

THE GLEANER:

AND
NORTHUMBERLAND SCHEDIASMA.

VOLUME III.]

"Nec araneorum sane texus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes."

No 5.

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THE GLEANER.

FROM BELL'S WEEKLY MESSENGER.

PROCEEDINGS IN THE LORDS—TITHE SYSTEM.

WE called the attention of our readers last week to the proceedings in the House of Lords, on the subject of Lord Wynford's Bill on the new regulation of the Debtor and Creditor's Laws, and we hope we have not called public attention in vain; but we are not now about to repeat our objections to this Bill. They will at length be considered in the right quarter, and a measure of intolerance, hardship, and most unconstitutional tendency, will, we trust, be stopt in its progress.

Our present purpose is to make a few observations on the admirable bill introduced by the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the improvement, or rather alteration of the Tythe System of Great-Britain.

A greater national grievance, more hurtful to the clergy themselves, and more burdensome to the nation; has never existed, than the manner in which tithes are paid and collected. With respect to the right of the Church to this property, we do not enter into it. The law has given it to the Church, and as there is no other tenure—certainly none better than the law—we agree, that the property in tithes is just as sacred as any other species of property whatever. To relieve the State by confiscating the funds of religion, would be as flagrantly unjust as it would be impious and irrational. There is not so much in *tithe* itself as in the mode in which this public charge is levied. The amount of money which the clergy draw from the land is perhaps as innocently expended as the rent which the landlord draws from it. Incomes may as well subsist in the hands of a rector, as in the hands of a country squire. Independently of this, it may, for many purposes, more profitably subsist in the hands of a clergyman. A clergyman, generally speaking (and by law he is bound to do so) resides in the parish, and spends what he derives from tithe, among his parishioners; and, although he may not keep hounds and race horses, he may expend it as beneficially for the community as any landed proprietor whatever. But this, in truth, is not the question. The great inquiry is—how to regulate the TITHE system, and not how to abolish it? Violence, and bare faced injustice may accomplish the latter, but moderation and wisdom are required for the former.

The argument against tithe, we shall very shortly state, pointing out the principal objections, and then pointing out to our readers the remedy proposed by the Archbishop's bill.

That agriculture is discouraged by every constitution of landed property which admits those who have no concern with the improvement of the land into a participation of the profits, there can be no manner of doubt. Of all the institutions of Government, which are in this way adverse to the improvement of the soil, the tithe system strikes us to be the most noxious. A claimant here enters into the produce who contributes nothing to the production. When years perhaps of care and toil have matured an improvement—have brought land from a state of barrenness into fertility,—have drained fens and morasses, and have converted vastes into profitable enclosures;—when, after a large expenditure of capital, the husbandman sees new crops ripening to his skill and industry,—the moment he is about to put his sickle to the grain, he finds himself compelled to divide the harvest with a stranger. He yields up, indeed, a tenth only; but may not this tenth be the only profit he may reasonably calculate upon from his whole outlay?

Tithes are not only a tax upon industry, but upon that industry which feeds mankind. Tithes are a spe-

cies of exaction upon that public and national improvement which it should be the aim of all wise laws to cherish and promote,—and to uphold and excite which composes the main benefit which the community derives from the whole system of trade, and the success of commerce.

Together with the general inconvenience which attends the exaction of tithe, there is this additional evil, that it acts as a bounty upon pasturage. It strikes at population; it diminishes the fund of agricultural labour; it abridges the employment of the poor; and acts, by a train of obvious consequences, as an obstruction to rural industry and comfort.

The burden of this tax falls with almost its whole weight upon tillage. It descends with its whole impetus and vigour of oppression upon that mode of cultivation, which it should be the business of a wise Government to foster, relieve, and remunerate, in preference of any other.

No measure of such extensive concern appears more practicable, nor any single alterations so beneficial,—as either a permanent composition for tithes, or the conversion of them into corn rents.

It has always struck us, that this composition, or conversion of tithe into corn rents, might be so adjusted as to secure to the tithe owner a complete and perpetual equivalent for his interest, and to leave to industry its free and entire reward.

The Bill brought in by the Archbishop of Canterbury is for a general composition of tithes in all parishes where tithes are due in kind; a composition not to exceed the term of twenty-one years; to be adjusted by impartial commissioners, and to be binding upon all parties. It is not a Bill for commutation, nor for the conversion of tithes into corn rents, but simply for composition upon large and equitable principles; and we are inclined to think that the plan recommended by this eminent prelate will be most beneficial to the landholder and the clergyman.

