

but an imperfect knowledge of mathematics to comprehend and to master the sublime discoveries of Newton. There was, however, a trifling objection to the publication of this commentary. The Pope had, by his decrees, forbidden any one to maintain the doctrines of the motion of the earth. The learned Jesuits disposed of this difficulty very easily. They prefixed a notice to part of the work, declaring that they bowed with implicit submission to the decision of the Pope that the sun moved round the earth, but that they had been incited by curiosity to show what would have been the case had it been a truth, instead of a fiction, that the earth moves round the sun.—(A laugh.) The world laughed and learned; the Holy See was satisfied and silent.—(Cheers.) Now, let us imagine that these erudite Jesuits, instead of physical theories had turned their minds to religion, and had examined, while bowing to the decrees of the Council of Trent what would have been the result had the Bible been the only rule of faith, and all reference to tradition and the authority of the church set aside. It is evident that censure, penance, and expulsion, if not worse punishments, would have been the result. This instance brings us at once to one of the great obstacles to the progress of moral and political science. Truth is discovered by inquiry; knowledge is attained by the diffusion of opinions; governments have undertaken to suppress inquiry, and to guide opinion on all religious and moral, nay, on many physical subjects. Let us investigate this subject further. We shall find that some of the greatest obstacles which have been interposed to moral and political progress are those which have been caused by a misapprehension of the functions and a misapplication of the powers of civil government. These functions are extensive in their legitimate province; these powers are formidable in their proper sphere. But Governments have perverted to wrong ends an authority which is essential to society in its lowest requirements, and ought to assist its progress to the highest summit. Let us for a moment consider the objects of the formation of civil government. These objects are very large, lofty and extensive. At home a government is bound to protect life and property.—These few words imply the whole question of criminal law, the various relations of property, the laws of marriage, the relations of master and workmen, the security of trade, the maintenance of internal tranquillity, the rule of all orders of men spring out of their dealings with each other.

Let us grant, in addition to these—although it may be matter of some question—the promotion of religion and instruction of the young by public grant or endowment. But there is another duty still more complex and more difficult. Government is charged with the maintenance of the independence of the nation. As such it forms alliances, makes and dissolves treaties, maintains armies and navies, rules, perhaps, extensive foreign possessions, and, whether in peace or war, is bound not to sacrifice any vital interest to a foreign power. (Loud cheers.) Surely here are functions enough for a Burleigh or a Sully—for the wisdom of Somers and the energy of Richelieu—for the capacity of a Henry IV. of France, or a William III. of Great Britain. It has been pretended, however, that besides all these functions it is the right and duty of Governments to prescribe the rule of religious faith, and to draw a circle beyond which it shall not be lawful to move. I propose to show you—first, the argument on which this pretension is based; secondly, its hollowness; and thirdly, the evils which this unhappy mistake has caused. A greater master of morality and of reason, a pious and virtuous Christian—I mean Dr. Johnson—after speaking of the duty of parents towards their children, says,—“Now the vulgar are the children of the state. If any one attempts to teach them doctrines contrary to what the state approves, the magistrate may and ought to restrain him.” On another occasion Boswell relates the following conversation. The speakers are Dr. Johnson and Dr. Mayo.

“I introduced the subject of toleration.—Johnson: Every Society has a right to preserve public peace and order, and therefore has a good right to prohibit the propagation of principles which have a dangerous tendency. To say the magistrate has this right, is using an inadequate word; it is the society for which the magistrate is agent. He may be morally or theologically wrong in restraining the propagation of opinions which he thinks dangerous, but he is politically right.—Mayo: I am of opinion, sir, that every man is entitled to liberty of conscience in religion, and that the magistrate cannot restrain that right.—Johnson: Sir, I agree with you. Every man has a right to liberty of conscience, and with that the magistrate cannot interfere. People confound liberty of thinking with liberty of talking—nay, with liberty of preaching. Every man has a physical right to think as he pleases, for it cannot be discovered how he thinks. He has not a moral right; for he ought to inform

