

THE ENGLISH CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT.

THOUGH it is, perhaps, impossible to treat the question of Church Establishments on purely economical grounds, it has sufficient economical bearings to justify its introduction into such a collection of Essays as the present.

Church Establishments date from the period when the Roman Catholic faith was everywhere prevalent, and the few dissenters were regarded as criminals whom it was the duty of the State to punish. There was then no question of rival Churches. If any religion was to receive State assistance, there was no doubt as to what religion should be thus favoured. There was, in fact, but one Church whose very existence the State recognized—except in the way that it recognizes robbers and murderers when it passes laws for their punishment.

But in this country, at least, such a defence of an Established Church is no longer tenable. Taking the three divisions of the United Kingdom—in England an Episcopal Church is established and endowed by the State; in Scotland the same position is held by a Pres-

byterian Church; and in Ireland there is no Church Establishment at all. In the latter country, too, concurrent endowment existed to a certain extent before the disestablishment; and in Malta the Roman Catholic must be regarded as the Established Church. In all parts of the kingdom, too, the State grants toleration to those who do not accept the established form of worship. It could not, indeed, in consistency refuse toleration in England to the Presbyterian whose Church is established in Scotland. The notion of any abstract superiority of one Church over another, which renders the former alone worthy of public support, must be abandoned by the statesman. Each man may, of course, continue to believe in the superiority of the religious denomination to which he individually belongs; but a Cabinet Minister cannot allow his private convictions on the subject to influence his legislative measures. We have had both Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics among our Ministers; and the Government has acted for many years past on the principle that members of all religious denominations—at least all denominations of Christians—should be treated alike, except in matters which relate to the Church Establishment. The propriety of making this exception is the real question at issue.

We sometimes hear it said that it is the duty of the State to provide religious instruction for all the people, and that in performing this duty it must make a selection among the various religious bodies, since it cannot attempt to give universal instruction in the creeds and

formularies of all.* I do not seek to underrate the importance of religious instruction; but how is it shown that it is the duty of the State to impart it? If it be so, that duty is at present neglected in Ireland, and a large majority of the representatives of the people concurred in resolving that it shall be neglected for the future. But the only argument in favour of imposing this duty on the State is, I apprehend, that otherwise the religious education and instruction of the people would be neglected. This allegation is in direct conflict with experience. There is not a parish or district in Ireland in which the Roman Catholics have not provided religious instruction for the people for centuries past without any State assistance, or rather indeed in spite of State prohibition. The Churchmen are doing the same thing since the disestablishment. There is, I believe, no instance of a Protestant population having been abandoned because it was poor and widely scattered. And the Dissenters have seldom if ever failed to provide religious instruction for all who desired to receive it at their hands. The case of Ireland, moreover, is on this subject a strong one. For the Roman Catholic population has always been poor, and the Protestants have suffered heavy pecuniary losses since the disestablishment. Yet Ireland, instead of failing to supply religious instruction for her own people, sends thousands of pounds abroad every year to supply religious instruction elsewhere—in Peter's Pence

* But the English Government never seems to have thought of performing this duty to the most numerous class of Her Majesty's subjects—the people of India.

and subscriptions to the several Missionary Societies, and similar objects. Poor as Ireland is, she can and does without State aid not only afford religious instruction to all her own population, but actually supplies funds for giving religious instruction to persons in other countries. The notion, therefore, that State assistance is necessary in order to place religious instruction within the reach of everyone is chimerical.

The Church Establishment has again been defended on the ground that the Established Church is the Church of the majority of the population. It is doubtful whether this assertion can be truly made as regards the Established Church of Scotland, and it is certainly not true of the Establishment in Wales. In England, moreover, it is liable to considerable qualification. A man who is careless in religious matters will usually describe himself as a member of the State-endowed Church, because if he joins any other Church he is expected to contribute to its funds, whereas by describing himself as belonging to the Established body, he excuses himself from paying anything. As long as there is an Establishment, too, it is likely to be fashionable. It will be the Church of the gentry, and many members of the middle classes, who seek to improve their social status, will attach themselves to it. But if we grant that the Established Church is the Church of the majority, does that afford any reason for its endowment? To simplify the question, let us suppose that the endowment is the direct product of taxation. Why, then, should the minority be taxed for the support of the Church of the majority?