We shall not here enlarge upon it, but refer our readers to our Parliamentary debates for the details. Of one thing we are satisfied, it will be a Bill of peace, quiet, and parochial harmony. It will promote charity and good feeling amongst the clergy and their flocks. It will abate contention and litigation, and put a stop to the unseemly spectacle of a rector perpetually wrangling with his parishioners for his ecclesiastical dues, and coming into more frequent contact with them in a court of law than in the church.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ADVANTAGES OF GOOD ROADS.—In the year 1822, the town of Castle Island, in the county of Kerry, situated at the western termination of the new road from Newcastle, in the county Limerick, bore the most equivocal signs of poverty in its inhabitants; the houses were universally dilapidated, and the windows and roofs broken; there was no inn (at least, none deserving the name), and no shop which could supply anything beyond a farthing candle, and a pennyworth of tobacco; and the street presented a mass of uneven rock, resembling a quarry rather than a road, and was nearly impassable for wheel-carriages. Within the last four years a great number of new houses have been built, all of which are two stories in height, are slated, and otherwise well finished—among which is an excellent inn; several shops have also been established, at which clothing of all kinds and groceries can be purchased at moderate rates. The street has been levelled, formed, and an excellent road made, with footpaths at each side, neatly curbed with cut limestone. The village of Abbeyfeale, in the county of Limerick,

situated in the midst of a mountain country, has also been much improved by the opening of the new road which passes through it. In the year 1822 it contained but one slated house, which was occupied as a barrack by the military; several houses were without roofs, which had been destroyed during the disturbances of the previous winter, and its appearance was in every respect similar to Castle Island. The Sunday after my arrival I had an opportunity of seeing the inhabitants of the village, and of the surrounding country, going to the Roman Catholic Chapel, on which occasion the peasantry appear in their best clothes; but in this case their apparel was much inferior to any I had before seen. The men's hats and the women's bonnets (where they had any) consisted of coarse straw or rush rudely put together, and generally much worn; the coats and cloaks were almost universally torn and ragged, and the whole population bore the marks of squalid poverty. In the year 1823, I had the pleasure to see the same people on a similar occasion; the change was almost incredible. The women displayed in their gowns and petticoats all the gaudy finery of Manchester and Glasgow; the men were substantially clothed, generally in blue coats, and wore universally good black hats, the straw plait having entirely disappeared; several new houses have also been built in this village, and several shops have been established. In proof of the general tranquility which remunerative employment has introduced into the country, I shall merely state, that in the year 1822 there were large garrisons in the villages and towns of Newmarket, Kanturk, Millstreet, Castle Island, Listowel, Abbeyfeale, Glynn, Newcastle, and Drummullagher, the whole of which are situated on the borders of the then inaccessible district. At present, with the exception of Newcastle, there are no troops in any of these towns; and the same persons who formerly were engaged in night marauding parties are now beneficially employed in cultivating their own farms, and have become quiet and useful members of society.—*Mr. Griffith's Report on the Roads in the South of Ireland.*

REMARKABLE FATALITY OF THE LATE MR. HUSKISSON.—There are some persons who are reported never to have gone into action without being wounded. Mr. Huskisson seems to have laboured under a similar fatality, in regard to accidents, from his earliest infancy to that fatal one which closed his career. As a child, he fractured his arm; a few days before his marriage, his horse fell with him, and he was severely hurt; soon after, he was knocked down by the pole of a carriage, just at the entrance to the Horse Guards; in the autumn of 1810, being then in Scotland, at the Duke of Athol's he missed his distance in attempting to leap the moat, and gave himself a most violent sprain of the ankle, accompanied with a considerable laceration, of some of the tendons and ligaments of his foot, and it was many weeks before he was able to leave Scotland: indeed the effects of this accident were visible in his gait during the remainder of his life. He afterwards fractured his arm, by a fall from his horse, at Petworth; and again, in 1817, by his carriage being overturned. On this occasion, none of his surgeons could discover the precise nature of the mischief; but Sir Astley Cooper was of opinion that the bone was split from the fracture up to the joint. The recovery was slow, and his sufferings very severe, as all kinds of experiments were employed to prevent the joint from stiffening. In spite of every exertion, he never recovered the full use of his arm, and a visible alteration in the spirit and elasticity of his carriage, resulted from the injury. He was constantly encountering accidents of minor importance, and the frequency of them, joined to a frame enfeebled