himself and think justly. But no member of a society has a right to teach any doctrine contrary to what the society holds to be true. The magistrate, I say, may be wrong in what he thinks; but while he thinks himself right, he may and ought to enforce what he thinks. Mayo: Then, sir, we are to remain always in error, and truth never can prevail; and the magistrate was right in persecuting the first Christians.—Johnson: Sir, the only method by which religious truth can be established is by martyrdom. The magistrate has a right to enforce what he thinks, and he who is conscious of the truth has a right to suffer. I am afraid there is no other way of ascertaining the truth but by persecution on the one hand and enduring it on the other.”

Such was the conclusion to which a man of powerful understanding and extensive language was driven by resting his opinions on false principles.—There are two of these principles involved in the discourse I have quoted. The first is, that a man is at liberty to hold an opinion in his own mind, but not to communicate it to others. It were easy to show that such a doctrine fully established must prevent all moral and political progress. Indeed, I might go further, and say that even progress in physical science would be arrested if the magistrate were, in the name of society, to stop all diffusion of such opinions as were considered by him adverse to religion. The opinion of Galileo—that the earth moved, was condemned, not as contrary to physical science, but as opposed to revealed doctrine. The opinions of the geologists were, at the commencement of this century, denounced as at variance with the narrative of Holy Writ. Is every man who has made a physical discovery to ask the civil magistrate whether his demonstration is at variance with some ignorant interpretation of the Scriptures before he ventures to publish it to the world. But to meet the objection in front, is he who deems more highly of his God than the emperor or high priest of his day to hide his light under a bushel, because the civil or ecclesiastical ruler does not like to be disturbed? Were the early Christians not to tell their brothers, their wives, their husbands, their children, to forsake idolatry and worship only one true God? Were the Christian martyrs rightly amenable to the penalties of the criminal law? Again, was Luther, after being convinced that indulgences and the other abuses of the Roman Catholic church were founded on perversions of the Christian religion, not to lift up his voice and proclaim his conviction? Was the martyrdom of Latimer and Ridley the just punishment of a crime against society? These questions must have pressed on the logical mind of Dr. Johnson, and accordingly they forced him to change his ground. But what is the conclusion at which he arrives? “The magistrate has a right to enforce what he thinks, and he who is conscious of the truth has a right to suffer.—[A laugh.] I am afraid there is no other way of ascertaining the truth but persecution on the one hand, and sustaining it on the other.” Why not? Why not permit the free circulation of truth and error—leave to truth its own all-sufficient armour—(cheers)—and to error its own stratagems and delusions—leave argument to be met by argument, assertion by inquiry? If the just cause suffer for a time, if human credulity embraces error with ardour, and is cold as ice to truth, we may yet rely that the light of free discussion will in time disperse the mist of false opinions—that, however slow the process, the test of free examination will in time separate the dross from the genuine ore. Here, in fact, is the turning point of the whole question. Dr. Johnson and others contend that Governments have the right and duty to control their subjects, as parents control their children. The friends of religious liberty contend that governments have no such right, and have no special capacity to fit them for the task. A Roman historian speaks of the rare felicity of his time, when a man was allowed to think as he chose and to speak as he thought. This rare felicity is the common birth-right of mankind. It is the source of all knowledge; the privilege which elevates the nature of man; one of the most precious of the gifts of God.

What is a man
If his chief good, and market of his time,
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast no more.
Sire He that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To rust in us unused.”

