK.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR SIR,—Although an entire stranger to you, I have felt for many years greatly interested in your history and doings ; and for the following reasons :

You are the chief pastor of a very important portion of the Roman Catholic Church in this country ; and your ecclesiastical position makes you emphatically a public man. If a bishop in Mexico or Missouri, like many mitred priests, you might live unknown to fame ; but as the papal bishop of the Commercial Metropolis of the Western world, and of the most populous and wealthy diocese of your church in the United States, this could not be expected. Position, you know, has much to do with our public character.

But in addition to your position, which is one of high influence, you possess the requisite qualifications to fill it. This is confessed by your most ardent opponents. By your genius, learning, and eloquence—by your sleepless devotion to the duties

of your calling, you have obtained a position in the very first rank of the ecclesiastics of your church.

Besides, at whatever odds, you have fought like a man with all your opponents. In controversies, religious and political, you have not shunned the hall of debate, nor discussion through the press. You have taken your positions adroitly, and you have defended them with remarkable skill. And even when convinced of the utter fallacy of your positions and defences, I have yet sympathized with your manly firmness. It is in human nature to respect the man that with an earnest soul contends for what he esteems right. And I must confess that as to some things, when the public voice was against you, your course met with my approbation.

Besides, if public rumor is worthy of belief, you have forced yourself into your present position by the force of your talents and character, from a social position comparatively humble. To me this is not the least of the reasons why I have felt interested in your career. The *men* of our race have been what is commonly called, self-made men. The heroes in history have been nearly all such. It requires high attributes both of mind and soul to rise above the disadvantages of family and fortune ; and to take precedence of those who would fain believe that birth and wealth give a patent-right to the high places of influence. Your past history, unless

I misunderstand it, must have had a liberalizing influence upon you. You must look at things on a larger and wider scale, and through a clearer medium, than if you had been cradled in crimson and educated in a convent. You know the distinction between prejudice and principle—between what is entitled to belief, and what we have been educated to believe—between what is truly reasonable, and what is only ecclesiastically so. And I therefore address myself to you with a confidence far stronger than what I shall say kindly and truly, will be kindly and truly weighed, than if I addressed myself to a priest from Maynooth or St. Omers, educated merely in the literature of legends and liturgies, and whose mind only possessed what was distilled into it from others. I shall address you not merely as a priest or bishop; but as a high-minded and well-educated gentleman.

Permit me to say that there is yet another reason why I have felt interested in your career. You were born in Ireland, the land of noble spirits and of warm hearts—that sweetest isle of the ocean. And so was I. We are natives of the same soil. And although in principle, by education, and in all my feelings, thoroughly American, yet I take a great pride in the high achievements of native Irishmen. America has had its Montgomerys, its Clintons, its Emmetts, its Porters, from Ireland.

Its sons have dorned the bar, the bench, the pulpit, the army, the navy, the legislatures, the Congress of these United States. That there are multitudes from Ireland who are no loss to their own country, nor any advantage to this, cannot be denied. The reasons for this I may examine hereafter. But yet we have many fine illustrations of Irish genius, character and valour, all along our history. And I have regarded yourself as one of them, so far forth as genius and force of character are concerned. And I have often pointed you out as an illustration of the high respectability which Irish character is capable of attaining when relieved from the burdens that oppress and debase it. Hence I have regarded as your eulogy the sneers of those who have addressed you as "John Hughes, the Gardener." Such taunts come not from true men.

Having said so much in reference to you, permit me now to say a word in reference to myself. I have just stated that I was born in Ireland. I may say to you in addition, that I was born of Roman Catholic parents, and received my early education in the full faith of that Church at whose altars you now serve with such distinguished ability. I was baptized by a priest—I was confirmed by a bishop—I often went to confession—I have worn my amulets,—and I have said my Pater Nosters and my Hail Marys, more times than I can now enumerate.

When a youth none excelled me in my attention to Mass, nor in the performance of the penances enjoined by the Father confessor. And whatever were my occasional mental misgivings, I remained a true son of the Church until I had nearly reached the years of manhood. Then, on as full an examination of the subject as I could give it, I came to the conclusion that I could not remain a Roman Catholic. I first became an infidel. Knowing nothing of religion but that which was taught me by parents and priests, and thinking that that was the sum of it, when that was rejected, infidelity became my only alternative. Subsequently, by the reading of the Bible, and by the grace of God, I was led to embrace the religion of the Gospel. That religion I have now for many years professed, and in connection with a Protestant Church. Unlike many who have left your communion, I have never bitterly assailed it. I am utterly unknown in the list of the champions of Protestantism versus Popery. But yet some recent occurrences have induced me to break a long silence, and to state in a series of letters addressed to your Right Reverence, the reasons which induced me to leave the Roman Catholic Church, and which prevent me from returning to it. Of these letters, this is the first. I ask of you for them a kind and candid perusal.

With great respect yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER II.

Causes of early misgiving—Priestly miracles—Purgatory—
Praying to saints.

MY DEAR SIR,—In my last letter I stated to you that I was born of Roman Catholic parents—that I was baptized and confirmed in your communion—and that for many years I have been in connection with a Protestant Church. I stated that, whatever were my occasional mental misgivings, I remained a true son of the Church until I had nearly attained the years of manhood ; and that, then, on as full an examination of the subject as I could give it, I came to the conclusion that I could not remain a Roman Catholic. Permit me in the present letter to state to you the causes of my early misgivings as to yours being a true Church, and as to its holding the true faith.

You know very well the common belief among the Irish peasantry that Papal priests can work miracles. Whatever may be the teaching of the priests themselves upon the point, such is the belief of the people, a belief strongly encouraged by the conduct of their spiritual leaders. Hence in diseases the people resort, not so much to the physician, as to the priest—they depend less upon the power of medicine than upon that of priestly charms. Although

the son of intelligent parents, and educated from my youth for the mercantile profession, the miraculous power of the priest is yet associated with my earliest recollections of him. And, as you know full well, the belief that this power is possessed by their priests, is one of the leading causes why the Papal Irish bow with such entire and unmanly submission to them,

In my youth there were two things which greatly shook my faith in the possession of this power. There resided not far from my parental residence a priest whose fame as a miracle-worker was known all over the county in which he resided. The road to his house (called in that country a bridle road) went by our door. I frequently saw in the morning, individuals riding by, with a little keg resting before them on the saddle, or a jug hanging by the horse's side. I often asked who they were and where they were going? I was told that they were going to Father C.'s to get some of their sick cured. I asked what was in the keg or jug? I was told that it was Irish whiskey to pay the priest for his cures. I asked why they went so early in the morning? I was answered that unless they went early they would not find him sober.

In one of the large interior towns of Ireland where I resided, the Bishop of the diocese met his priests, or a part of them, once a year. This meeting was always held in the house where I resided, and over

the store in which I was then clerk. Among the priests that always met the Bishop was a Father B., whose fame as a miracle-worker was extensive. He had also a reputation for learning and eloquence; and because of his connection with an old and wealthy family, exerted a wide social influence. He always staid with us when he came to town. About ten o'clock one night, after one of those meetings of bishop and priests, I went out to shut up the store windows; and hearing a singular noise in the gutter, I went forward, and assisted a man out of the mire. I soon recognised it to be Father B. the miracle-worker. Running in, I announced with some excitement to the lady of the house that Father B. was drunk in the street. I received for my pains a stunning slap on the side of the face, with this admonition "never say again that a priest is drunk." I staggered under the blow,—I assisted in cleaning off his Reverence. I gave him his brandy next morning. And young as I was, my faith in miracle-working priests was effectually shaken. Although fearing to draw the conclusion, I felt it, that God would not bestow miraculous power upon those who lived a life, not of occasional but of habitual intemperance. And I would ask you, sir, whether all this pretension to miraculous power by your priests is not a gross imposition upon the people for the double purpose of keeping them

in awe, and getting their money? Let the Bishop be silent, and the man of sense speak, and I have no fear as to the answer.

The doctrine of Purgatory, you know, sir, is one of the peculiar and most cherished doctrines of your church. Indeed I do not know how your church could get along without it. My object now is not to reason with you about it, or to controvert it; but to state to you a few facts in reference to it that made, in early life, a strong impression on my mind. You know that in Ireland, the custom of the priest is, at a certain point in the service of the mass, to turn his back to the altar, and his face to the people and to read a long list of the names of deceased persons whose souls are in purgatory, and to offer up a prayer for their deliverance from it. This is done, or used to be done, in the chapels on every Sabbath. To obtain the name of a deceased relative on that magic list, the priest must be paid so much a year, varying I believe, with the ability of the friends to pay. If the yearly payment is not made when due, the name of the person is erased from the list. A circumstance arising out of this custom of your church, occurring in my boyhood, is distinctly before me. A respectable man in our parish died in mid-life, leaving a widow and a large family of children to mourn his loss. True to her religious principles, and to her generous instincts,

the widow had her husband's name placed on that list, and heard, with pious gratitude, his name read over from Sabbath to Sabbath, with a prayer offered for the deliverance of his soul from purgatory. After the lapse of two or three years, on a certain Sabbath the name of her husband was omitted from the list. The fact filled her with mingled joy and fear; joy thinking that her husband had escaped from purgatory; and fear, lest she had done something to offend the priest. On timid inquiry, she learned that his soul was yet in purgatory, but that she had forgotten to send in the yearly tax at the time it was due. The tax was promptly paid, and the name was restored on the next Sabbath. With this fact, sir, I am entirely conversant; for that widow was my own mother, who sought the release of the soul of my father from purgatory. Can you wonder, sir, that this incident made a deep impression upon my youthful mind, or that it shook my faith in your whole system? And as far as memory serves me, Father M. was an amiable man and above the ordinary level of the men of his calling.

Another fact which early impressed me in reference to purgatory was this. Your church makes a distinction between mortal and venial sinners. The former go to hell forever—the latter go to purgatory “whence they are taken by the prayers and alms offered for them, and principally by the holy sacri-

fice of the mass." Now I always saw that the *most mortal* sinners, that every body would say went to hell, could always have masses said for them as if they went to purgatory ; provided their friends could pay ; and that *less mortal* sinners, that people would say went to purgatory, were sent to hell, if their friends could not pay for masses for them. And their souls were kept in purgatory for a long while when their friends paid promptly every year ; but their souls were soon prayed out whose friends could not pay long for them. Facts like these, sir, very early impressed my mind, and shook my faith in the religion of my parents and priests. And when in maturer years, I could more fully consider them, they led me to reject religion as a fable cunningly devised by priests.

Again ; to pray to angels and saints is a doctrine of your church. I am quite familiar with your explanations of it ; with the distinctions which your writers make to free it from idolatry. It is precisely the distinction which the heathen make to get rid of the same charge. Perhaps ere these letters are concluded I may return to the subject ; I have only to do now with some of my early impressions in reference to it. In our parish chapel there were a great many pictures of saints. Whose pictures they were I do not remember. But on Sabbath morning, an hour before mass, I have often seen the poor people

and even some more wealthy and refined going on their knees from the one picture to another, and counting their beads, and bowing before them with external acts of the most profound and sincere worship. Although, then, I thought differently, I have not now a doubt but that it was idolatry. But the idea that struck me was this : here are some praying to Peter, or Paul, or John ; the same pictures are hung up in ten thousand chapels all over the world, and in all these chapels persons are praying to them. Can these good saints hear but in one place, or can they hear all ? If they can hear all, then they are omnipresent—if omnipresent, they are gods. Thus we have as many gods as saints. But if they hear but in one place, then nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine out of the ten thousand are praying to an absent saint ! This one thought, reverend sir, very early in life impressed my mind, and was not the least powerful among the causes which led me, eventually, to reject the authority of your church. More of these causes in my next.

With great respect, yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER III.

Causes of my early misgivings, continued—Confession—Holy Wells—Prohibiting the Bible—An Incident.

MY DEAR SIR,—In my last letter I commenced a statement to you of the causes which in early life caused my misgivings and distrust as to yours being a true church, and as to its holding the true faith. I referred to some incidents connected with the claims of your priests to miraculous power, with the doctrine of purgatory, and with praying to saints. I shall now proceed with a statement of some more of those causes.

The doctrine of Confession is one of the primary doctrines of your church. It requires every good papist to confess his sins to a priest at least once a year. If any sins are concealed, none are forgiven. This doctrine makes the bosom of the priest the repository of all the sins of all the sinners of his parish, who make a conscience of Confession. And this is one of the sources of the fearful power which your priests have over your people. And with this doctrine of Confession, is connected the power of the Father Confessor to grant Absolution to the confessing penitent. It is sometimes affirmed, and then denied, to suit circumstances, that the priest claims such power. But Dr. Challoner in his "Catholic Christian Instructed," Chap. 9th, asserts this power,

and on what he deems scriptural authority. And I never knew an individual who came from Confession, with the privilege of partaking of the Communion, who did not feel and believe that his sins were forgiven him. And if they were not immediately forgiven, they would be on performance of the prescribed penances. You, sir, will not say, that I either misstate or misrepresent the doctrine.

Now for some of my early impressions upon this subject. Father M. held frequently his confessions at our house. He sat in a dark room up stairs with one or more candles on a table before him. Those going to Confession followed each other on their knees from the front door, through the hall up the stairs, and to the door of the room. When one came out of the confessing-room another entered. My turn came, I entered the room, from which the light of day was excluded, and bowed myself before the priest. He made over me the sign of the cross, and after saying something in Latin, he ordered me to commence the detail of my sins. Such was my fright that my memory soon failed in bringing up past delinquencies. He would prompt me, and ask, did you do this thing, or that thing? I would answer yes, or no. And when I could say no more he would wave his hand over me and again utter some words in Latin, and dismiss me. Through this process I often went, and never without feeling that my sins were forgiven. Sins that burdened me

before were now disregarded. The load of guilt was gone. And I often felt, when prompted to sin, that I could commit it with impunity, as I could confess it and secure its pardon. And this, sir, is the fearful and fatal effect of your doctrine of Confession and Absolution upon millions of minds.