The minority will find it hard enough to support the clergy of their own denominations without contributing to the funds of any rival body. On the voluntary system the majority would (other things being equal) support their clergy with least effort. A clergyman's field of labour is limited by local considerations no less than by the number of persons under his care. He may find it as easy to attend to the spiritual wants of one thousand persons in a town, as to those of one hundred in a sparsely-populated rural district. Now the clergyman of a small minority is almost always in this latter position. The portion of the population which is willing to accept his ministrations is always sparse and widely-scattered; and in supporting him by voluntary contributions the subscription per head must, on the average, be larger than would be the case if the majority of the population were of his persuasion. Of course a majority in Parliament can do as it pleases, but there could hardly be a more tyrannous use of the power of the majority than to compel the dissenting minority to subscribe for the support of the religion of the majority. With more justice the position might be reversed. The poor and thinly-scattered dissenting congregations, who find the greatest difficulty in supporting their ministers, have a far stronger claim to State assistance than the large and wealthy congregations who can, if they choose to do so, subscribe the requisite amount almost without an effort. Taxing dissenters for the benefit of the Church can only be justified on the assumption that the Church is the best of all religious bodies, or indeed the only one

which the State should recognise. The argument that the Church is the religion of the majority is here totally insufficient—indeed it rather tends to prove the opposite conclusion.

Nor is the case materially altered when we consider the mode in which the Church endowments are actually provided. Though private property in land is, in my opinion, justifiable, wherever private property does not exist the land must be considered as the property of the State. I do not of course deny that some corporate property is in reality private property—as, for instance, that which a railway company has purchased for the construction of its line. But the Church lands, except when they have been granted by private individuals, or purchased with private money, do not fall under this head. They are the property of the State (subject to interests which certain individuals have acquired therein), and the State is responsible for their proper application. Indeed there is no other principle on which the Irish Church Act can be justified. If the State resumed these lands the revenues derived from them would enable the Government to make a general reduction of our taxation, and the devoting of these lands to Church purposes prevents this reduction from being made. We are really in the same position as if, by an agreement between the Church and the State, the latter took over the lands and granted an annual sum out of the produce of our taxes instead. Grants of land to the Church by the public are equivalent to grants of an annual sum raised by taxation. But grants of land for Church purposes have some

special disadvantages. In the first place, they tend to make the bishop or rector a farmer or a landlord, neither of which positions are conducive to his popularity or to the efficient discharge of his duties. (I do not of course speak of a residence with a few acres of land, but of extensive grants of land.) In the next place the temporary land-owner often tries to make leases at low rents to his relatives and friends, to the detriment of his successors; or else to make leases extending beyond his own life on fines, thus benefiting himself at the expense of the Church. Thirdly, the State does not exercise the same control over land thus granted away that it does over an annual grant from the public revenue; and ecclesiastics often come to regard it as the absolute property of the Church, and to resent all State interference with it as if it was private property, interference with which was confiscation. The clergy are in this manner rendered to a great extent independent of public opinion, and are often disposed to play the tyrant in their parishes, disregarding even the plain directions of the Prayer-book itself.

Very similar observations may be made respecting tithes and the other sources of ecclesiastical revenue. Indeed tithes, if their original intention was carried out, would have had a peculiarly prejudicial effect upon industry. The man who raised 100 barrels of wheat where the ordinary processes would only yield 80, would be fined 2 barrels as a reward for his energy and skill. Cultivation, in fact, can never be carried to the highest practicable point where the rent or taxes follow a sliding scale,

increasing as the gross produce increases. Increased produce beyond a certain point is always acquired by largely increased labour and expense, and to take for any public purpose the same proportion of this increased produce as before is both unjust and impolitic. How far this objection has been removed in practice I need not consider. At best, tithes are a form of taxation, and leave the Church in the same position as if the clergy were paid directly out of the public revenue.