The exercise of the faculties of the human mind, I contend, is the first step to the discovery of truth. The highest object upon which the mind, when once raised and disciplined and strengthened by instruction, fixes its attention is religion. What we are to believe of God, what we are required to do in obedience to His will engages the most earnest thoughts of good and wise men. Milton and Locke are great examples of this. But we have higher authority for the exercise of the right of teaching than any mere human dictum. When Peter and John were commanded “not to speak at all nor

teach in the name of Jesus,” they answered and said, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, Judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Again, when they were threatened a second time, and asked by the high priest, “Did not we strictly command you that ye should not teach in this name?” they answered simply, but steadfastly, “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Now, if this conduct of Peter and John was right in the sight of God, it follows that no man ought to be punished for publishing his religious convictions. For it is impossible that men can have a right to do certain things and avow certain opinions, and that other men—their rulers—can have a right to punish them for these same actions and avowals. If a man, convinced of the truth of his own belief, has a right to propagate that belief, a sovereign or magistrate can have no right to punish him for it. For this were to admit two contradictory rights, two repugnant duties, in violation of all our notions of divine and human justice. It is contended, however, that the public peace is only to be preserved by repelling the intrusions of fanaticism, by depressing the disturbances by which innovations in religion are always attended. This is the pretence of those craftsmen who wish to maintain inviolate the profits of their own silver shrines. Let us see how far history sanctions this pretence. Without recurring to the well known example of the trial and punishment of Socrates, let us observe the exercise of this right in four memorable instances. The first I shall take is the punishment of the early Christians in the Low Countries; the third, the religious wars in France; the fourth the revocation of the edict of Nantes. To begin with the Roman emperors. I will not quote the example of Nero or Domitian, but refer to the wise Trajan, and his minister, the enlightened Pliny. We possess the correspondence of Pliny with Trajan during the time that Pliny was propraetor in Bithynia. In this curious correspondence we find traces of the provident care with which a Roman governor watched over the public peace, adorned the buildings of the chief towns and guarded the health of the community intrusted to his charge. For instance, as a true sanitary reformer, he reports to the emperor that an open space, near a town, has a stream running through it, which is called a river, but which is, in fact, a sewer—filthy to the sight and pestilential to the smell.—(Cheers and laughter.) He asks the emperor’s permission to have this stream covered, engaging to find the money for the purpose, and immediately obtains the necessary authority. Among other public and private concerns on which he writes, he touches upon the progress made by the Christians.

He complains that the temples are nearly deserted, that animals for sacrifice find no purchasers, and that the number of Christians is daily increasing. He interrogates some who had belonged to their community, and who had left it at various periods from two to twenty years before. These persons readily worshipped the image of the Emperor, and cursed the name of Christ. Examined as to the nature of their former religion, they said that all they had done was to meet on stated days, before daylight, and sing hymns to Christ, as to a god; that they bound themselves by an oath [sacramento] not to commit theft or adultery, to keep faith with their neighbours, and restore goods deposited with them to their right owners; that after this they separated, and met again to take food together, in common, but without any evil intent.—This account, from men who had obeyed the orders of the Emperor to desist from attending Christian meetings, and who were therefore disinterested, might, one should have thought, have induced so benevolent an Emperor as Trajan, and so enlightened a Governor as Pliny, to leave undisturbed the followers of Christ. But it was not so. Pliny seems, indeed, to have doubted whether the name of Christian, apart from any crime was to be punished. He continues, however, his report to the Emperor in these words: “In the meantime, with regard to those who were brought before me as Christians, I followed this method. I asked them whether they were Christians; to those who confessed themselves to be so I put the question a second and third time, threatening them with punishment; those who persevered I ordered to be led out to execution.” Trajan approves these proceedings and only desires that the Christians who were brought before the Governor should not be brought out. I need not relate to you what fearful martyrdoms, what cruel massacres, followed the adoption of this principle of persecution. Far from preserving public peace the system of punishing Christians convulsed the empire, and was so far from being successful, that it finally terminated in the establishment of Christianity. I wish I could add that Pagans were not in their turn victims of persecution. The learned Dean of St. Paul’s, agree-

ing in this respect with other historians, places the first edicts sanctioning the punishment of heretic Christians in the reign of Theodosius the Great. I do not propose, however, to follow the history of the various persecutions of heretics in Christian times. I wish to make a transition at once to the persecution of the Protestants in the Low Countries, and to call your attention to a remarkable passage of Grotius on this subject. Speaking of the intolerant laws promulgated in that country, he says:—(To be continued.)