The questions however often came up—Why does the priest go into a dark room in the daytime? Why not speak to me in English, and not in Latin? How can he forgive sin? What, if my sins after all are not forgiven? And I always found that I could play my pranks better after confession than before, for I could go at them with a lighter heart. Very early in life my confidence in this doctrine of Confession was shaken; and at a later period I came to the conclusion that it was a priestly device to ensnare the conscience, and to enslave men.

Another thing which made early a deep impression on my mind was this. On my first remembered journey to Dublin we passed by a place called, unless I mistake, St. John's Well. It is, as you know, one of the "Holy Wells," of Ireland. There was a vast crowd of poor looking and diseased people around it. Some were praying, some shouting; many were up in the trees which surrounded it. All these trees were laden, in all their branches, with shreds of cloth of every possible variety and color. I inquired what all this meant. I was told: "This

is St. John's Well, and these people come here to get cured." But what do those rags mean, hanging on the trees? I was told, that the people who were not immediately cured, tied a piece of their garments on some limb of the trees, to keep the good Saint of the Well in mind of their application. And judging from the number of pieces tied on the trees I inferred that the number that went away cured were very few. I had previously read some travels in Africa describing some of the religious rites of the sable sons of that continent; and the thought that those performed around St. John's Well were just like them, occurred to me. I have no doubt but that the rites witnessed in my youth are performed there yet—that the rags of diseased persons are now streaming from those trees to remind the Saint of the requests of those who suspended them. There was always a priest present to hear confessions, and to receive the pennies of the poor pilgrims. And the impression then made upon my mind was, that it was a piece of paganism. And the rites and ceremonies about this Well, I learn, are nothing in comparison with those performed at the Wells of Saint Patrick in the County Down. I will here insert an account of a festival at St. Patrick's Well, as given by an eye-witness:

"When or how the custom which I shall describe originated, I know not, nor is it necessary to inquire; but every midsum-

mer eve thousands of Roman Catholics, many from distant parts of the country, resort to these celebrated holy wells to cleanse their souls from sin, and clear their mortal bodies of diseases. The influx of people of different ranks, for some nights before the one in which alone, during the whole year, these well possess this power (for on all other days and nights in the year, they rank not above common draw-wells,) is prodigious: and their attendants, hordes of beggars, whose ragged garments, if once taken off, could not be put on again by the ingenuity of man, infest the streets and lanes and choose their lodgings in the highways and hedges. Having been previously informed of the approach of this miraculous night, and having made ourselves acquainted with the locality of the wells, early in the evening we repaired to the spot: we had been told that we should see something quite new to us, and we met with what was scarcely creditable on ocular evidence. The spot on which this scene of superstitious folly was exhibited, was admirably adapted to heighten every attendant circumstance of it; the wonderful wells, of which there are four, being situated in a square or patch of ground, surrounded by steep rocks, which reverberated every sound, and redoubled all the confusion. The coup d'œil of the square on our approach presented a floating mass of various coloured heads, and our ears were astonished with confused and mingled sounds of mirth and sorrow, of frantic, enthusiastic joy, and deep desponding ravings. On descending into the square we found ourselves immediately in the midst of innumerable groups of these fanatics, running in all directions, confusedly, in appearance, but methodically, as we afterwards found in reality;—the men and the women were barefooted, and the heads of all were bound round with handkerchiefs. Some were running in circles, some were kneeling in groups, some were singing in wild concert, some were jumping about like maniacs at the end of an old building, which, we were told, was the ruins of a chapel erected, with several adjacent buildings, in one miraculous midsummer's night by the tutelary saint of the wells, of whose talent as a mason they give, it must be confessed, no very exalted opinion. When we had somewhat recovered from the first surprise which the (to us) unaccountably fantastic actions of the crowd had given us, we endeavored to trace the progress of some of these deluded votaries through all the mazes of their mystic penance. The first object of them all appeared to be the ascent of the

steepest and most rugged part of the rock, up which both men and women crawled their painful way on their hands and bare knees. The men's clothes were all made so as to accommodate their knees with all the sharpness of the pointed rock; and the poor women, many of them young and beautiful, took incredible pains to prevent their petticoats from affording any defence against its torturing asperities. Covered with dust and perspiration, and blood, they at last reached the summit of the rock where, in a rude sort of chair hewn out of the stone, sat an old man, probably one of their priesthood, who seemed to be the representative of St. Patrick, and the high-priest of this religious frenzy. In his hat each of the penitents deposited a half-penny, after which he turned them round a certain number of times, listened to the long catalogue of their offences, and dictated to them the penance they were to undergo or perform. Then they descended the rock by another path, but in the same manner and posture, equally careful to be cut by the flints, and to suffer as much as possible: this was, perhaps, more painful travelling than the ascent had been—the suffering knees were rubbed another way—every step threatened a tumble; and if any thing could have been lively there, the ridiculous attitudes of these descenders would have made us so. When they gained the foot of the hill they (most of them) bestowed a small donation of charity on some miserable groups of supplicants who were stationed there. One beggar, a cripple, sat on the ground, at one moment addressing the crowd behind him, and swearing that all the Protestants ought to be burnt out of the country, and in the same breath, begging the penitents to give one halfpenny for the love of '*swate blessed Jasus.*' The penitents now returned to the use of their feet, and commenced a running sort of Irish jiggish walk round several cairns or heaps of stones erected at different spaces: this lasted for some time. Suddenly they would prostrate themselves before the cairn and ejaculate some hasty prayers, as suddenly they would rise and resume their mill-horse circumrotation. Their eyes were fixed; their looks spoke anxiety, almost despair; and the operation of their faculties seemed totally suspended. They then proceeded to one end of the old chapel, and seemed to believe that there was a virtue, unknown to us heretics, in *one particular stone* of the building, which every one was careful to touch with the right hand; those who were tall did it easily; those who were less, left no mode of jumping

unpractised to accomplish it. But the most remarkable, and doubtless the most efficient of the ceremonies, was reserved for the last; and surely nothing was ever devised by man which more forcibly evinced how low our nature can descend. Around the largest of the wells, which was in a building very much, to common eyes, like a stable, all those who had performed their penances were assembled, some dressing, some undressing, many *stark naked*. A certain number of them were admitted at a time into this holy well, and there men and women of every age bathed promiscuously without any covering. They undressed before bathing, and performed the whole business of the toilet afterwards in the open air, in the midst of the crowd, without appearing sensible of the observations of the lookers-on, perfectly regardless of decency, perfectly dead to all natural sensations. This was a strange sight, but so nearly resembling the feast of lunatics, that even the voluptuary would have beheld it without any emotions but those of dejection. The penance having terminated in this marvellous ablution, the penitents then adjourned either to booths and tents to drink, or join their friends. The air then rang with musical monotonous singing, which became louder with every glass of whisky, finishing, in frolicsome debauch, and laying, in all probability, the foundation for future penances and more thorough ablutions. No pen can describe all the confusion—no description can give a just idea of the noise and disorder which filled this *hallowed* square, this theatre of fanaticism, this temple of superstition, of which the rites rival all we are told of in the East. The minor parts of the spectacle were filled up with credulous mothers, half drowning their poor children to cure their sore eyes; with cripples who exhibited every thing that has yet been discovered in deformity, expecting to be washed straight, and to walk away nimble and comely.

“The experience of years had not shaken their faith; and though nobody was cured, nobody went away doubting.—Shouting and howling and swearing and carousals filled up every pause, and ‘threw o’er this spot of earth the air of hell.’ I was never more shocked and struck with horror; and perceiving many of them intoxicated with religious fervour and all-potent whisky, and warming into violence before midnight, at which time the distraction was at its climax, I left this scene of human degradation in a state of mind not easily to

be described. The whole road from the wells to the neighbouring town was crowded with such supplicants as preferred mortal halfpence to holy penance. The country around was illuminated with watch-fires; the demons of discord and fear were abroad in the air; the pursuits of the world, and the occupations of the peaceful, appeared put a stop to by the performance of ceremonies, disgraceful when applied to propitiate an all-compassionate Divinity, whom these religionists were determined and taught to consider jealous rather than merciful. I wish it were in my power, without insincerity, to pay a compliment to the Irish Catholic Clergy. On this occasion they were the mad priests of these Bacchanalian orgies; the fomenters of fury; the setters-on to strife; the mischievous ministers of the debasement of their people, lending their aid to plunge their credulous congregations in ceremonious horrors."*

Now, sir, can you, as a man of high intelligence, regard these things in any other light than as the merest impostures to delude the ignorant? And what epithet sufficiently expressive of abhorrence can we apply to the priesthood who thus impose upon a credulous people?

I well remember yet another of these impostures. When a boy I often heard that on the morning of Easter Sunday, the sun might be seen dancing in the heavens and in the chapels, to express its joy on the anniversary of the resurrection of Christ.— And I often wished to be where I could witness the phenomenon. It took place in a certain chapel, and in the presence of many pious and admiring beholders. An unbeliever in priestly miracles was present, who traced up the dancing of the sunbeams.

* McGavin's Protestant, p. 403.

through the chapel, to an individual managing concealed mirrors, so as to produce the wonderful effect. Of this I heard, and although it seemed incredible, yet it made an impression on my mind.—The probability of the imposture cannot be doubted by those who know that the earth which covers the grave of Father Sheely (who was convicted of treason, and hung in the County of Tipperary) when boiled in milk, cures a variety of diseases.

The bible, with all its notes and glosses, as published by the authority of your own church, is denied by you to be a complete rule of faith. On this question I will not now enter, only so far as to say that this denial holds a very intimate connexion with its virtual withholding from the people. If not a complete rule, it may lead astray ; and as it is capable of opposite interpretations, in some of its passages, the souls of the people must not be endangered by its general circulation. It is better to know nothing of the Bible, than in some particulars to misinterpret it ! Your infallible church teaches both ways on a variety of subjects, and among the rest, on the circulation of the Bible. It allows it in Protestant countries, with some stringent regulations ; it virtually forbids it in purely Papal countries. How many Bibles could your Reverence procure in Spain, Portugal, Naples, or Italy ? How many Spaniards or Italians have ever read a

Bible through ? How many of the Irish peasantry that can read and write have ever read ten chapters of it ? Now, sir, for years together I sat daily at table with a Catholic priest, who was a member of the family, and the curate of the parish ; and I never saw a Bible used in the family. I never heard at table, or in the morning, or in the evening, a religious service. The members of the Douay Bible published by subscription in Folio, were taken in the family, but never read. And not only so, but I never heard a sermon preached in a Catholic chapel in Ireland ; nor a word of explanation on a single Christian topic, doctrine, or duty. And before I was sixteen years of age I never read a chapter in the word of God, whilst in other respects my education was not neglected. I often asked the meaning of this thing and the other ; but there was no explanation. Nor can one out of one thousand, in Papal countries, give a single reason for one of your peculiar doctrines or duties. And since in the maturity of my judgment I have examined this matter, I have greatly commended your wisdom in withholding the Bible from the people ; if I were a bishop or a priest of your church I would do the same. I heard a man who lived near the Canada line, in Vermont, during the last war with Great Britain, tell the following story :—" There was," said he, " much smuggling going on. Whenever

we met a traveller with a pack of any kind, we ordered it to be searched. Honest men always said, 'search and welcome.' But whenever a man refused, or made any fuss about it, we always suspected that there were contraband goods in the pack; and we were never mistaken." You have brought contraband goods into the house of God, and the Bible tells the people so. Hence it is forbidden. Light is the sure death of darkness. The circulation of the Bible will be the death of popery.

With great respect yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER IV.

Translation from Popery to Infidelity—Inquiry awakened—
Abstinence from Meats—The Mass—Confession—Tran-
substantiation—Religion vanishes.

MY DEAR SIR,—In my last two letters I have stated to you some of the causes of my early misgivings as to yours being a true church, and as to its holding the true faith. These causes I might multiply indefinitely; for you well know it to be a law of the human mind that when its confidence is once shaken, it sees causes of suspicion even in things true and honest. In my first letter I stated to you, that, when I deliberately rejected the authority and teachings of your church, I became

an infidel. And my object in the present letter is to reveal to you the process through which my mind passed, in its transition from popery to infidelity. I believe that your Reverence will pronounce it a very natural one.

On reaching the years of maturity my mind was a perfect blank as to all religious instruction. And if such instruction is ever given by your church or priests, my advantages were peculiarly good for receiving it. Indeed I was even talked of as a candidate for Maynooth. Whilst my mind was filled with superstitious notions concerning meats and penances, and external observances, and legends, it was utterly ignorant of the Bible. With my missal I was somewhat familiar; I said the Catechism when I was confirmed at the age of nine or ten; and that was the amount of my religious education. At the age of eighteen years the Catechism was forgotten, and the Missal was neglected; and as my conscience was uneducated, and my mind unfurnished with religious principles, the only test of truth left me was my common sense. I then became the associate of companions of Protestant education, who would sometimes ask me my reason for this and that observance; and not being able to give any, as none were ever given me, I was frequently put to the blush. I candidly state to you that it was in this way I was first led to bring to the

test of my common sense, then my only standard, some of the doctrines and rites of your church. And this reveals the reason why your priesthood is so intensely concerned that Catholic children should be guarded from all contact with those of Protestant education. The spirit of inquiry is contagious, and pope, bishops, and priests fear it worse than the plague. Its indulgence, you know, either is, or leads to mortal sin. Let me briefly state to you some of the effects of this spirit of inquiry upon me.

From my youth up I was taught to abstain from all meats on Fridays and Saturdays. Why on these days more than any other, I was never told. If by mistake I was involved in the violation of this law, I felt a burden upon my conscience, of which confession could only relieve me. Circumstances led me to inquire into this matter. I saw good papists eating eggs, and fish, and getting drunk on these days ; but this was no violation of the law of the Church ! Yet if these persons should eat meat of any kind, or use gravy in any way, their consciences were troubled, and they must perform penance ! This led me to ask, is this reasonable ? If I may eat meat on Thursday, why not on Friday ? Can God, in things of this kind, make that to be a sin at one time which is not on another ? I saw also persons, for whose moral worth I had the highest regard, eating meats on those days, and without

any injury ! And I came to the conclusion that your regulations on this matter were unreasonable, and rejected them. And as far as I now remember, this was my first step towards light and freedom.

