

SECOND LETTER

&C.

My Dear Sir,

It is a long time since you have heard from me, and in the mean time the poor Church of England has been trembling, from the Bishop who sitteth upon the throne, to the Curate who rideth upon the hackney horse. I began writing on the subject to avoid bursting from indignation; and as it is not my habit to recede, I will go on till the Church of England is either up or down—semianimous on its back, or vigorous on its legs.

Two or three persons have said to me—”Why, after writing an entertaining and successful letter to Archdeacon Singleton, do you venture upon another, in which you may probably fail, and be weak or stupid?” All this I utterly despise: I write upon these matters not to be entertaining, but because the subjects are very important, and because I have strong opinions upon them. If what I write is liked, so much the better; but liked or not liked, sold or not sold, Wilson Crokered or not Wilson Crokered, I will write. If you ask me who excites me—I answer you, it is that Judge who stirs good thoughts in honest hearts—under whose warrant I impeach the wrong, and by whose help I hope to chastise it.

There are in most Cathedrals two sorts of Prebendaries—the one resident, the other non-resident. It is proposed by the Church Commission to abolish all the Prebendaries of the latter and many of the former class; and it is the Prebendaries of the former class, the Resident Prebendaries, whom I wish to save.

The Non-resident Prebendaries never come near the Cathedral; they are just like so many country gentlemen: the difference is, that their appointments are elective, not hereditary. They have houses, manors, lands, and every appendage of territorial wealth and importance. Their value is very different. I have one, Neasdon, near Willesdon, which consists of a quarter of an acre of land, worth a few shillings per annum, but animated by the burden of repairing a bridge, which sometimes costs the unfortunate Prebendary fifty or sixty pounds. There are other Non-resident Prebendaries, however, of great value; and one, I believe, which would be worth, if the years or lives were run out, from 40,000*l.* to 60,000*l.* per annum.

Not only do these Prebendaries do nothing, and are never seen, but the existence of the preferment is hardly known; and the abolition of the preferment, therefore, would not in any degree lessen the temptation to enter into the Church, while the mass of these preferments would make an important fund for the improvement of small livings. The Residentiary Prebendaries, on the contrary, perform all the services of the Cathedral Church; their existence is known, their preferment coveted, and to get a stall, and to be preceded by men with silver rods, is the bait which the ambitious squire is perpetually holding out to his second son. What Prebendary is next to come into residence is as important a topic to the Cathedral town, and ten miles round it, as what the evening or morning star may be to the astronomer. I will venture to say, that there is not a man of good humour, sense, and worth, within ten miles of Worcester, who does not hail the rising of Archdeacon Singleton in the horizon as one of the most agreeable events of the year. If such sort of preferments are extinguished, a very serious evil (as I have often said before) is done to the Church—the service becomes unpopular, further spoliation is dreaded, the whole system is considered to be altered and degraded, capital is withdrawn from the Church, and no one enters into the profession but the sons of farmers and little tradesmen, who would be footmen if they were not vicars—or figure on the coach-box if they were not lecturing from the pulpit.

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But what a practical rebuke to the Commissioners, after all their plans and consultations and carvings of Cathedral preferment, to leave it integral, and untouched! It is some comfort, however, to me, to think, that the persons of all others to whom this preservation of Cathedral property would give the greatest pleasure are the Ecclesiastical Commissioners themselves. Can any one believe that the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London really wish for the confiscation of any Cathedral property, or that they were driven to it by anything but fear, mingled, perhaps, with a little vanity of playing the part of great Reformers? They cannot, of course, say for themselves what I say for them; but of what is really passing in the ecclesiastical minds of these great personages, I have no more doubt than I have of what passes in the mind of the prisoner when the prosecutor recommends and relents, and the Judge says he shall attend to the recommendation.

What harm does a Prebend do, in a politico-economical point of view? The alienation of the property for three lives, or twenty-one years, and the almost certainty that the tenant has of renewing, give him sufficient interest in the soil for all purposes of cultivation,¹ and a long series of elected clergymen is rather more likely to produce valuable members of the community than a long series of begotten squires. Take, for instance, the Cathedral of Bristol, the whole estates of which are about equal to keeping a pack of fox-hounds. If this had been in the hands of a country gentleman instead of Precentor, Succentor, Dean, and Canons, and Sexton you would have had huntsman, whipper in, dog-feeders and stoppers of earths; the old squire, full of foolish opinions, and fermented liquids, and a young gentleman of gloves, waistcoats, and pantaloons: and how many generations might it be before the fortuitous concurrence of noodles would produce such a man as Professor Lee, one of the Prebendaries of Bristol, and by far the most eminent Oriental scholar in Europe? The same argument might be applied to every Cathedral in England. How many hundred coveys of squires would it take to supply as much knowledge as is condensed in the heads of Dr. Copplestone, or Mr. Tate, of St. Paul's? and what a strange thing it is that such a man as Lord John Russell, the Whig leader, should be so squirrel-minded as to wish for a movement without object or end! Saving there can be none, for it is merely taking from one Ecclesiastic to give it to another; public clamour, to which the best men must sometimes yield, does not require it; and so far from doing any good, it would be a source of infinite mischief to the Establishment.