I do not deny that the greater part of this taxation falls ultimately on members of the Established Church; but why should *any* part of it fall on other persons? It was contended by the friends of the Irish Church that, though the Protestants formed a minority of the population, the tithe-rentcharge by which the Establishment was supported fell chiefly upon them. I am not aware that this argument was ever refuted; but nevertheless it failed to influence the legislature. Moreover, if even under the present system the Church of England is really supported by the taxation of its own members, it is clear that these members are able to support it without obtaining assistance from any other quarter. This latter fact, indeed, cannot be disputed; for the members of the Church include not only the most numerous but the wealthiest part of the community. Then, why not give up the State endowment and let the Church be supported by its sons, who are not only well able to support it, but who, according to the argument which I am now considering, do in fact support it? Nor can it be alleged that the present mode of raising the funds from its



members is a more equitable one than voluntary contribution would be. Under the present system men of great wealth, and with a great number of Protestant workmen in their employment, pay little or nothing, while poorer men, who avail themselves less of the Church services, pay a good deal. Under the voluntary system, no doubt, the man who estimates his religious privileges highly would contribute more than he who estimates them more lowly; but this seems to me to be rather a merit than a defect in the voluntary system. And there is another consideration which must not be overlooked. Within the Church there are several distinct parties, some of which are violently hostile to others; and under our present system a lay member of the Church is often taxed for the support of a clergyman from whose teaching and practice he strongly dissents. He may absent himself from the church and go elsewhere, but he must pay his tithes notwithstanding; and he must continue to pay them when he is actually bringing an action against the clergyman for illegal practices or erroneous doctrine. He is, in fact, in a worse position than the Dissenter. He must not only pay for ministrations of which he cannot avail himself, but the existence of these prevents the introduction of ministrations of which he can avail himself into his parish: for the law does not admit of two rival rectors in the same parish, each ministering to the portion of the congregation that agrees with him.* The parochial

* We had, however, two rival bishops, each with his own following, in Natal. I suppose an ardent Churchman would affirm that there was but one;

system excludes all clergymen but one, and there is no security that the doctrines and practices of that one will accord with the views of the majority of his flock.

The system of State endowment, too, is entirely wanting in that flexibility which belongs to the voluntary system, and which the circumstances of the country require. We often meet with a largely-endowed parish where there is little or no work to be done, and again with another parish in which there is a great deal of work, with a very scanty endowment. The latter case often occurs when a manufacturing or mining town grows up rapidly. The system of State endowment fails altogether to accommodate itself to such alterations of circumstances, and voluntary contributions alone save the rising population from total neglect. In addition to this, however, the endowments of the different parishes appear to have been always of an unequal character; and the division of parish from parish was based on no fixed principle, whether as to shape, area, or population. Such defects could be easily rectified under a voluntary system; but under that of State endowment changes can only be brought about by a tedious and expensive process. The change, moreover, is in many cases rendered almost impossible by the gross abuse of lay patronage which has been allowed to creep into the Church. It is an injury to a private individual to transfer a part of the parish of which he owns the advowson to a parish in the gift of the bishop, but, then, which was the true bishop, and which was the schismatic? Or was one a schismatic and the other a heretic?

or of the Crown, or of some other layman. It is a still greater injury to him to divert a portion of the revenues of his parish elsewhere, or to require the rector to superintend a new district: for the selling price of the advowson or of the next presentation depends at once on the largeness of the income and the lightness of the work.

This abuse is, indeed, so gross that if Churchmen bear nearly all the cost of the Establishment at present, it is surprising that they do not offer to bear the whole, and thereby get rid of such a crying evil. The lay patron may be an irreligious and even an immoral man. He may, and often does, promote a relative or friend whom he knows to be totally unfit for the post. He may force a Ritualist on an Evangelical congregation, or a Low-Churchman on a Ritualistic one. He may sell the parish under circumstances which just escape the simony laws, and perhaps would not escape them if the facts were known, and the Ecclesiastical Courts were appealed to; but in all this he is, practically at least, within his right, and no one can interfere with him. Crown patronage is often used as a reward for political subserviency,* or a means of advancing the Church views of a particular Minister; and even Episcopal patronage is not free from the charge of nepotism and favouritism. All these evils are aggravated by the permission of pluralities. In these respects, indeed, the

* If we examine the votes of the bishops on any party division in the House of Lords, we shall have little trouble in ascertaining by whom each prelate was appointed.

abuses which exist in the English Church far surpass those which existed in her Irish sister when the latter was disestablished. Would it not be of advantage to the Church itself to get rid of them, even if the members had to contribute a little more for its support under the voluntary system than they now contribute in the form of ecclesiastical taxation?