Whether our course is upwards, towards the region of light, or downwards, towards that of darkness, one step always prepares for another. Devoted to reading at this period of my life, I perused without discrimination, everything that came in my way. Some book or tract, now forgotten, gave rise to some inquiries as to the mass. I asked, What does it mean ? I could not tell, though for years a regular attendant upon it. Why does the priest dress so ? What book does he read from, when carried now to his right, and now to his left ?—What mean those candles burning at noonday ? Why do I say prayers in Latin, which I understand not ? Should I not know what I am saying when addressing my Maker ? Why bow down and strike my breast, when the little bell rings ? What does it all mean ? The darkness of Egypt rested upon these questions. I thus reasoned with myself : God is a spiritual and intelligent being, and he requires an intelligent worship. What worship I render him in the mass I know not. My intelligent worship only is acceptable to him, and is beneficial to me. I am a rational being, and I degrade my nature,

and insult my Maker, by offering Him a worship in which neither my reason, nor *His* intelligence is consulted. Having come to this conclusion, I gave up the Mass as a form of worship well enough fitted for an idol, but unfitted to be rendered by a rational being to the infinitely intelligent Jehovah. I have never been to Mass since, save out of curiosity to see how an ignorant people can be edified by what seems to me the most unmeaning and farcical of all the rites that ever man devised. And you know, sir, that with all devotion and honesty a Catholic may wait on your Masses until his locks are as white as your surplice, and then pass into eternity without one single spiritual idea upon the subject of religion; resolving it all into external observances.

When I came to the above conclusion on the subject of the Mass, I experienced no great difficulty as to the other matters which passed rapidly in review before me. Must I go to Confession? My prejudices said, Yes. My reason said, No. And my logic was simply as follows: If I truly repent of my sins God will forgive me; if I do not, the priest cannot absolve me. And I spurned as unreasonable, and as an insult to my common sense, your terrible doctrine that "Every Christian is bound, *under pain of damnation*, to confess to a priest all his mortal sins, which after diligent exam-

ination he can possibly remember ; yea, even his most secret sins ; his very thoughts ; yea and all the circumstances of them which are of any moment." I ask you, sir, if this dogma of the Council of Trent is not a horrible dogma ? It suspends upon confessing to a priest, what the Bible suspends on believing in Christ ! Do you, sir, believe it ? Can you believe it ?

With yet greater abhorrence, I gave up the doctrine of Transubstantiation. As explained by Dr. Challoner, in his "Catholic Christian Instructed," Chap. 5, it means "that the bread and wine are changed by the consecration into the body and blood of Christ ? and are so changed that Christ himself, true God, and true man, is truly, really, and substantially present, in the sacrament." With this doctrine in view, I went to witness the administration of the Eucharist, as you call it. I went to Saint Peter's, in Barclay-street. The communicants drew around the altar upon their knees. With a little box in his hand the priest passed from one to the other, taking a wafer, smaller than that used in sealing a letter, from the box, and placed it upon the extended tongue of the communicant. I was always taught that the teeth must not touch the wafer ?—that it must melt upon the tongue. This I find to be the law of your church. I witnessed the ceremony as I had often done before. I retired

from the scene, asking these questions ? Is that little wafer the real body and blood of Christ ? Does the priest, in that little box, not as large as a snuff-box, carry two or three hundred real bodies of Christ ? Do these communicants, each in their turn, eat the real body and blood of Christ ? My dear sir, I cannot express to you the violence with which my mind rejected the absurdity. Look at it in what light you may, it is abhorrent to our common reason—it gives the lie to every sense with which God has endowed us. It is a wicked imposition.

Having gone through this process, not with a light and trifling, but with a serious mind, my prejudices rising in stormy rebellion against my convictions, I raised up my eyes, and behold, my religion was gone ! The priest was a juggler, and his religion a fable ! Every thing that I had ever learned from parent and priest to esteem as religion, was now rejected as false ; and not knowing but that this was all of religion that was in the world, I had no alternative but infidelity. I had no test of truth but my reason, and when I brought your system to that, I was compelled to reject it, not only as false, but as a monstrous absurdity, and with it all religion.

Nor have I, dear sir, any hesitation in saying, that the process of my own mind from popery to infidelity, is that through which multitudes of minds

have passed, and are now passing. To an inquiring mind, which knows nothing of the Bible, infidelity is the fruit of popery. Hence in papal countries, whilst the masses are superstitious the intelligent and educated are infidels. If they sustain the vulgar religion, it is for reasons of state. Hence the infidelity of France, of Spain, of Italy. At the present hour the mind of these countries is more infidel than papal. And this is true of every country on the globe where your religion prevails. It makes the masses superstitious, and the intelligent, infidels.

And permit me to say, my dear sir, in reference to yourself, that I have far too high a regard for your intelligence to admit for a moment that you believe in the absurd doctrines which your church teaches. Like the ancient priests of Egypt, you must have one class of opinions for the people, and another for yourself. Will you say that this is harsh and uncharitable? None knows better than yourself that history affirms it of popes, cardinals, and bishops that have lived before you. On no other ground can I possibly account for your remaining an hour in the Roman Catholic Church.

With great respect yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER V.

Popery makes the masses superstitious, the intelligent, infidels
—Who go to confession?—Ireland—France—other countries—Reasons why Popery debases—The days of Popery numbered.

MY DEAR SIR,—In my last letter, in which I stated to you the process of my mind in its transition from Popery to Infidelity, I asserted that the effect of your religion is, to make the masses superstitious, and the intelligent infidels, in all the countries where it predominates. Although the truth of this assertion is self-evident to the well-read mind, the briefest consideration will make its truth apparent to all.

How stands the matter in our own country? Who attend your Confessional, and your Masses in New-York? How many of the educated Irish, French, or Germans, ever whisper at your knees their sins, or ever bow at your altars to receive your wafers on their tongues, believing them to “be Jesus Christ himself, true God and true man,” and believing that he is “truly, really, and substantially present” in them? How many of these go to your churches? Let any body, wishing to know, stand at the door of St. Peter’s or St. Patrick’s. on the Sabbath, and examine the multitudes who attend these places, and they will soon learn. And even when an intelligent person is seen mixing with

those who attend on your masses, he goes merely through the force of habit, or to wait upon a female relative. Permit me to say that, with an acquaintance somewhat extended in our country, I know not a single layman, of any repute for learning or science, who believes in your distinguishing doctrines. There are some I allow, of high standing and character, who are nominally Catholics, but who, I learn on inquiry, are but nominally so. And the nominally Catholic is really an infidel.

And how stands the case as to Ireland, the land of our birth, where seven of her nine millions of people are Roman Catholics? Whilst its masses are with your church, is not its mind in opposition to it? And what has kept the mind of Ireland from being infidel, but the fact that the religion of the Bible stands out there with a greater or less degree of prominence in opposition to the religion of the priest? Thank God, the Irish massacre did not exterminate Protestantism in the "fairest Isle of the ocean."

And how stands the case in France, where your church, Nero-like, extinguished the lights of truth, and caused the blood of the Huguenots to run like water? Popery has managed France in its own way, without any let or hinderance, and what has been the result? It legislated God out of existence—decreed religion to be a fable, and death to be an

eternal sleep. Knowing nothing of religion but what it learned through the unmeaning rites of your church, and by the carnal policy of your priests, it sought to erase every trace of it from existence. And although France has recovered from the intoxication of the maddening bowl, and has risen to order from the wild chaos into which popery plunged it, its mind is yet infidel. Voltaire is the pope of the mind of France, and Sue is the high priest of the people. Your dumb show of imposing ceremony is there esteemed, not as solemn, but as farcical; and upon your rites but few attend, save the peasantry and the women. And the world should hold the Papal church accountable for all the horrors of the French Revolution.

What is thus true of France is yet more true of the other Papal countries of Europe. If the nobility of Spain, Portugal, Austria, or Italy, are less infidel than in France, it is because they are less educated. Their masses are superstitious—their educated men, including many of their clergy, are infidels—and their men of fortune and spirit live without any moral restraint. Popery brings no strong moral influence to bear upon the mind and conscience of any people. In the proportion that its influence is strong, do people and nations sink in the intellectual, social, and moral scale.

That you, yourself, dear sir, may see this, sit

down and candidly compare Connaught and Ulster, in Ireland. In the one Popery almost exclusively prevails ; in the other, Protestantism is in the ascendancy. What a difference between them !—Compare Ireland and Scotland—and although the land of St. Patrick is far richer than that of St. Andrew, yet how heaven-wide the difference between them ! Compare Spain with England—Italy with Prussia—Rome with Edinburgh—Belfast with Cork ; how wide the difference ! Come across the Atlantic, and continue the comparison on our own Western continent. Compare Mexico to New England—Brazil to these United States—the city of Mexico to that of Boston, or New York, or Cincinnati ! How great the contrast ! Come yet nearer home : compare the worshippers at St. Peter's, in Barclay Street, with those at St. Paul's in Broadway ;—compare the attendance on your own ministry, at St. Patrick's, with those who worship God at the Brick Church, or at La Fayette Place, or at University Place. How wide the difference intellectually, socially, morally ! And why is it that Papal countries and communities thus suffer, and so sadly suffer when contrasted with other communities, where there is an unshackled conscience and an open Bible ? there must be some general law or cause in operation to produce results so uniform. What is that law or cause ? Sir, it is the influence

of that system of religion which you are seeking with so much zeal and ability to extend. The traveller in Europe need not be told when he crosses the lines that separate Papal from Protestant states ; the obvious marks of higher civilization declare the transition with almost as much plainness as would a broad river or a chain of mountains. Popery, with infallible certainty, degrades man. Do you ask how ? In this wise :—

It takes from him the Bible, the revealed will of God, with all its clear light, with all its high motives to excite the soul to high and holy action ; and without which neither civilization nor religion can be long maintained. Papal countries are countries without the Bible.

It withholds from the people all right moral instruction. It suppresses the preaching of the gospel, and substitutes for it the dumb show of the Mass. The Apostles turned the world upside down by preaching ; but in Papal countries there is generally no preaching. I venture the assertion that there are multitudes of Catholic churches in Catholic countries where a sermon would be as great a rarity as would be the saying of mass in a Scottish kirk ! And is it not one of the seven wonders of the day, that the present Pope, the pretended successor of that warm-hearted preacher, Peter, *has preached a sermon*, the first preached by a Pope in three

hundred years!! Could Peter return to Rome, unless his long absence from the body has cooled his generous but impetuous spirit, I am afraid he would treat his pretended successors as roughly as he once did Malchus.

It withholds from the people the benign influences of Christianity, the great element in the development of civilization. It withholds the Bible,—the sermon,—it has instituted a worship which wants nothing of heathenism but the name,—that worship is performed in a language now unspoken by any living people; it excludes all reading from the people but such as the priest permits: acting on the principle that ignorance is the mother of devotion, it erects no schools for the instruction of the common mind; it substitutes the feast day for the Sabbath; the saints and the Virgin Mary for the Saviour; confessions and penances, for faith in Christ; and reverence for places, unmeaning rites, relics, for the fear of God. Sir, I say it with deep sorrow, Popery is not Christianity. It is a fearful perversion of the religion of God; and for the evidence of these assertions I again point you to its influence upon the people where there is nothing to counteract it. It has degraded the once noble Castilian until there is now none so mean as to do him reverence: Italy, once the seat of empire, it has reduced to feebleness; and the once chivalrous Italian, who

carried the eagles of his country to the extremes of the world, to an ignoble slave. And it has rendered our noble-hearted, noble minded, impulsive countrymen, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water in all the countries to which they emigrate. The degradation of Ireland, which has made it a by-word, I charge upon Popery. If the priests of Ireland would give the quarter of what they receive for praying souls out of purgatory, to the sustaining of common schools among the people, there might be three or more such schools sustained in every parish in that bleeding, famishing, yet noble country ; and its sons would have an opportunity of rising to that position to which their native wit, eloquence, and genius entitle them.

These, sir, are, in brief my reasons for asserting that the effect of your religion is to make the masses of your people superstitious. They have no intelligent views of God. They know nothing about the plan of salvation. Sacraments and ceremonies exert an undefined mysterious influence. The priest exerts a ghostly, fearful power, before which the ignorant believer slavishly crouches, and of which he stands far more in awe than he does of the God who has made him.

And the very causes which render the masses superstitious, operate in an opposite direction upon the intelligent, and drive them into infidelity.—

They reason about your doctrines as the Earl of Mulgrave is said to have done with a priest who was sent to him by James II. of England, to convert him to Popery. "Sir," said he, I have convinced myself, by much reflection, that God made man ; but I cannot believe that man can make God."

My dear sir, the days of Popery are numbered. The Bible is against it. Civilization is against it. The mind of the world is against it. Good people now pray for its downfall as earnestly as they do for that of Mahometanism. It may live through centuries yet to come ; but it will be as Judaism now lives : or as Paganism lived in many dark corners of the Roman world long after its conversion to the Christian faith. But my own fear is that the Papal world, both as to its mind and its masses, will become suddenly infidel, as in France, and then pour down its legions upon the Church of God, to blot it out of existence. The Romish Church is one of the "gates of hell" which has poured forth armies of the aliens in opposition to the Church of Christ ; but it has never, nor will it ever, prevail against it.

With great respect yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER VI.

Popery has degraded Ireland—Evidences of its degradation
—Absenteeism—Sub-letting—Tithes—The Priest's cry for
money.

MY DEAR SIR,—In my last letter, in which I sought to illustrate that the influence of Popery is to make the masses superstitious, and the intelligent infidels, in all the countries where it predominates, I made the following assertion: "it has rendered our noble-hearted, noble-minded, impulsive countrymen, the hewers of wood and drawers of water, in all countries to which they emigrate. The degradation of Ireland, which has made it a by-word, I charge upon Popery." To some of the evidences of the truth of these assertions I wish to call your attention in the present letter. Perhaps the present state of feeling in our country towards famine-stricken Ireland, may secure for what I shall say to you, some attention.