MR. PERLEY’S LECTURE ON CANADA.—The Lecture on “Canada and the Canadians in 1855” at the Institute, last evening, by M. H. PERLEY, Esq., was the most interesting, racy, and truly useful that we have listened to for a long time. Just as was anticipated, from the Lecturer’s well-known celebrity, the Institute was crowded. There was a perfect jam, nine hundred having managed “by hook or by crook” to get inside the Hall. But we never witnessed a stronger proof of the success of a lecture than in the quiet and constant attention throughout, and the discreet applause of the audience. And when we say that the substance of the Lecture was equal to the happy manner and taking delivery in which it was given, our readers will understand the richness of the treat.

A large map of Canada, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick was suspended at the back of the Stage, on which the Lecturer pointed out the boundaries of the former Province, and also its Lakes, Rivers and Mountains. The Cities of Toronto, Kingston, Montreal and Quebec were briefly described, and the great Falls of Niagara were worthily and admirably spoken of. “Pen or pencil,” the Lecturer said “had never adequately represented them?” The go-aheadiveness of Upper Canada was glowingly treated of, and its superiority to Lower Canada distinctly shown. The Lecturer very humorously pictured the life of the *habitant* in Lower Canada, and made the audience fully comprehend that although they were a cheerful and contented set—these *habitants*—yet they did not make the Country progress. For they are ignorant, and too willing to walk in the same track their ancestors did.

The excellent School System in successful operation in Upper Canada is composed of the best features of that in the States of New York and Massachusetts; while in the Townships are also Libraries, founded, in most instances, by Government.—The population in Canada is increasing at a rapid rate. The social, moral, and agricultural prosperity of that Province was well told by the Lecturer and we trust his remarks on these points will be profitably remembered by his hearers.

That was a capital idea of the Lecturer to say something about our own Province at the conclusion of his Lecture. And the *multum-in-parvo* epilogue was so truthful, so good, so forcible, and so applicable that we wished it had been possible for every person in the Province to have heard the Lecturer deliver it. He said exactly what was needed to be heard by all—speaking enthusiastically for our many various resources which are undeveloped—of what should be done to keep the young and old in the Province in the first place, and then to induce Emigration. But want of space prevents our saying more concerning Mr. Perley’s excellent Lecture so we may only thank him heartily for it, and express a wish that his suggestive schemes for the progress of our own dear Province will soon be realized.—Observer.

On Thursday evening, during the play of Hamlet, at Phoenix Hall, the news of the fall and destruction of Sebastopol arrived, just as Taylor, as Hamlet, was in his death scene, exclaiming—

“O, I die, Horatio;
The potent poison quite o’ercome my spirit;
I cannot live to bear the news from England!”

A friend of the allies immediately cried out,—
“Die away, old fellow; Sebastopol is taken!”—
Petersburg, Va., Express.

A writer in the London *Examiner* attributes the beer and gin drinking propensities of English work-people of both sexes to the unreasonable quantity of labour which they are called upon to undergo. Without the stimulus of strong drink the English navvies and many other classes of laborers could not continue each to do the work of a horse, as they now do.

NEW YORK, Dec. 20.—Last night the jewelry store of Messrs. Lyons & Cohen, No. 168 Chatham Street, was burglariously entered and robbed of watches, jewelry, &c., to the amount of nearly \$60,000.

We are informed by a gentleman from Chippewa, Canada, that two persons belonging to that village went over the falls on Friday last. They were out on the river in a small boat fowling and in pursuit of game, ventured too far into the current, and were consequently carried over the cataract.—*Buffalo Courier*.