I have already glanced at a circumstance which shows the weakness of the argument that the Church ought to be endowed because it is the Church of the majority, viz. that the Church includes persons who entertain the most widely discordant views, and in fact are only held together by the State endowment. The advanced Ritualist differs much more widely from the extreme Evangelical than he does from the Roman Catholic. The low Evangelical differs much more from the Ritualist than he does from the Protestant Dissenter. But the Dissenter and the Roman Catholic are rigorously excluded from the endowments which their sympathisers in the Church enjoy. You must recognise episcopacy on the one hand (that is, in England, not in Scotland), and you must not subordinate yourself to the Bishop of Rome on the other—these are the conditions of State aid; but so that you keep within these limits you may do almost anything you please. When I speak of the Church of England as only held together by State pay, however, I do not mean that the present union is a purely mercenary one. So long as there is a State Church, any Church party that withdrew from the State connexion, and renounced the State endowments, would

have to bear the reproaches of secession, schism, heresy, *et hoc genus omne* ; and men are slow to face this in addition to the loss of State support. But if State pay was withdrawn, and the Church separated into two or more hostile camps, there would be nothing to mark out one as the original body, and the others as seceders. Two sections, at all events, would probably carry with them a portion of the bishops and clergy, as well as of the laity, and while both would no doubt claim to be the legitimate successors of the ancient English Church, the public would soon perceive that there were either two equally legitimate successors, or else none at all. There is, I believe, no religious body in the world in which such wide diversities of doctrine and practice exist as in the Church of England, and the reason is that a State endowment coexists with a good deal of indifference on the part of the State as to the particular character of the religious teaching. Under no voluntary system, I believe, would the members of one of the existing Church factions subscribe for the maintenance of clergymen belonging to the opposite faction. The differences are too wide for voluntary contributions to flow into a common fund, but the State allows the public money to flow into a single reservoir (from which it issues by at least two distinct channels), for the simple reason that it has been flowing there so long already.

The State management of this fund is, it need hardly be said, eminently unsatisfactory. In all other cases it is supposed to be the duty of the State to see that those who are paid out of the public funds perform their duties

properly. But in the case of the State Church this is never thought of. It is left to the private persons, who consider themselves aggrieved by the conduct of these State officials, to appeal to the Courts at their own risk, and at their own expense, unless they succeed in recovering costs against the offending clergyman. Indeed Associations have been formed for the purpose of compelling these public officers to keep within the limits of the law, and in some cases, perhaps, for the purpose of assisting them to evade or resist their legal obligations. The Ecclesiastical Courts, to which the appeal must be made, are among the slowest and most expensive of our Courts, and the legislature has effected but little towards providing a short and clear code of ecclesiastical offences which would enable the Court to see at once whether the clergyman is within his rights or not. A clergyman often continues to draw State pay for years after he has done acts for which any other public official would have been summarily dismissed :* but as a set-off to this, he is sometimes sent to prison, when no other public servant would be sent there. In fact, while the clergyman draws public pay, he often denies that he is a public servant at all, and he meets with a good deal of sympathy in his denial because he appears to be only asserting the superiority of divine law to human. That he *ought not* to be a public servant is my contention, but so long as he draws State pay he *is* one; and what right has he to

* And is even allowed to perform duties after being dismissed for non-compliance with the law. This is done under the pretext of assisting some one else.

draw it, while carrying out his own notions of the divine law, in opposition to the law of the State, which pays him? The Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian, the Independent, the Methodist, and the Quaker, are, like him, carrying out their own notions of divine law. Why, then, should they not receive State pay as well as he? It is useless, indeed, to expect the Ritualist to view the question in this light; but the fact remains that numbers of clergymen are now receiving public money without conforming to the conditions which the State has annexed to that payment, while the existing remedies for this evil are of the most inadequate description. It is not persecution to say to the Roman Catholic or the Dissenter, 'We will not give you any pay'; but it is regarded in many quarters as persecution to say to the Church of England clergyman, 'We will stop your pay unless you comply with the conditions which the State has attached to it'; nor do I believe the matter will be viewed differently until the Church has been disestablished. Imprisoning a clergyman for not complying with the State requirements is an absurdity and an anachronism. Can it be contended that it is impossible to have the Church service conducted in conformity with the law, without imprisoning the man who conducts it otherwise?*