That Ireland is a degraded country, as to its masses, with all our pride of country, neither you nor I can deny. Its general poverty, its pervading ignorance, its mud hovels, its innumerable beggars, its insubordination, are the sad and tangible proofs of its degradation. They lie upon the surface of the country, where every traveller can behold them. And the untravelled American has the evidences of

this degradation brought to his own door. He sees it in the perfect ignorance of his Irish servant—in the squalid appearance of the Irish beggar—in the deep-rooted superstition of the Irish papist—in the Irish brawls in low tippling-houses—in the furious passions of an Irish mob—in the large proportion of Irish convicts in our prisons, and of vicious Irish in our places of moral reform. It is, my dear sir, with feelings of regret and shame that I make this statement. My love of country has never forsaken me for an hour. With all its faults, I love Ireland still; and in the lowest depths of their degradation its children manifest a sensibility and a nobility that would honour those in the highest ranks of civilization, and that evince what they would be, under a right development of their social and moral nature. What are the causes of this degradation?

I will not, I cannot omit from the list of causes what is technically called Absenteeism: the lordly proprietors of the land living in foreign countries, and expending abroad the hard earnings of their tenants at home. This is one of the grievous curses of Ireland.

Nor can I omit the system of letting and sub-letting, or renting and sub-renting of the land, by the richer to the less rich, until between the owner and the actual cultivator there may be six to twelve landlords, each living upon those below him; and

the actual tillers of the land supporting them all ! This is infusing into the curse of absenteeism an ingredient which multiplies its bitterness by ten. It gives rise to a class of landlords as unpitying as famine.

Nor can I omit the system of tithes for the support of the Established Church of Ireland. An Episcopal priest is placed in every parish in Ireland ; and if he has not one single parishioner to wait on his ministrations, he is yet entitled to his tithes from the parish. And these tithes are drawn from the actual cultivators of the soil, the poor tenants. And these tithes are usually let and sublet, as is the land ; and their collection usually falls into the hands of men as rapacious as vultures. Yes, and the priest for whose support these tithes are paid may never have made the impress of his foot upon the soil of his parish ! Yes, and when the tither calls upon a poor man to pay his tithes for the support of a minister he has never seen, and for the maintenance of a religion which his soul abhors, unless he is ready to pay, his only cow, more than one half the support of his family, is riven to the market, and there sold for half her value ! And if that does not pay, his pig is driven and sold in the same way ! Such is the system of tithes in Ireland ! I have no language, my dear sir, in which to express my abhorrence of it. The

support of such a system is a disgrace to the Protestant name ; it is a deep, dark, direful stain upon the equity of British legislation. It is a public protest before heaven and earth, against the church that sanctions it, and against the craven-hearted earthly-minded clergy that can submit to be thus supported ! Out of your own church, sir, I know of no ecclesiastical nuisance so utterly offensive as that of the Established Church of Ireland ! And yet the very upholders of these schemes of robbery, yes, and some of the very individuals that pocket the plunder thus legally and ecclesiastically filched from the poor people, write to us about public faith and honesty, and lecture us upon the subject of slavery as if they were spotless as Gabriel ! Of all this I can say, as Talleyrand is reported to have said to a lady that frequently annoyed him—“Madam,” said he, “you have but one fault.”—“Pray, Sir,” said she, “what is it ?” “It is,” said he, “that you are perfectly insufferable.”—Nor have I seen, among the various plans suggested by Lord John Russell for the relief of Ireland, a hint at the abolition of this nefarious system of tithes.

Bad, my dear sir, as I think of these causes, and much as they have contributed to the degradation and impoverishing of Ireland, they are but as the dust of the balance when compared with the influ-

ences of Popery. And that yourself may see this, hear me to the close, calmly, and without prejudice.

Why this absenteeism, of which we so bitterly and justly complain? I am not about to excuse it; but one of its reasons is the opposition of the priest to the efforts of the land proprietor to elevate his tenantry, and the fierce jealousies which the priest excites in the minds of the people. There is but little absenteeism in Scotland; why is it so general in Ireland? The cause we find in the difference of the religion of the two people. If the parish priest of Ireland was like the parish minister of Scotland, the Marquis of Sligo would have as pleasant a home upon his estate as the Duke of Buccleugh or the Marquis of Breadalbane.

Popery does nothing for the education of the people of Ireland. With the wealth of the middling classes under its controul, and almost at its beck, where are its schools and its colleges for the education of its people? You send to Ireland for money to establish them here; why erect none there?—Connaught, where your Church has complete control, is an almost unbroken mass of ignorance. And Munster is precisely like it. And these are the portions of it where the famine is now raging. Ignorance brutalizes, and sensualizes, and renders men improvident. It places our higher in subjection to our lower nature; and in withholding edu-

cation from the people popery has degraded Ireland. And wherever its children are carried by the tide of emigration, their want of education places them in the lowest grade of society ; and they are more dreaded as a burden, than hailed as an accession. Without the high aspirations which knowledge imparts, and without the self-respect which it creates, they are satisfied with being menials where they might be masters—to be carriers of mortar, where they might be chief builders on the wall. If the ignorance of Ireland has any thing to do with the degradation of Ireland, *I charge that ignorance upon Popery.*

And if Absenteeism, and sub-letting and the tithe system do much to impoverish the people, Popery does yet more. It meets them at the cradle, and dogs them to the grave, and beyond it, with its demands for money. When the child is baptized, the priest must have money. When the mother is churched, the priest must have money. When the boy is confirmed, the bishop must have money.—When he goes to confession, the priest must have money. When he partakes of the Eucharist, the priest must have money. When visited in sickness, the priest must have money. If he wants a charm against sickness or the witches, he must pay for it money. When he is buried, his friends must pay money. After mass is said over his re-

mains, a plate is placed on the coffin, and the people collected together on the occasion are expected to deposit their contribution on the plate. Then the priest pockets the money, and the people take the body to the grave. And then, however good the person, his soul has gone to purgatory; and however bad, his soul may have stopped there. And then comes the money for prayers and masses for deliverance from purgatory, which prayers and masses are continued as long as the money continues to be paid. Now when we remember that seven out of the nine millions of the people of Ireland are papists, and of the most bigoted stamp; and that this horse-leech process of collecting money, whose cry is "*give, give,*" is in operation in every parish; and that as far as possible every individual is subjected to it, can we wonder at the poverty and the degradation of Ireland? Can we wonder that its noble-hearted, noble-minded people are every where hewers of wood and drawers of water? Shame, shame upon your church, that it treats a people so confiding and faithful so basely! Shame, shame upon it, that it does so little to elevate a people that contribute so freely to its support! O, Popery, thou hast debased my country—thou hast impoverished its people—thou hast enslaved its mind!—From the hodman on the ladder—from the digger of the canal—from the ostler in the stable—from

the unlettered cook in the kitchen, and the maid in the parlor—from the rioter in the street - from the culprit at the bar—from the state prisoner in his lonely dungeon—from the victim of a righteous law stepping into eternity from the gallows, for a murder committed under the delirium of passion or whiskey, I hear a protest against thee as the great cause of the deep degradation of as noble a people as any upon which the sun shines in the circuit of its glorious way !

My dear sir, your religion is for the benefit of the priest, and not that of the people. Its object is not to spread light, but darkness—not to advance civilization, but to retard it—not to elevate, but to depress man, that he may the more readily be brought under your influence. And we have in Ireland a type of what our happy land will be when the priest wields the power here which he wields there.

I own, dear sir, that I have digressed a little from my original object in these letters. But in my next I shall commence with the reasons which, on the most mature reflection, yet prevent me from returning to the pale of your church.

With great respect, yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER VII.

Reasons for not returning to the Papal Church—Prohibition of the Scriptures—The way and manner of Papal Worship—Ceremonial Law of Popery—Obstructions raised between God and the soul.

MY DEAR SIR,—Agreeably to the promise made to you in my last letter, I now commence a statement of the reasons which, on the most mature reflection, yet prevent me from returning to the pale of your church. I wish to avoid prolixity of statement, and minuteness of detail ; as I feel that I am addressing one who can see the point, and weigh the force of an argument, without either.

When, in the kind providence of God, my mind became interested to know what God would have me to do, I cast around for a true guide to the solution of the question. Where could I find such an one ? Books are written by fallible men—priests had already imposed on my understanding—fond parents, deceived themselves, taught me superstition for religion—all men are liable to err. I felt there was a God, and that I was bound to obey him ; but where is the rule of my obedience ? This was *the* question. I was told of the Bible, but of that I knew nothing, and, then, I knew the Bible to be by your church a prohibited book, or to be read only by priestly permission. I sought

the Bible, and read it. I found it to be the true and only guide to the right solution of the question as to what God would have me to do. And without the fear of the Pope, or of the anathemas of the Council of Trent, and without a line of license from prelate or priest, I have continued to read it for years. And the virtual prohibition of the unfettered reading of the Bible by your church, is one of the main reasons why I cannot return to it.— That your restrictions amount to a virtual prohibition, your candor will not for a moment deny.

And let me ask you, dear sir, why this virtual prohibition? Who has given you authority to say that I must not read what God has given to direct me into all the ways of faith and obedience? God has commanded me to “Search the Scriptures;” who has *given you authority to forbid me?* What right have you to forbid me, more than I have to forbid you? Produce your credentials! Where does God place his Revealed Will in the keeping of pope, prelate, or priest, to be doled out to his erring children in such ways and parcels as they may deem best? He has no more placed the Bible under your control, or that of your church, than he has the sun in heaven, or the vital air. Nor can I conceive of any principle that can possibly induce you to withhold it from the people, without gloss or comment, save one; “Every one who doeth evil

hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." It is said that Herod when convinced that he was not of the royal line of the Jews, burned their genealogies and records that his false pretences might not be confuted by them. Is it for a similar reason that your church withholds the Bible from the people? The Bible lays the axe at the root of the Upas tree of Popery ; is this the reason why it is withheld.

Another of the reasons which prevent me from returning to your church, is the way and the manner of your public worship of God. On reading the New Testament, I find that Jesus Christ embraced every opportunity of declaring the will of God. After his ascension and the descent of the Spirit, the Apostles went every where preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. The worship of God, as taught us in the New Testament, consists in prayer, praise, and the preaching of his word for the instruction and edification of his people. To the instruction and edification of the saints every thing in the church of Christ is made subservient. Is it so in the church of Rome? Do your Masses convey any instruction to the common or the uncommon mind? Do they ever give, have they ever given one true idea of God, or of religion, to a human soul? If so I should like to know it. May not individuals attend upon them from youth

to gray hairs, and yet know not the first principles of the doctrines of Christ? I have attended recently, sir, a High Mass at one of your Cathedrals. It was on the last Christmas day. I bore the unmeaning pageant for three hours together. There was the bishop in his robes, with his cap, his crook and his crozier—there were priests, in numbers, moving about, making their crosses, obeisances and genuflexions—when the bishop rose, the cross and crozier moved before him, and the priests, as waiters, went behind him—the book was shifted from side to side, and was read and chanted in ways that no mortal hearer could comprehend—there was the raising of the Host, and the bowing down of the people—the incense, and all the other usual accompaniments of such a service; and it struck me as one of the most farcial pantomines that I ever witnessed. I left the house without receiving a solitary religious suggestion, and puzzled and confounded for a solution to the question, how intelligent men could possibly submit to act such a farce, and to pass it off upon a crowd of poor looking people for the solemn worship of God? And If your Mass, when thus performed with all the splendor and pomp of your ritual, is thus unmeaning, how insipid must it be when performed in your country chapels by ignorant priests, who hunt up the sheep only to shear off their wool! God, my

dear sir, is an intelligent God, he has given me intelligence with which to worship him. For the intelligence within me, either as to its increase or exercise, your church makes no provision in its public worship. I must not, then, return to your church, and seek to have my soul, made for the inhabitation of the Spirit, satisfied with the mumery of your muttered Masses, in the public worship of my God.

Another of the reasons which prevent me from returning to your church is, the burdens which it places on my conscience, which crush without correcting it. It institutes a kind of a ceremonial law which restricts where God has given liberty ; and which licenses where God has prohibited indulgence. With your Fast and Feast days, who can keep up without an almanac in his hand ? And how many of your people can read it ? Should I blunder in counting the days of the week, and mistaking Friday for Thursday, eat meat, my conscience is wounded. If, in performing penance, I miscount my beads and say a less number of Pater Nosters than required, my conscience again suffers. If, ignorant of the "Laws of Lent" which have been just published by you, I should eat three meals on a day between "Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday," or should eat meat on the "Thursday next after Ash Wednesday," or on "any day in the Holy Week,"

my conscience would be again burdened. And these are but specimens of the thousand and one ceremonial regulations of your church, as burdensome as they are unmeaning, which fret and crush the conscience without directing or strengthening it. And whilst thus restricted in things indifferent, I am freely indulged in things which the divine law prohibits.

Now, sir, who has given you authority to make laws where God has made none? Where is the law in the Statute Book for your Lents, your Feast days, your Fast days, your Easter days? Why fast or feast at one time more than another? Who has given you authority to say what I shall eat, or how often, in any one day of the year? What unutterable arrogance to tell me I cannot eat fish and flesh at the same meal: what priestly intolerance to tell me, with my Bible open before me, that if I transgress these laws I sin against my God! You know that the gospel is a law of liberty, you know that if a man eat meat he is not the worse, and that if he refrain he is not the better,—you know that the Bible teaches that man is defiled, not by that which entereth into him, but by that which cometh out of him. And why burden souls and fetter consciences by silly enactments about things in themselves indifferent, and about which God has made no regulations? O, sir, like the Scribes and the

Pharisees of old, you are busied about the mint, the annis and the cummin, forgetful of the weightier matters of the law. And I deeply regret that a man who has forced himself up to a station and influence against so many adverse circumstances, had not force enough left to break the chains of early religious prejudice, to rise up to the region of intellectual, and moral, and religious freedom! You are too much of a man to stoop to such nonsense. I would leave such things to those who know no better.

On these subjects, dear sir, your church must return to the standard of the Bible, and of common sense, before I can return to it.

Another of the reasons which prevent my return is, the obstructions which your church raises between me and my God. My Bible, that hated book by pope, prelate, priest and papal peasant, teaches me that if any man sin he has an Advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ. It every where teaches me, that I may have free access to God through Jesus Christ, that if I sin, I may go for pardon directly to the throne of God, through the mediation of his Son. And this is a precious privilege—a privilege which may be enjoyed by all, "*without money and without price.*" Now what do you ask of me to do in order to receive the forgiveness of sin, and to be restored to the favor of God? You.

send me to Peter or Paul, or some other saint on the catalogue, who may have never known me, and who may never hear me if I pray unto them. Or you send me to Mary, whom you blasphemously call the Mother of God, to ask her to intercede for me. Nor will this suffice. I must go to your Confessional, and tell you *all* my sins ; incurring the fearful penalty of refusal of pardon if I withhold one. Thus you take from me the privilege of going to God for myself—a privilege purchased for me by the death of Christ. You tell me I must go to the priest : and from the priest to the saint, or to the Virgin ; and the Saint or Virgin will go for me to the Saviour ; and he will go for me to the Father ! And then when pardon is granted, it goes from the Father to the Son—from him to the Saint or Virgin—from him or her to the priest ; and when in the hands of the priest, he will give me absolution, *if I pay for it !* Will you say, dare you say, that this is a caricature of your teachings upon this matter ? Would to God you could, with truth !—Why send me to the saints to ask them to intercede for me, if this is untrue ? That I am a sinner, I know and feel. That there is pardon for me, through the atonement of Jesus Christ, on my repentance and faith, is a precious doctrine of the Bible, and of my creed. That pardon I receive the moment I sincerely exercise the graces of repent-

ance and faith ; yes, and not a whit the less freely if all of you, pope, patriarchs, prelates and priests were with Pharaoh and his chariots.

And why turn me away from the door of mercy and compel me to speak to my heavenly Father by proxy? Why call me away from the cross, and send me to a priest, or a saint, or a virgin, to ask them to do for me what I can better do for myself? Where has my Saviour taught me that I can only address him through a priestly attorney, that I must fee, however poor, for his services? O, ask me to do any thing—to bale the ocean—to tame the hurricane—to arrest the sun—rather than ask me to return to your church, until every thing is removed which forbids the free access of my soul to my God,—which suspends my salvation on any thing else than repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. You must pull down your toll-gates on the way of life, before you see me back.

The statement of a few additional reasons I hope to give you in my next.

With great respect yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER VIII.

Further reasons for not returning to the Papal Church—Celibacy of the Clergy—Auricular Confessions—A call on Irish Papists to assert their rights.

MY DEAR SIR, —In my last letter I entered on the statement of the reasons which yet prevent me from returning to the pale of your church. I adverted only to four : your virtual prohibition of the Bible ; the way and manner of your public worship of God ; your ceremonial law, which burdens and crushes, without instructing or correcting the conscience ; and the obstructions which you erect between my soul and my God. These, or either of them, would be reason sufficient not merely to excuse, but to forbid, my ever returning to your communion. For me to give farther reasons, would seem to be a little like your doctrine of Supererogation, which is not among the least of the absurd errors of your infallible church ; but as the argument is cumulative, you will bear with me whilst I proceed to the statement of a few others.

I cannot return to your church, until you cease teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Permit me here to say, dear sir, that without a solitary exception, the things which are peculiar to your church—the things which make it distinct-

ively what it is, are the commandments of men, either in direct opposition to the teachings of the Bible, or based upon the most gross perversion of its meaning. In as brief a manner as possible, permit me to illustrate this position.

Your church teaches and enjoins the celibacy of its clergy, in language the most pointed and positive; and the Council of Trent hurls its anathemas against all who would assert the contrary doctrine, or who would admit the lawfulness of the marriage of a priest. Thus you forbid the priest to marry—you damn him if he does marry—and you anathematize all who think or say, that in marrying he sinned not against God or man. All this, you admit, is so. Now, then, I ask your authority for so teaching. I ask not your ecclesiastical, but your scriptural authority. Did not the Jewish priests marry? Was not Peter your first pope? This you assert. And was not Peter's wife's mother sick of a fever? Matt. 8, 14. Pope Peter, then, had a wife. Why would it be a mortal sin in pope Pius IX. to have one also? Would he be the less pious or moral on that account?—You, sir, are a bishop. How far you are a scriptural bishop is not now the inquiry. But Paul in writing to Timothy says, "A bishop *must* be the husband of one wife....having his children in subjection with all gravity." And even poor "dea-

cons," the lowest order of your ministry, are thus instructed by Paul, "Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well." 1 Tim. iii. 12.

Now, dear sir, put these things together, and see in what a position they place you! Peter, your first pope, had a wife; and you damn to the depths of perdition any pope that would, in this respect, follow pope Peter! Challoner says that he had no commerce with his wife after he was made an apostle! Will you tell me how Challoner found that out? Deacons and bishops *are commanded*, or at least permitted to have wives, and you would empty the seven vials of your wrath, and pour all the anathemas of Trent upon the head of the priest or bishop that, in obeying God, would disobey your church! Is it possible for you and the Bible to be in more direct opposition? Is it wrong to conclude that in thus forbidding to marry, your church gives at least one evidence that it is the Antichrist? Will you favor me, dear sir, with a common-sense exposition of the meaning of Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 3, where he brands "forbidding to marry" as a doctrine of "devils?" If half as literal in the exposition of Paul, as in your exposition of, "this is my body," "this is my blood," how will you avoid the inference that you are a devil?

Again your church enjoins confession, under

the most stringent rules. To this I have already adverted in former letters. I advert to it again to illustrate how you teach for doctrines the commandments of men. The Council of Trent teaches that "it is the duty of every man who hath fallen after baptism to confess his sins at least once a year to a priest." It teaches that "this confession of sin is to be secret, for public confession is neither commanded nor expedient." It teaches that "this confession of sin must be very exact and particular, together with all circumstances, and that it extend to the most secret sins, even of thought or against the 9th or 10th Commandment." You know you omit the 2nd Commandment, which forbids your bowing to pictures and images, and divide the 10th into two, so as to make up the 9th and 10th, and thus complete the number. On receiving confession as thus ordained, the priest pronounces absolution upon the penitent, "not conditional or declarative only, but absolute and judicial." When I remember the use which your church has made of this doctrine, and the fearful power which it gives the priest over the people, my heart swells with emotion as I pen these lines; and, like the angel of Manah's sacrifice, my thanksgivings ascend to heaven, that I have escaped the snare of the fowler.

Now, sir, let me again turn querist and ask you where in the Bible do you find your doctrine of

confession taught? With me the teachings of all your Councils weigh not a feather; give me, if you can, Bible authority. Is there one text from Genesis to Revelation, which you, as a scholar, will say teaches it? I put the question to you, not as a bishop, but as a scholar. A priest from Maynooth, taught there only to mumble the Missal; or a poor unlettered peasant from Mayo or Galway, into whose lips words are put, as into the mouth of a parrot, might quote to me James v. 16, which says, "Confess your faults one to another;" but will *you* do it? They might tell me that the Pharisees were baptized of John Baptist, "confessing their sins"—that at Ephesus, many that believed came and confessed, and showed their deeds"—but will *you* do it? If James is your authority, are not you bound to confess to me, If I am to you? "Confess your faults *one to another*;" if this text teaches auricular confession, I hold you to it. When did you put the poor Irishman, who whispered his sins into your ears, in your seat in the Confessional, and kneeling down outside, whisper through the little square hole cut in its side, your sins into his ear? This would be *confessing your sins one to another*. Did you ever do this, sir? Never, never. I ask you again, not as a bishop, but as a scholar, whether a single text quoted by Challoner, or Butler, or Hay, gives a shadow of countenance to your

doctrine of confession? Lay aside your mitre, your crosier, your crook, and your canonicals, and look at those texts as simple John Hughes, and then answer my question. How can you account to man or to God for the erection of such an awful institution as Auricular Confession, upon the merest perversion of Scripture, a perversion which has neither sense, nor wit to excuse it, and without a solitary text or example in the Bible to sustain it? O, why will you do as a priest, what you would not do as a scholar or as a man?

And, then, what aggravates the whole matter is, that every man who is made a priest, no matter how ignorant or wicked, feels himself divinely appointed of heaven to confess sinners, and to absolve them from their sins! No matter if he is a Judas, he has the same authority to confess and absolve as Peter! A priest, Sir, under your own jurisdiction, and I am sorry to say, an Irishman also, was heard thus to address the ostler of the hotel at which he boarded, on returning from Mass on Sabbath afternoon, "Pat, get up my horse, I have to go and confess a poor devil who is dying five or six miles out in the country." I would not say this wretch is a fair sample of all your priests: I hope otherwise. But there are too many like him! And he has the same power to confess and absolve that you have, against whose character I know nothing, save that you sus-

tain a system which you must know to be as false as the Koran.

I would implore you, my dear sir, to review this doctrine of your church. As to the word of God it is baseless as the fabric of a vision. It was unknown in the Jewish church ; it is untaught in the Christian Scriptures. It crept into your church during the dark ages. It was nailed upon it at Trent. It is clearly a device of man, and in terrible opposition to some of the plainest precepts of God's word. It gives power to the priest, and enslaves the people. It has been to your church, in every land, a fearful source of corruption. Every thing is beneath you but the truth. Reject the lie, however long it may have been told, and however it may increase your income and influence. No longer prostitute your fine talents and education in maintaining this religious juggle, but send the sinner to the cross, telling him that whosoever shall there confess and forsake his sin, shall find mercy. In this thing show yourself a man ; and the blessings of unborn generations will be upon you.

And could I address myself to every papist upon whom the sun shines, I would say to them all, and especially to those of your country and mine, *the doctrine of confession is a priestly device to gain an absolute authority over your consciences.* You are no more bound to confess to a priest than he is to

confess to you. And as to the doctrine of Absolution, connected with Confession, it is simply blasphemy. God only can forgive sin. And were it not for the fees connected with your Confession and Absolution, there is not a priest upon the face of the earth that would care a straw about your Confession, or that would commit the blasphemy of forgiving your sins. If bishops or priests will not, in this day of light, cut in pieces the net wove in the dark ages to confine and trammel you, it is in your power to rise and tear it in pieces. Irish Roman Catholics! our fathers fought and bled and died, to obtain for themselves and for us civil liberty. Their blood shed by British bayonets in these struggles for their civil rights, have crimsoned every stream and fattened every field of Ireland. And will you, their sons, bow your necks to a priestly tyranny, which debases you mentally and morally? Will you give yourselves to be led, and rode, and robbed, by priests who come to you pretending that the keys of heaven hang by their girdle, and that it is with them to let you in, or shut you out at pleasure? No man can be a slave whilst his soul is free; nor can any man be free, whilst his soul is in bondage.

There is, Rev. sir, one confession which I freely make to you; my spirit waxes warm when I think or write upon the absurdities of your church—upon its flagrant perversions of the Scriptures—upon its

shameful impositions upon the ignorant and credulous—upon the unblushing effrontery with which it teaches for divine doctrines the commandments of men. And I assure you that my warmth of feeling is not diminished when I consider that a man of your character and country, could consent to be a chief workman in this bad business. Irishmen have their faults ; but they are not usually those of duplicity, or perversion of the truth. And, hence, whilst they may make good papists, they make bad Jesuits.

I regret to find that I must end this letter without ending my illustrations of the way and manner in which you teach for doctrines the commandments of men. This I hope to do in my next.

With great respect yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER IX.

Reasons which prevent from returning to the Papal Church
continued—Purgatory—Transubstantiation.

MY DEAR SIR,—I will proceed with the statement of the reasons which prevent me from returning to the pale of your church. I have reached my fifth reason; your teaching for doctrines of divine authority the commandments of men. I entered upon the illustration of the way in which you do this in my last and without ending my illustrations, ended my letter. Permit me to state a few more for your candid consideration.

The doctrine of Purgatory is one of the peculiar doctrines of your church. You teach that nearly all Christians when they die, are “neither so perfectly pure and clean as to exempt them from the least spot or stain; nor yet so unhappy as to die under the guilt of unrepented deadly sin.” It is for these *middling* Christians that you make a purgatory, where they remain until they make full satisfaction for sin; and then they go to heaven. And the “Profession of Faith” of Pius IV. tells us “that the souls therein detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful; that is by the prayers and the alms offered for them, and principally by the holy sacrifice of the Mass.” And the doctrine of

your church is so expounded upon this matter, that but few, if any, die however good, without needing purgatorial purification ; and that but few are so bad but that they may be there fitted for heaven.— This you will admit is a fair statement. The more you get into purgatory, the more you will receive of the “suffrages of the faithful ;” that is of their money.

I have already told you my estimate of this doctrine. It is that by which your church traffics in the souls of men : and an amazingly profitable traffic it makes of it. It has placed in your possession riches far exceeding in value the mines of Peru.— And because of the *value* of this doctrine you seek in all possible way to sustain it. With me the authority of your popes and councils is not worth a penny. I would rather have one text of Scripture bearing upon the point than the teachings of as many such as you could string between here and Jupiter. Let us then look at the chief texts adduced to sustain a purgatory.

One of these texts is Matt. 12 : 32 : “ Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world neither in the world to come.” Matt. 5 : 26 is another : “ Verily I say unto thee thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.” Both these, you say, refer to purgatory. From the one

you conclude that sins may be forgiven in the next world—from the other, that none can get out of purgatory till the last farthing is paid. Now, dear sir, let me ask you, how you put these texts together? If sins are forgiven, how or why is payment also required to the last farthing? Can I forgive a debt and yet require its payment? Look at the first text again; you find purgatory in it, but how? In this way; because there is a sin which will not be forgiven in this world nor in the world to come, *therefore* there is a sin that will be forgiven in the world to come!! Such is the logic of infallible Rome! Because a certain sin is not to be forgiven here or hereafter, *therefore* many sins will be forgiven hereafter! And because “this world” and “the world to come” is inclusive of all time and place, Popery builds up a place which belongs neither to this world nor to the world to come, and fills it with fire, and calls it Purgatory! Like Mahomet’s coffin, it floats somewhere between heaven and hell. Into this world of fire you drive the souls of men as they leave the body, and let them out only on the reception of “the suffrages of the faithful”—that is their money! Now, sir, what do you say to all this?