His imprisonment does not insure its proper performance even while he remains in gaol; while, if he is at last deprived of his parish, there is nothing to prevent a man of similar sentiments being

* And perhaps at the same time imprisoning another man for interrupting this illegal service! Such is the present state of the law.

appointed to succeed him. The present condition of English ecclesiastical law is a scandal; and it often happens that a law-abiding congregation has practically no rights whatever against the law-breaking rector with his patron and supporters. On the other hand, even where the clergyman and his flock are in perfect unison, they are not safe from the Ecclesiastical Courts, as at present constituted, which may be set in motion by some Association against the wish of the parishioners.

Another evil of the State endowment is that it diverts private endowments into a wrong channel. There are many persons who are willing to contribute for the good of the English Church, but finding that all its pressing needs are provided for by means of the public purse, they set about beautifying the Church fabrics, improving the music, providing peals of bells, &c., &c., all of which an economist must regard as for the most part a very unproductive expenditure of wealth. Considering the advantages of religion, the economist will not feel disposed to decry any real help to devotion; but much the greater part of the expenditure to which I refer cannot be brought under that head. Even in Ireland we have seen a sum sufficient to provide a permanent endowment for at least thirty poor parishes expended on a cathedral, when there was already another (and a finer one) within a few hundred yards of the same spot, and open to all the same class of worshippers.* But this is much more true of England, where the sus-

* Unless, indeed, the two cathedrals were intended for the worship of the members of two opposite factions in the Church.

tentation of the Church is provided for by the State, and it is hardly possible for voluntary contributions for purely Church purposes to take any other direction than that of ornamentation. The money which is thus wasted would probably be applied to really useful purposes if State assistance was withdrawn. The State would gain, and the Church, even in a pecuniary point of view, would probably lose nothing. Its clergy would be as well supported as before, though a few sinecures, or half-sinecures, might disappear. We should only have less expensive edifices, and less costly and theatrical services; and everyone knows that it was not by the magnificence of its buildings, or the splendour of its ritual, that Christianity first made its way in the world. A nearer approach to its primitive condition might perhaps strengthen rather than weaken its influence for good on the masses.

And this observation leads to another objection to a Church Establishment so richly endowed as that of England. When a young man of talent and learning resolves to adopt religious teaching as his profession, he is strongly tempted to join the persuasion in which he may rise to be a peer of the realm, with an income of several thousands a year; while, even if he misses that distinction, there are many minor prizes which he may reasonably hope to acquire, and which are considerably above anything that he can expect to achieve in a dissenting communion. And as the Church is not very stringent in the pledges which it exacts from its ministers, and allows them pretty wide scope for the

exercise of their own judgment after their ordination, the sacrifice of principle which a talented Dissenter is required to make is not after all so very violent. A direct bribe is thus held out to the ablest young men who would otherwise become Dissenting ministers, and in some instances at all events it has proved successful. But as regards the allied Episcopal Churches of Ireland and Scotland, the bribe is still more direct. The clergymen and members of these Churches can transfer their services to the English Church without any sacrifice of principle at all; and the greater wealth of English Churchmen would probably enable them to offer a bribe under any circumstances. But they are not thrown upon their own wealth for this purpose. The State supplies the bribe; and the sister Churches are thus placed at even a more serious disadvantage than the Dissenters as regards their ministry. There are probably as many Irishmen (with Irish Divinity Testimoniums) in the Church of England as in the Church of Ireland, and it is the picked men who are usually carried off by the former. The English Establishment is thus an injury to every other religious body in the kingdom, and the injury is greatest in the case of the religious communities which approach most closely to it both in doctrine and practice. Their best men are tempted to leave them by positions of honour and emolument which are placed by the State at the disposal of the very Church which of all others has least need of them—the Church of the majority, of the wealthy, and of the people of rank and fashion—the Church which

could outbid the others without any help from the public treasury.