But, you ask, are there not other texts quoted by our writers to sustain Purgatory as a Scriptural institution? O yes, but they are as far from the point as the most vivid imagination can well conceive.

They are by the diameter of the heavens farther from the point, than those just quoted. Let any intelligent man read chapter xiv. of Challoner's " Catholic Christian," and he will rise from it with amazement that God could ever leave men to the folly of so perverting Scripture; or that even the devil could permit them so absurdly to misapply it. Permit me to quote an instance by way of illustration. We are taught in Matt. 12: 36, that we must give an account for *every idle word* in the day of judgment. Now how does this text prove a Purgatory? In this wise: "No one can think that God will condemn a soul to hell for every idle word; *therefore* there must be a purgatory to punish those guilty of these little transgressions." If you or any mortal man think I am joking, let him turn to the chapter. Let me quote the answer in full to the question, Are not souls in Purgatory capable of relief in that state? "Yes, they are, but not for any thing that they can do for themselves, but from the prayers, *alms, and other suffrages offered to God* for them by the faithful upon earth, which *God in his mercy is pleased to accept of*, by reason of that communion which we have with them, by being fellow members of the same body of the Church, under the same head, which is Jesus Christ." Now, sir, if in this answer you substitute the word "priest" for "God," then we come to the facts in the case.

The "alms" and the other "suffrages of the faithful," are pocketed by the priest. And purgatory was invented for the special purpose of securing these alms, and other suffrages of the faithful, to pope, prelates, and priests.

Now, sir, let me ask you a few questions. Perhaps I have asked you too many already ; but you will bear with a fellow-countryman, anxious not so much to embarrass you, as to bring out the truth. What has the blood of Christ which cleanses *from all sin*, to do with the venial sins of those middling Christians who die, not good enough to go to heaven nor bad enough to go to hell ? What has the blood of Christ, his atonement, his finished work, at all to do, on your plan, with the saving of the sinner ? If my child should die and go to purgatory, would a thousand dollars given to you at once, have the same effect as a hundred dollars a year for ten years ? How can you tell when enough is given to get the soul out ; or has your purse no bottom ? As souls are spirits without bodies, how can you tell one soul from another as they issue from the gates of purgatory ? In the prayer "Hail Mary," we are made to utter at its conclusion, the following petition : "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and *at the hour of our death* ;" why not solicit her to pray for us *after our death*, to get us out of purgatory ? Is it because you are afraid

the good woman would get us out before the priests had gotten enough of the "alms and suffrages of the faithful."

My dear sir, the absurdities connected with your doctrine of purgatory are sickening. It is based on the love of money. The Bishop of Air candidly confesses that it is not revealed in the Scriptures. It came into the church in the seventh century, it was affirmed in the twelfth;—it was stereotyped at Trent; and fearful anathemas are hurled at all who deny it. It puts away the work of Jesus Christ, and sends the sinner, not to "the blood of sprinkling," but to the fire of purgatory, in order to secure a meetness for heaven. And why this parody—this caricature of the religion of God? Simply to put "the alms and the suffrages of the faithful" in the pockets of your priests! What an outrage upon the common sense of the world to have men, dressed up in canonicals, teaching things as true, of which the beast that Balaam rode might well be ashamed!

I entreat you, my dear sir, to review this doctrine of your church. *You*, surely, must see its absurdity. Neither in the word of God, nor in the common reason of man, is there the shadow of an argument to sustain it. Nor is there a class of men upon the face of the earth who deserve a purgatory from which "the alms and other suffrages of

the faithful" would never release them, as do those who preach up a purgatory and its fearful torments, for the sake of filthy lucre. But, as Father O'Leary said to Canning, "I am afraid many of them will go farther and fare worse." My high respect for you renders me solicitous that you should not be of the number. I wish you not to be one of the dumb herd who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and believe a lie that they may be damned.

Transubstantiation is another of the peculiar doctrines of your church. By this you teach, that, in the Lord's Supper, the bread and the wine are converted into the real body and blood of Christ, by the consecration of the priests. The thing is so absurd as to confute itself; and as, therefore, to require from me but a brief statement. Challoner, chap. v., thus states the doctrine: "The bread and the wine changed by the consecration into the body and blood of Christ." "Is it then the belief of the Church that Jesus Christ himself, true God and true man, is truly, really, and substantially present in the blessed sacrament? It is, for where the body and blood of Christ are, there his soul also and his divinity needs be. And consequently there must be whole Christ, God and man: there is no taking him to pieces." And all this is proven to demonstration by the quoting of the words of Christ

at the institution of the Supper, "This is my body," "This is my blood."

Now, sir, if you and your church had only the common sense to look for the true meaning of the two little words "is" and "this" in the above sentences of the Saviour, it would have saved you a world of trouble. Look at one or two similar passages: "The seven good kine are seven years—and the seven good ears are seven years."—Gen. 41: 26. "The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches."—Rev. 1: 20. "The seven heads are the seven mountains."—Rev. 17: 9. The sense is plain here. They *signify* those things. So the word "is" may mean to *signify*. Now for the word "this." It obviously refers to the bread. I will have none of your nonsense about "the substance contained under the species." It is darkening counsel by words without knowledge. So that the simple, natural, reasonable, scriptural sense is: "This bread signifies or represents my body"—"This wine signifies or represents my blood." Just see how a little common sense simplifies every thing!

Now, turning back to your interpretation, permit me in view of it to ask you a few questions: Did the apostles at the first institution of the Supper, eat the real body and blood of Christ? So your church must and does teach! What power have you,

more than I have, to work such a miracle as to change a little wafer into the real body and blood of Christ? If you stickle so much for the letter in your interpretation of "This is my body," "This is my blood," why withhold the wine from all but the priests? Why give up the bread for a wafer? If some wag should mix arsenic with the wafer before consecration, would you be willing to take it after you had changed it into the real body and blood of Christ? You place great dependence on John 6: 56. You take it literally. Will you take the whole connection literally? Then he that eateth this bread *shall live forever*. He that eateth this bread *will never hunger*. All that you have to do, if your principle is true, is to give your wafer to the poor, famishing Irish, and they hunger no more!

But the thing is too outrageously absurd to dwell upon! Nothing equals it in absurdity in all paganism. If a man should mumble a few words over a stone, and tell you it was converted by these words into bread, what would you say to him? If, against all the evidences of your senses, he should seriously assert that it was bread;—and if, in addition, he should seriously assert that unless you believed that stone to be bread you must be damned, would you not be for putting him in a strait jacket?

But I must bring this letter to a close. These are but a few of the illustrations of the way and

manner in which you teach for doctrines the commandments of men. And without at all exhausting the subject, I must here close my statement of the reasons which forbid me to return to the pale of your church. When I give up my Bible for the commandments of men, they must have learning, or genius, or wit, or something to recommend them. They must be, at least, good nonsense, which, you know, to an Irishman is quite interesting.

With great respect, yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER X.

Is the Church of Rome a Church of Christ?

MY DEAR SIR,—I have with all frankness and honesty stated to you the reasons which yet prevent me from returning to the pale of your church. And although I have stated but five, which are scarcely a tithe of those that press themselves forward for utterance, yet, if not to you, they are to myself and I think are to all unbiassed minds entirely sufficient. I have even the faith to believe that you yourself will deem them sufficient; and that were it not for the peculiarity of your position, and your plighted oath, to sustain your church, right or wrong, that they would have the same effect upon your mind and conduct that they have upon mine.

Whilst reviewing and weighing these reasons, the questions have arisen before my mind, Is the Roman Catholic, a church of Christ? Has it so far departed from the truth, or so grievously perverted it, as to forfeit all claim to that title? These are questions of grave import, which I will not undertake to decide. But I wish to state to you, in the present letter, how some things bearing on these questions strike me, and then I will submit the decision of them to yourself. To this, surely, you will make no objection.

The external organization of your church is obviously not that taught by Christ and his Apostles. As to this matter every thing in the Bible is simple. The kingdom of Christ is not of outward observation—its seat is in the hearts and affections of men—its elements are righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. The great object of the Apostles and first preachers of the doctrines of Christ was to win men to the belief and to the practice of the truth. When men believed the truth, they were baptized and were thus introduced into the communion of the saints; and not a word is said about popes, patriarchs, cardinals, metropolitans, prelates, or of the duty of implicit obedience to their authority. There is a government enjoined, but it is as free and as simple as one can well conceive; whilst yours is as despotic, and as absurdly pomp-

ous as one can well imagine. As your external organization is not taught in the Bible, where did you get it ?

The answer to this question in my mind is plain. As the early church advanced in numbers, influence, and wealth, it gradually lost the martyr spirit of its founders. Its ministers became corrupt, secular, and ambitious. By degrees, bishops, from an office, became an order. As Rome was the metropolis of the world, and it was there that the greatest number of martyrs had shed their blood, the bishop of the metropolitan city soon became pre-eminent among his brethren. Now the State sought the influence of the church to assist in maintaining its authority ; and the church sought the influence of the State to assist in building up its ghostly dominion. Each yielded to the request of the other. The church rapidly extended ; and the ambition of priests conceived the idea of governing it after the model of the State. Rome must be the centre of ecclesiastical as of civil power. The State had its Cæsar,—the church must have its pope. Cæsar had his governors of provinces,—the pope must have his patriarchs. The governors had their subordinates ; and these again theirs, down to the very lowest office ; so that the patriarchs had their archbishops ; these their bishops ; and these their priests ; and so down to the very

lowest office in the church, As in the State all civil authority emanated from Cæsar, and all disputes were finally referable to him ; so in the church all ecclesiastical authority emanated from the pope, and he was made the final judge of all disputes.— Here, sir, is the origin of your ecclesiastical government. And did the limits of a letter permit, I could run out this parallel into some details which even to you would be striking and confounding. Your ecclesiastical organization has just the same divine warrant that that of Mahometanism, or Hindooism has,—God permits it. The Roman Empire has passed away ; ages ago its mangled limbs were strewn over the earth. But in that ecclesiastical organization called Popery, we have the living models of that form of government by which the Cæsars bound the nations of the earth to their thrones ; and by which they were enabled to crush, at the extremes of the world, every effort to break the yoke of servitude.

How far all this bears upon the question, whether yours is a church of Christ, I submit to your candid decision. When weighing this matter, I would entreat you not to jeopardize your standing as a scholar and as a man of sense, by any reference to, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I build my church." Leave that thing to the boys from Maynooth, with long coats and short brains.

The forms and method of your public worship are obviously not those taught us in the Bible. I enter your church, St. Patrick's, to worship God. I am required to sprinkle myself with holy water, and to make on myself the sign of the cross. And why, or for what purpose? That I may be defended from unclean spirits! I look around me, and I see a forest of candles burning upon the altar. And for what purpose? where is this commanded? I see people counting their beads, and praying before pictures. Where is this taught? Now comes out a priest in his robes embroidered with crosses. Did Peter or Paul wear such things when teaching Jews and Gentiles the faith of Christ? He says nothing to the people, but goes through the Mass in Latin, of which I may know nothing. Was this the way Peter and Paul did? Then come out boys in white frocks, with their censers, offering incense to the priest, and filling the church with the odour. Were Peter and Paul thus incensed? The priest goes through the service, bowing, and kissing the altar, now lifting up his hands, now his eyes; now speaking in a whisper, now in full voice, according to the rules laid down. Now, Sir, where did you get these things? And after the ceremony is over, I again cross myself with Holy Water and retire. This is your public worship of God every where, and from age to age; save, that

in this country there is a sermon, on sticking to Mother Church, sometimes added. Have you the most distant idea that it was in this way the first Christians worshipped God? The manner of your public worship is not scriptural or Christian: it is heathen, and was originally adopted for the seducing of the heathen to Christianity. If Peter or Paul could be introduced to Saint Patrick's, when you were going through High Mass, and were told that you were one of their successors, what would be their astonishment! What! you a successor of the men who lived by catching fish, and mending nets, and making tents!! And that farce in which you are a chief actor every Sabbath, the exact counterpart of the worship instituted by the apostles!! Your manner of public worship is not only unscriptural, but in direct opposition to scripture—it wants nothing of heathenism but the name. And how far all this bears upon the question whether yours is a Church of Christ, I submit to your candid decision.

The Bible is God's revealed will to teach us what we should believe, and do. This Bible your church has corrupted, and labours to suppress. You mix up with the pure word of God, the Apocrypha, which lays no claim to inspiration, and whose internal evidences are fatal to such a claim. I need here only mention the recommendation of the an-

gel, in Tobit, *to make smoke out of the heart and liver of a fish, to scare devils out of men!* And yet this Apocrypha is of more use to you than all the Bible besides! You mutilate the ten commandments written on stone by the finger of God! You mistranslate the Scriptures in passages innumerable, to bring out your peculiar doctrines: or to conceal its testimony against them. And where the point of Scripture cannot be broken or blunted, you put a note at the bottom in explanation. And what notes! Take the following as an illustration, appended to Romans iv. 7: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." "That is, blessed are those who, by doing penance have obtained pardon and remission of their sins, and also are covered; that is, newly covered with the habit of grace, and vested with the stole of charity." Nor is the work of corruption yet done. You superadd to all this your traditions, which like a piece of Indian rubber you can stretch or contract to suit your purpose. Nor can the Bible, when all this is done, be put into promiscuous circulation, lest, with all these additions and corruptions, some might understand it as teaching some things in opposition to popery! You tell the poor Irishman that his spade and hod are better suited to him than the Bible; and the poor Irish woman that she had better keep at her broom and wash-tub, than trouble herself

about the Gospels! When you corrupt the Bible to the extent of your ability; when you add to it every thing you can, or dare:—even then you keep it from the people! Why thus fearful of the Bible?