Another evil of the Establishment is the great difficulty of reforming and amending an Established Church. On the occasion of its disestablishment, the Irish Church adopted a Constitution which seemed to pledge it against all reform, two-thirds of the representatives of both clergy and laity being required to concur (and that more than once) in any amending enactment which was to be passed into law by its Synod. Considering the conservative tendencies of Churchmen, and the unwillingness of the clergy of either school to alter formularies which both had always asserted to be in their own favour, it might seem at first sight that this constitution rendered change impossible; yet the changes which have been adopted by the Irish Church during the last fifteen years are perhaps more important than those made by its English sister in three centuries. The clergy and laity of the English Church have no recognized method of expressing their wishes on the subject, and even if they had, they might fail to set the wheels of the State machine in motion. However clear the expression of opinion might be, the Cabinet might have other business which prevented it from attempting any legislation on the subject. The Premier might belong to the theological school which was threatened by the alterations, and for that reason refuse to take them up. The measure might be made a party question, and the Ministers might refuse to risk a defeat on it; or the Roman Catholic and

other non-Church members of Parliament might assist the obstructive party in the Church in order that the Establishment should not be strengthened by the proposed reforms. By accepting the State endowment, the Church has lost the power of self-legislation, and as the State takes very little interest in legislating for it (and receives very little thanks when it does so legislate), the Church has practically become as unchangeable as if it laid claim to infallibility. But the Church of England makes no such claim; and the great latitude which it allows to its clergy in dealing with its articles and formularies probably arises from the fact that the need of amendment is generally felt, while the State connexion renders this general feeling inoperative. The clergyman who publicly returns thanks to the Deity for having regenerated the child which he has just baptized is allowed to state in his sermon that he does not believe that it has been regenerated, and that he is doubtful whether it ever will be. This license of interpretation on questions of such solemnity can hardly fail to be productive of ill effects; but in this instance the clergyman could probably say that if a vote were taken among the members of the Church, there would be a large majority in his favour. In truth, the formularies always represented the opinions of the bishops and clergy rather than those of the majority of the members; but even as regards the bishops and clergy, they only represent the opinions which were held in the year 1662—the opinions of men who succeeded in fastening on the Church until very recently a service in honour of King

Charles the Martyr, which must have delighted Mr. Bradlaugh while it continued in force.* The Church may be better than its formularies : but undoubtedly, in the present day, the formularies are one thing, and the sentiments of the majority of Churchmen are another thing. If it be said that I should not speak of the sentiments of the majority of Churchmen but of those of the clergy, I reply that the last task which the State should undertake is that of attempting to enforce the doctrines of any priesthood upon an unwilling people. Moreover, what, on this assumption, becomes of the argument that the Church of England is the Church of the majority? Are its formularies the formularies of the majority? Or would these formularies be left unaltered if the question was decided by a popular vote?

Penal laws of any kind against Nonconformists are now abolished; but, still, I believe that the exclusive patronage (in England) of one Church by the State gives rise to no slight amount of indirect persecution. The man who prevents the erection of a Dissenting meeting-house on his property, and even forbids his tenants to set lodgings to a Dissenting minister, flatters himself that he acts from other motives than mere bigotry. He is showing himself to be a loyal subject; he is on the side of the State, and of the State Church; and he fancies that he is in the same position as the Orangeman who gets up a demonstration against the National

* Does any one now believe in the so-called Athanasian Creed? Yes, all the clergy do—provided that you will allow them to interpret it after their own fashion.

League. Nor would the censure of the Government of the day have any more effect on the one than on the other; for both would equally regard this particular Ministry as seeking to subvert the English Constitution—which, however, was certain to triumph in the long run over such puny assailants. It will be admitted, I think, that the English oppressor has not *quite* as much reason for his conduct as the Orangeman has, and that he is not *quite* so certain of being censured for his conduct by the powers that be. Be this as it may, however, if the State placed all religious denominations on the same level, bigotry and intolerance would have to show themselves in their true colours; and in the present state of public opinion this would make them cautious about showing themselves at all. But, in fact, if the State connexion was once broken, it would be seen that there was no Church in the world which was less calculated to evoke enthusiasm on the part of its followers than the Church of England. A Church which one party regards as Protestant and Reformed, and another as Catholic and Unreformed, and whose doctrines and formularies are so loosely or inconsistently expressed that both parties can make out a very plausible case—a Church in which one man may teach one doctrine, and another may teach the opposite without let or hindrance, and in which no member who goes into a strange edifice knows whether the views put forward there will agree with or differ from his own—is, at all events, not calculated to render men bigots. Men may fall down and worship a golden calf, but they will