Nów, sir, how far all this bears upon the question whether yours is a Church of Christ, I submit to your own decision. As far as you can, you strive to supplant the Bible as the only rule of faith; and as far as I am concerned, I would as soon strive to grope my way to Heaven by the Koran, as by that which you give me as a substitute for the Bible. But I wish not to forestall your decision.

The Sacraments, instituted in condescension to our weakness, are outward and sensible signs of inward and spiritual grace. These like the Bible, you have enlarged and corrupted. Christ and his Apostles left us but two; you multiplied them by three and carry one. I only wonder how your ingenuity permitted you to stop at seven. Here you have allowed a Dr. Deacon, a dull Englishman, and I believe, a Protestant in the bargain, to surpass you! He adds, *exorcism, the white garment, a taste of milk and honey, &c.* How easily you might have gone on to seven, or even seventy-times seven. But in addition to multiplying, you have most grievously corrupted the two that are taught us in the New Testament. In baptism you dip or pour three times; where is this taught? Ordinarily you per-

mit it only to be administered in churches which have fonts, the water of which is to be blessed every year on the vigils of Easter and Whit Sunday! Where did you get this? Where is your warrant for the absurd practice of god-fathers and god-mothers? The priest blows three times upon the face of the person to be baptized, saying, "Depart out of him or her, O unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost;" where did you get this? He then puts a grain of blessed salt into the mouth;—then he exorcises the unclean spirit, because the devil must go out, before the person is introduced into the church! Then he wets his finger with his spittle, and touches, first, the ears, saying, "Eph-phatha"—then his nostrils, saying, "unto the odour of sweetness." "Be thou put to flight, O Devil!" And when baptized, a white cloth is put on his head, and a candle in his hand. Now whence all these things? Is this a heathen ceremony, or Christian baptism?

Bad as all this is, it is strong common sense when compared with your corruption of the Lord's Supper. The bread and wine are rejected for a wafer—that wafer is converted into God—the wafer God is first worshipped, and then eaten! And to believe all this shows great exaltation of faith and piety! Some things would appear very pious were they not so absurd and ludicrous.

Now, Sir, how far this multiplication and corruption of the sacraments of the Christian religion enters into the question, whether or not yours is a Church of Christ, I submit again to your own decision.

Nor have you permitted a single leading doctrine of the Bible to escape your efforts to pervert them.

The Bible holds up one God as the sole object of religious worship. You teach us to worship the Virgin—the host—the cross; and to adore angels—departed saints—relics—and even pictures.

The Bible teaches that our only access to God is through a Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who is made unto us of God, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, and that through faith in his name, we are made partakers of the blessings of his work of redemption. You teach that there are other intercessors to whom we must apply—that our own works are efficacious to save us—that the sacraments have inherent power to save—that faith in Christ is not the true method of justification.

The Bible teaches that we must be born again, created anew by the Holy Ghost. This you denounce as a false and accursed doctrine, and teach us that we are regenerated by baptism, and kept in a state of salvation by confirmation, confession, penance, fasts, and alms.



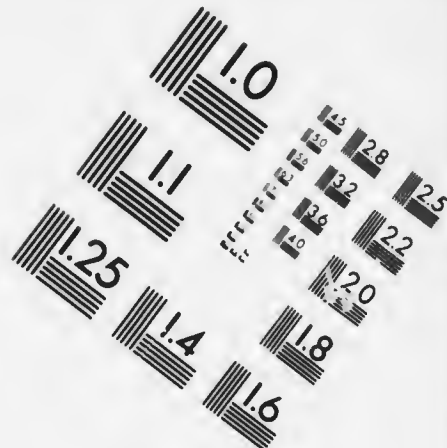
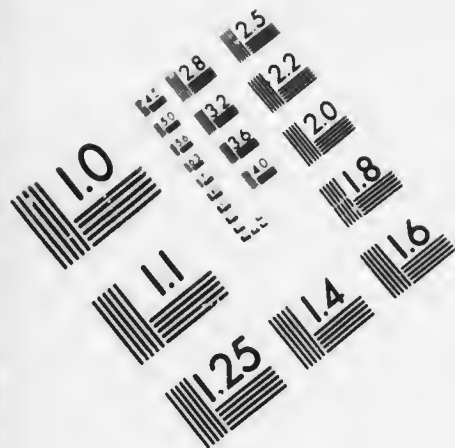
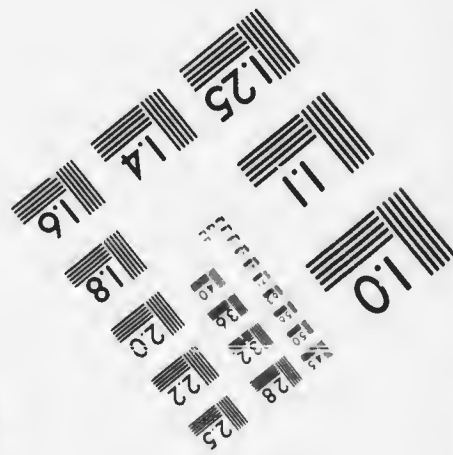
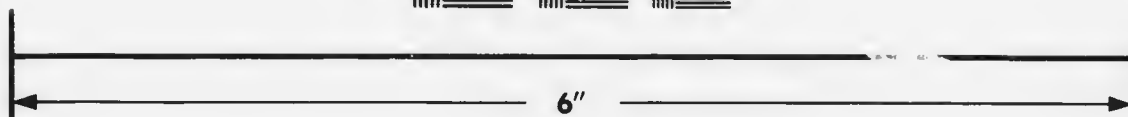
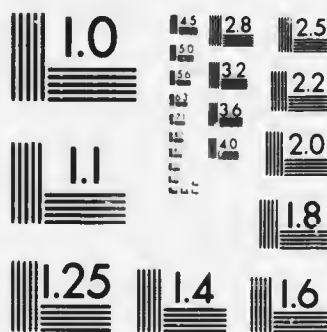


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The Bible plainly teaches that when we die we go to Heaven or to Hell, like Lazarus and the rich man, that our probation is confined to the present state. You teach us that there is a third state, Purgatory, where souls are purified from the stains of venial sins, and thus prepared for Heaven. And so on to the end of the chapter.

Such, Reverend Sir, is the way in which some things strike me, bearing on the question whether yours is, or is not, a Church of Christ. That there are many papists truly pious, I believe. But whether a church fashioned as is yours, as to its external organization, after the Roman state, when governed by military despots—departing, in its public worship, in every essential particular, from that taught in the Scriptures; whether a Church which corrupts and suppresses the Bible—which corrupts its sacraments and its doctrines, is a Church of Christ; this, this is the grave question which I now submit to your decision. It is said that a question involving a vast amount of property was once submitted to Sir Matthew Hale. Before giving his opinion he was approached by the lordly defendant in the case with a bribe. He repulsed him with great indignation. His lordship complained of him to the king; and the reply of his Majesty was:—“Sir Matthew makes his decisions without fear or favor; he would treat me in the same way.”

All I ask of you is to decide the above question with the honesty of Sir Matthew.

With great respect yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER XI.

The effects of Popery on Liberty, Knowledge, Happiness.
True Religion.

MY DEAR SIR,—In my last letter I submitted to your decision the question, whether or not the Roman Catholic is a Church of Christ, after briefly stating to you how some things bearing on its truthful decision strike me. I design the present letter to have no very remote bearing upon the same question; and would ask you to give it the degree of consideration to which in candour, you may deem its statements.

In reading the prophecies of the Old Testament, I find that they all speak with the most glowing anticipations of the yet future Kingdom of Messiah. That kingdom was to produce the civil, moral, and spiritual renovation of the world. When I turn over to the New Testament, I find that on the birth of Messiah, the Angel of the Lord stated to the shepherds that he came to bring them good tidings of great joy which should be to all people. And having announced the birth of the Saviour in the

city of David, he was suddenly joined by a multitude of angels, singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The Old Testament and the New,—patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, all unite in teaching us that the effect of Christianity upon our world would be to restore it to its primeval state, and to re-instamp upon the heart of man the lost image of his Creator. Now how far has Popery fulfilled these predictions, and the reasonable expectations of the faithful, founded on them? In other words, what are the fruits of Popery? Our Saviour tells us that a good tree yields good fruit,—a bad tree, bad fruit. And with this test in view, my object in the present letter is to state to you how some things strike me.

What has been the effect of Popery upon *human liberty*? Permit me to use the word "liberty" in its widest sense. As to civil liberty, it has been its unchanging enemy. It has never permitted a spark of liberty to glow for an hour when it could extinguish it. There is not in Europe, at the present hour,—perhaps not on earth,—a greater civil despot than the Pope. The man that in Italy, writes a page, or makes a speech in favour of liberty, must fly the kingdom or be dragged to a dungeon. And we are to judge of Popery, not by its pliability where it cannot rule, but by the way which it shows its heart where it can do so without let or hinder-

ance. Kings as well as people have groaned under its tyranny. Henry IV. of Germany was made by the Pope to stand three days in the open air, with bare head and feet. Frederic. I. was made to hold his stirrup. He caused Henry II. of England to be scourged on the tomb of Thomas-a-Becket. And the present state of Spain, Austria, Italy, show the effects of Popery on civil liberty.

It is equally the foe of mental liberty. The Bible is without any authority, save what your church gives it. And the Bible must teach nothing save what your church allows. And man must believe nothing save what the priest permits. And philosophy must teach nothing save what the church sanctions. You know that for this last offence Galileo was sent to study astronomy in prison. Pure popery and real liberty, never have breathed, and *never can*, the same atmosphere. The principle of your church is to allow nothing that bows not to its yoke.

What has been the effect of popery upon *human knowledge*? When Christianity like a new sun rose upon the world, there was much that might be called education in the Roman Empire. The obvious effect of Christianity was to extend it. After the lapse of some ages, Popery by gradual stages crept, serpent like, to the high places of power. How soon afterwards the lights of learning go out; how soon the dark ages commence, and roll on as

if they were never to end ! And those centuries of darkness form the golden age of your church. And what spirit did it manifest on the revival of learning in England after the sacking of Constantinople, and at the Reformation ? Leo X. prohibited every book translated from the Greek and Hebrew. This blow was aimed at the Bible. He forbade the reading of every book published by the Reformers. He excommunicated all who read an heretical work. The Inquisitors prohibited every book published by sixty-two different printers ; and all books printed by any printer who had ever published a book of heresy ! Nor has one of these prohibitions been ever recalled. At this hour, the noblest products of human genius are under the ban of your church ; and the Index Expurgatorious is in full operation at Rome !

And what has been the effect of all this upon human knowledge ? Look into the countries, for an answer, where your church rules undisturbed. The nobles and the people, in Spain, Portugal, Austria, Sardinia, Sicily, are sunk into almost the same state of ignorance. Upon the intellectual degradation of Catholic Ireland I have already dwelt. The Book of books which the Lamb died to unseal, your church has re-sealed ; it has laid an embargo upon human knowledge ; it allows the people to read only what it permits ; and it permits

only what tends to rivet its chains, and to perpetuate the darkness which is its natural element. When the Reformation occurred, the retrograde movement of the world towards ignorance and barbarism, and idolatry, had almost been completed. Had it not occurred, a radiance might continue to gild the high places of the earth after the gospel sun had set—a twilight might be protracted for a few ages, in which a few might grope their way to heaven—but each age would have come wrapped in a deeper, and yet deeper gloom, until impenetrable darkness had fallen on the world. Even the degree of knowledge which has obtained in the papal world, it owes to the Reformation.

And what has been the effect of popery upon the *happiness of our race*? This is a question of wide bearing, yet I can do little more than glance at it. Has it ever laid out its energies for the promotion of human happiness? If so, when and where?—Has it not, on the other hand, set itself in opposition to every thing calculated to promote it? Does general intelligence promote it? Your church has always opposed it. Does the free circulation of the Word of God promote it? You have opposed this also. Does the inculcation of pure religion promote it? You have poisoned or closed up all its fountains. Does advancing civilization promote it? Your efforts are untiring to reverse its

wheels and to roll us back to the darkness of the dark ages, whose very light was darkness. But what can I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of your monasteries and nunneries—of the wars which popery has excited—of its crusades—of the bitter jealousies it has sown between states—of the oceans of blood it has shed to obtain its objects—of the Inquisitions it has erected to torture the unbelieving—and of the way and manner in which it has caused those of whom the world was not worthy, to have trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: how it caused them to be stoned, to be sawn asunder, to be slain with the sword; to wander about in deserts and in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. O! Sir, the pathway of popery through the world is marked by the blood and bones of its victims. It has gone into the earth, feeling that Joshua's commission on entering Canaan, was in its pocket; and that all who questioned its authority were Hittites and Amorites.—And almost without a figure of speech it can be said, that the nations which it found as the garden of the Lord, it converted into a howling wilderness. I know not that human happiness has ever had a more determined foe than popery.

What is the influence of popery as to the exercise of *Christian charity*? By charity I mean not

alms-giving, nor yet the love of God which the Spirit inspires in the soul, but that grace which induces love to those who differ from us, and to cast a mantle over their defects. The Bible teaches us to do good to all as we find opportunity—to love our enemies—to treat with kindness those who despitefully persecute us. How does your church obey these injunctions of Christ the Lord? Let your Inquisitions—your auto-da-fe's—your Bartholomew's day—your Irish massacre—your early anathemas against heretics—your consigning to perdition all beyond the pale of your church, answer. All non-papists you place beyond the pale of mercy—you refuse their bodies Christian burial, if such *your* burial can be called—you convert into the bitterest enemies of the man that becomes a Bible Christian, those of his own household—you make the poor Irish servant to feel that his master and her mistress, are the enemies of God, however pious, whose reading of the Bible, and whose prayers to heaven cannot be heard without committing great sin—you enact a ceremonial law, and proclaim that all who submit not to it are speckled with plague spots. And, hence, your priests, wherever located in Protestant communities, instead of going about, as men, to promote the general welfare, move about as spectres, as if afraid of the light of day; here abstracting a child from a

Sunday school ; there burning a Bible ; here poisoning the mind of a servant against his master, and there that of a maid against her mistress ; and seeking to place all, save his own unlettered followers, like the lepers of Samaria, without the City of God. Does this look like the spirit of Christ ?

What is the influence of popery on *true religion* ? To this point I have already spoken. I have told you, sir, how it has corrupted our Rule of Faith, and the sacraments and the doctrines of the Bible. This is but the *theory* of the matter ; O, how can I speak of its practical effects ? The religion of Christ it has converted into a system of idolatry in which God and witches—the Bible, and traditions, canons, decretals—the worship of God and of saints—the mediation of Christ and of Mary—prayer and scourging—pious deeds, penances and processions, are all of like authority and like efficacy !

The mind of the poor papist it fills, not with light and love, but with darkness and fear. It closes to him the way of heaven through the blood of Christ, and opens it through the fires of purgatory. Leaving him in doubt as to where he will succeed best, he now prays for pardon to God—now to the Virgin—now to Peter or Paul—now before some old picture almost obliterated by age—believing alike the truths of scripture, and the absurdities of your system, and knowing little of either.

It impresses the poor papist with the idea that religion consists, not in love to God and man, but in external submission to rites and forms. Hence the Spaniard will go to confession with his dagger under his mantle—and the poor, generous Irishman will go from the Mass and Missal to the pot-house. And your inquisitors have gone out from your eucharist to kindle the fires which consumed *your* heretics and *our* martyrs, and which illumined their pathway to glory!

But I must stop, lest my emotions swell beyond due bounds.

These, Rev. Sir, are some, and but some of the fruits of your system. How do they appear to you when thus brought together? Is the tree which bears these fruits good, or bad? Has popery, in any one particular, in any one country, or in any age, ever produced the results which prophets and apostles have told us the religion of Messiah would produce? If not, are not popery and Christianity not only different, but antagonist systems?

With great respect yours,

KIRWAN.

LETTER XII.

Conclusion of the whole matter.

MY DEAR SIR,—The letters which I have had the honour of addressing to you, I must now bring

to a close. I have stated to you, with all frankness and sincerity, my reasons for leaving the church in which I was born, baptized and confirmed; and which, on the most mature deliberation, yet prevent me from returning to it. I can assure you, on the word of an Irishman, and which is far more, on the word of a Christian, that I have had no end in view but the exposure of error, and the development of the truth. Thirty years have almost run their course since I left your church:— and although not utterly unknown to the men of our age, nor unsolicited, these letters form my first appearance on popery. Unless some unexpected ripple is excited on the current of my feelings, they will, probably, form my last.

Now, dear Sir, what think you of these reasons? Are they, or are they not, sufficient to excuse, to forbid my return to your church? Had I an ear sufficiently acute to hear the decision of your conscience, I believe in my soul that it pronounces them sufficient. Yes, I believe, that were it not for your sad doctrine of Infallibility, which stereotypes and perpetuates every absurdity, you, and multitudes like you, men of sense and education, would rise and cast a fire-brand amid the rubbish which ignorance and wickedness have, in the progress of ages, collected around your church, and send its smoke heavenward like the smoke of a

furnace. But, Sir, I am not ignorant of the slow progress of truth against bigotry—of the great difficulty of exchanging bad opinions and customs, hallowed by usage, for better ones. Nor have I read history so inattentively as not to learn from it the great difficulty of converting high ecclesiastics to the knowledge of the truth. The mitre has shielded many a head from the weapons of sense and logic; and under the surplice many a conscience has gone to rest, that, without it would have contended to the death for the faith once delivered to the saints. I must not forget that it was the high priest who occupied Moses' seat that put our Lord to death; nor can I forget that those claiming to be the successors of Peter, and the vicegerents of Christ, have been the greatest persecutors of the saints. They have shed Christian blood enough for pope and cardinals to swim in. Would to God that you could see things as I see them; your influence would be strong in freeing our fellow-countrymen from that bondage of the soul which most degrades them. But despairing of this, I turn from you to the victims of your system. Roman Catholics, and especially Irish Roman Catholics, to you I now turn. From your bishop, whom, with you, I respect as a man, though I oppose his religious principles, I appeal to you. With you is the power to bring to a perpetual end that system of

ghostly tyranny the most oppressive that man has ever felt. Subjects and sceptres depart together; the farce of the Mass will soon end when there are none to witness it,—and popes, bishops, and priests will soon seek an honest calling when there are none to be edified by their jugglery,—when the alms and the suffrages of the faithful, cease to flow.

Will you give an honest perusal to these letters: and candidly weigh the reasons and the arguments which they contain? That I was born in Ireland, is my pride. My sympathies are all with Ireland in its civil, social, and moral degradation. The blood of my kindred, shed to defend it against English oppression, mingles with its soil. Your present feelings as to your church, I have had, and in all their force. I can entirely appreciate them. I cordially hated Protestantism and Protestants; and I have seen the time when I regarded the man as my personal enemy who would utter a word against my religion. But those were the days of my youth, and of my ignorance. When I became a man, I put away childish things. And my reasons for so doing are spread out before you in these letters; and all I ask of you is, kindly and candidly to consider them, and then to act accordingly. If they are not sufficiently cogent to cause you, as they have caused me, to leave the Church of Rome, then

you will have my entire consent to be oppressed, fleeced, and ridden by your priests, as long as you live.

Yet permit me to entreat you to give to the subject of these letters the attention which it demands. I know that many of you are sincere ; but this is no test of truth. I know many of you to be devout ; but so are Mahometans and pagans. I know that many of you are prepared to make any sacrifice which religion demands. But we may give all our goods to feed the poor, and our bodies to be burned, and yet be strangers to the only true religion. My heart is deeply affected in view of your state. A noble people, you are shut out from the joys to which God invites you. You are hoodwinked and manacled by a system of the grossest fraud and delusion ; you are denied the common birthright of a citizen of the world—seeing with your own eyes and hearing with your own ears. You are robbed of the only volume that can guide you—and are forbidden to enter the way of life, save through the gate which is guarded by your priests. O ! suffer the entreaties of one who suffered as you now do under the galling chains of papal tyranny. Break the fetters which priests have forged, and in which they have bound you. You are now in a land where you may laugh at the excommunications and anathemas of popes, prelates, and priests. God has

given you his word; let no man filch it from you. God has given you a mind, to think for yourselves; let no man usurp the power of thinking for you. God invites you to himself, to receive at his own hand pardon and forgiveness. O! submit not to go and pay for these, and on your knees, to a priest. Go to the Bible for your religion. Receive nothing as religious truth, which is not there taught; and your mental, social, and moral regeneration is commenced.

But you meet this appeal with the objection, that I am a deserter from your church; and that I am not, therefore, to be heard. If your priests take any notice at all of these letters, I know well the changes they will ring upon this idea. But was not Peter a deserter from the Jewish church; and must he not be heard on that account? Must a man who renounces error never be heard by those who continue in it? And what think you of the persecution by your church of those who renounce its authority? To say the least of it, it is in bad company. The Jews put Christ to death for deserting the faith of Moses. The Mahometans put to death any man of their number who rejects the Koran for Christ. The Hindoos expel from their society all who reject their religion for ours. And popery has shed, in rivers, the blood of those who could not but reject its follies and absurdities. In this happy

land, the bull of a pope is as harmless as a lamb—and the thunders of the Vatican have no lightning that injures. Priests may prejudice you against these letters, but they are the interested party,—their craft is in danger. And all I ask of you is, to give my reasons the candid consideration which you owe to yourself, and which their importance requires.

But you may ask, What! do you wish me to give up my religion? Is not mine the oldest religion? Here, I well know, is the invincible argument with many of you; but has it any weight? Are the oldest things always the best? If so, then the Jews were right in resisting Christianity; and the pagans are right in clinging to their false systems—and you do wrong in ever exchanging an old garment or an old house for a new one. But is popery the oldest religion? O, no; Christianity is older. Popery and Mahometanism arose at the same time, and centuries after the establishment of Christianity. They are alike corruptions of the religion of Jesus, though the prophet has apostatized farther than the pope. They both appeal to the senses, and are both idolatrous. If the pope has his holy water, the prophet has his holy well. If the one has his holy bones, and coats, and relics, the other has his holy pieces of tapestry from the temple of Mecca. They have alike their pilgrimages—their senseless repetition of

prayers—their Lents—their penances, and their external symbols which alike adorn the church and the mosque. And if the papist can object to Christianity, saying, Is not mine the oldest religion? then can the Mahometan do the same.

But yours is not the oldest religion. I could here give you the time, did the limits of a letter permit, when the distinguishing doctrines of your church were introduced. The celibacy of the clergy came into the church in the Fourth Century; purgatory appeared in the Seventh, and was affirmed in the Twelfth; auricular confessions and the worship of the Host, in the Thirteenth; and so on to the end of the chapter. And instead of wishing you to give up the oldest religion, we wish you only to give up popery for Christianity;—to give up the new and to return to the old. All that I have done myself, and all that I desire you to do is, to lay aside everything that pope, bishops, and priests have added to the religion of Jesus, and to embrace that religion just as it is taught in the Bible.

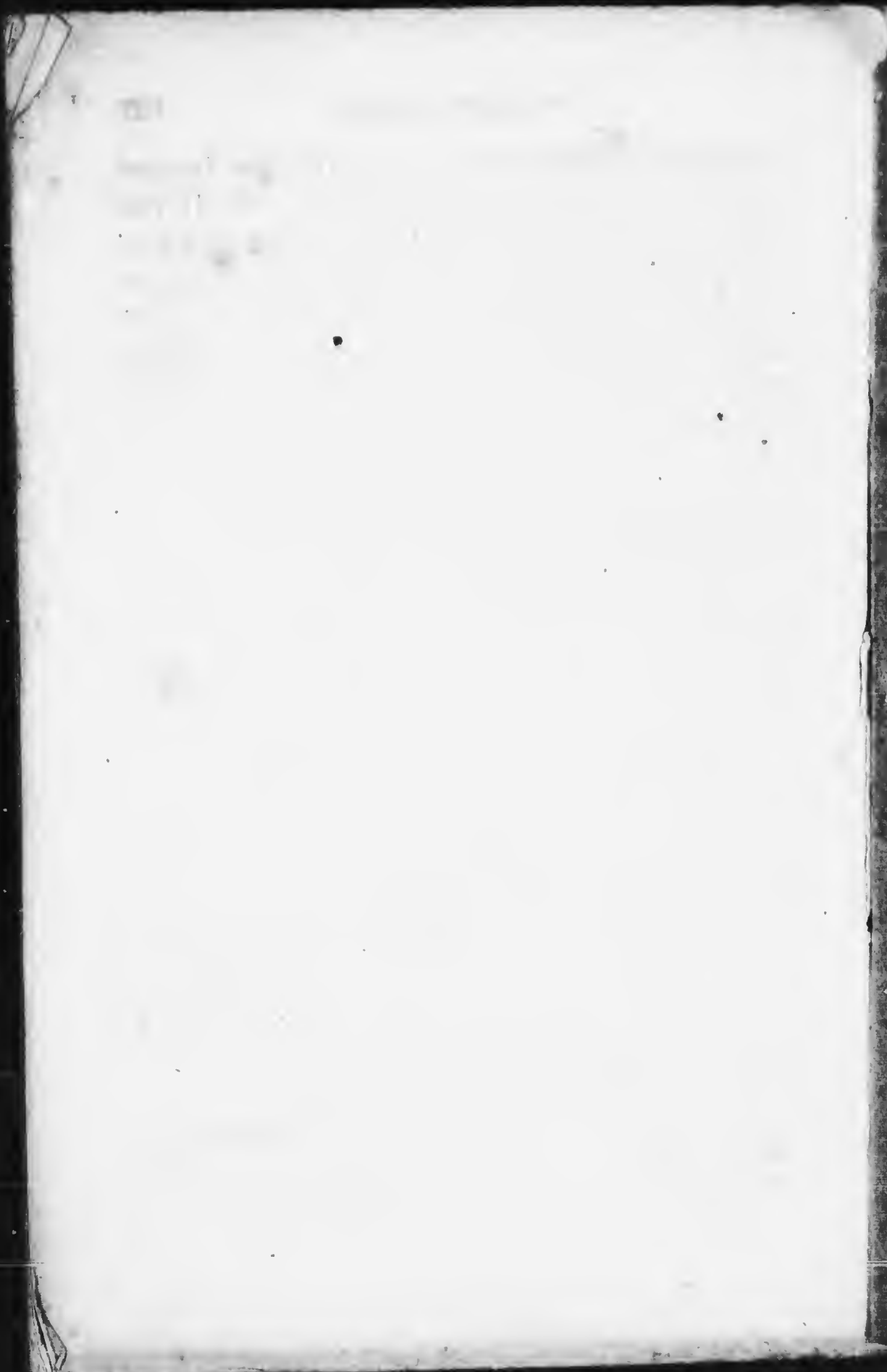
Convinced that you have been deceived by those to whom you have been looking for guidance—that priests have sought your money more than your salvation—that instead of bread they have given you stones, and for eggs, serpents—that they have sought to brutalize, instead of enlighten you—to enslave instead of elevating you to the liberty with which

Christ makes his people free ; do any of you inquire as to the course best for you to pursue ? If you will take the advice of one that has gone before you in the way, it is cheerfully given. Think not of giving up all religion because of the deceptions of popery. This was one of my mistakes. Take the Bible for your guide ;—that will not deceive you. It teaches you that you are a sinner ; this you should believe and feel. It teaches you that Christ died for sinners and that his blood cleanses from all sin ; and that to escape the wrath and curse of God due to you for sin, the great and only prerequisites are repentance toward God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Give up your missal for the Bible—confess your sins not to your priest but to God—look for pardon and meetness for heaven, not to priestly ablutions, and eating wafers, and extreme unctions, but to the righteousness of Jesus Christ, received by faith ; and in spite of popes, prelates, and priests, life, eternal life, is yours.

Wishing and praying for you all, that deliverance from popish thralldom in which I rejoice, and that gospel hope of future blessedness, which is my stay and comfort in this vale of tears,

I am, with great respect yours,

KIRWAN.



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