scarcely worship an image so shapeless and indefinite that one man takes it for a lion, and another for a donkey. Bigotry requires something definite to rest upon; but the Church of England is all things to all men; and though it may thus gain some disciples, they are seldom very ardent ones.

The advantages which the nation might derive from the confiscated Church property, after providing for vested interests, are too obvious to insist on; and I fail to see any reason whatever why this public property should not be again applied to the use of the public. At present a considerable portion of the public is excluded from its benefits; its uses are accompanied by abuses which seem almost inseparable from them; State connexion has in more than one respect proved injurious to the Church itself; and this particular application of public property appears to have been founded on a politico-religious system which no eminent statesman of the present day would attempt to defend. The misapplication has already continued too long. The sooner it is now terminated the better.

Another advantage which I anticipate from the disestablishment of the English Church is, the emancipation of the education of the young from ecclesiastical control. Of course, a man who supports a school out of his own pocket, or by means of voluntary contributions, may fairly be allowed to regulate the education given in it; but as regards State-supported schools, I cannot see that the State is bound to supply religious education to the young any more than to the old. It would indeed

be desirable to offer the use of the school-house to religious teachers at certain hours, since it would be difficult otherwise to assemble the same number of children for the purpose; but the schoolmaster or schoolmistress should not be required to take any part in the instruction thus afforded. Owing to peculiar circumstances the disestablishment of the Irish Church has not led to this emancipation in Ireland; and to this cause the present condition of that country is, I believe, in some degree attributable. Ecclesiastics who contribute almost nothing to the support of the State schools are allowed to exercise complete control over them—selecting a teacher who is far from being the most competent to fill the post, and dismissing him on grounds quite distinct from immoral conduct or failure as a secular instructor. Hence, under this pretended system of Mixed Education, the schools are too frequently converted into hotbeds of religious bigotry, and sometimes of disloyalty also; while the education given is by no means so good as if the State took the matter into its own hands, and selected the Commissioners of National Education for purely educational reasons. No teacher, inspector, or commissioner should be appointed for religious reasons; and grants (except in the form of results' fees) should be withheld from every school which bears a distinctly denominational character. The appointment and dismissal of all teachers paid by the State should rest exclusively with the State, and the State should make its selection, having regard to educational fitness and moral character. These principles seem so

obvious as regards a country where there is no Established Church, that one would think it was unnecessary to insist on them; yet they are more universally disregarded in Ireland than in England. The school in four cases out of five is not worked by the State, but by the clerical manager (usually a Roman Catholic priest), who perhaps cares nothing about secular education, is only desirous that the fundamental principles of his creed should be instilled into the minds of the pupils, and prefers a teacher who has not been trained in the State training-school to one who has. And it is for the benefit of this clerical manager (or rather mismanager) that the English taxpayer maintains the school, and maintains it in a condition which even the report of a co-religionist inspector often declares to be in every respect discreditable. Secular education has not, I believe, any tendency to subvert religion. It is good in itself, instead of being (as many of the managers seem to think) bad in itself, unless diluted with a liberal infusion of dogma. The religious instruction of the young is not the primary object of the State. No boy is the worse Catholic or the worse Protestant for knowing the six books of Euclid; but if he is sent to a school where the primary object is to make him a good Catholic or a good Protestant, the chances are that he will not know the six books of Euclid as well as he ought to know them. Results' fees for answering in secular subjects may perhaps be granted to any school; but when the State supports a school in any other manner than this, the total separation of the secular and religious departments should be

insisted on; and the public grant should be limited to the teachers in the former departments, who should thereupon become servants of the State and of the State only.

To conclude: should not a great populous and wealthy Church, like the Church of England, be ashamed of subsisting on the public rates, like a pauper ?