If you were to gather a Parliament of Curates on the hottest Sunday in the year, after all the services, sermons, burials, and baptisms of the day, were over, and to offer them such increase of salary as would be produced by the confiscation of the Cathedral property, I am convinced they would reject the measure, and prefer splendid hope, and the expectation of good fortune in advanced life, to the trifling improvement of poverty which such a fund could afford. Charles James, of London, was a Curate; the Bishop of Winchester was a Curate; almost every rose-and-shovelman has been a Curate in his time. All Curates hope to draw great prizes.

I am surprised it does not strike the mountaineers how very much the great emoluments of the Church are flung open to the lowest ranks of the community. Butchers, bakers, publicans, schoolmasters, are perpetually seeing their children elevated to the mitre. Let a respectable baker drive through the city from the west end of the town, and let him cast an eye on the battlements of Northumberland House; has his little muffin-faced son the smallest chance of getting in among the Percies, enjoying a share of their luxury and splendour, and of chasing the deer with hound and horn upon the Cheviot Hills? But let him drive his alum-steeped loaves a little further, till he reaches St. Paul's Churchyard, and all his thoughts are changed when he sees that beautiful fabric; it is not impossible that his little penny roll may be introduced into that splendid oven. Young Crumpet is sent to school—takes to his books—spends the best years of his life, as all eminent Englishmen do, in making Latin verses—

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knows that the *crum* in crumpet is long, and the *pet* short—goes to the University—gets a prize for an Essay on the Dispersion of the Jews—takes orders—becomes a Bishop's chaplain—has a young nobleman for his pupil—publishes an useless classic, and a serious call to the unconverted—and then goes through the Elysian transitions of Prebendary, Dean, Prelate, and the long train of purple, profit, and power.

It will not do to leave only four persons in each Cathedral upon the supposition that such a number will be sufficient for all the men of real merit who ought to enjoy such preferment; we ought to have a steady confidence that the men of real merit will always bear a small proportion to the whole number; and that in proportion as the whole number is lessened, the number of men of merit provided for will be lessened also. If it were quite certain that ninety persons would be selected, the most remarkable for conduct, piety, and learning, ninety offices might be sufficient; but out of these ninety are to be taken tutors to Dukes and Marquises, paid in this way by the public; Bishops' Chaplains, running tame about the palace; elegant Clergymen of small understanding, who have made themselves acceptable in the drawing-rooms of the mitre; Billingsgate controversialists, who have tossed and gored an Unitarian. So that there remain but a few rewards for men of real merit—yet these rewards do infinite good; and in this mixed, checkered way human affairs are conducted.

No man at the beginning of the Reform could tell to what excesses the new power conferred upon the multitude would carry them; it was not safe for a Clergyman to appear in the streets. I bought a blue coat, and did not despair in time of looking like a Layman. All this is passed over. Men are returned to their senses upon the subject of the Church, and I utterly deny that there is any public feeling whatever which calls for the destruction of the resident Prebends. Lord John Russell has pruned the two luxuriant Bishoprics, and has abolished Pluralities: he has made a very material alteration in the state of the Church: not enough to please Joseph Hume, and the tribunes of the people, but enough to satisfy every reasonable and moderate man, and therefore enough to satisfy himself. What another generation may choose to do is another question: I am thoroughly convinced that enough has been done for the present.

Viscount Melbourne declared himself quite satisfied with the Church as it is; but if the public had any desire to alter it, they might do as they pleased. He might have said the same thing of the Monarchy, or of any other of our institutions; and there is in the declaration a permissiveness and good humour which in public men has seldom been exceeded. Carelessness, however, is but a poor imitation of genius, and the formation of a wise and well-reflected plan of Reform conduces more to the lasting fame of a Minister than that affected contempt of duty which every man sees to be mere vanity, and a vanity of no very high description.

But if the truth must be told, our Viscount is somewhat of an impostor. Everything about him seems to betoken careless desolation: any one would suppose from his manner that he was playing at chuck-farthing with human happiness; that he was always on the heel of pastime; that he would giggle away the Great Charter, and decide by the method of tee-totum whether my Lords the Bishops should or should not retain their seats in the House of Lords. All this is the mere vanity of surprising, and making us believe that he can play with kingdoms as other men can with nine-pins. Instead of this lofty nebulo, this miracle of moral and intellectual felicities, he is nothing more than a sensible honest man, who means to do his duty to the Sovereign and to the Country: instead of being the ignorant man he pretends to be, before he meets the deputation of Tallow-Chandlers in the morning, he sits up half the night talking with Thomas Young about melting and skimming, and then, though he has acquired knowledge enough to work off a whole vat of prime Leicester tallow, he pretends next morning not to know the difference between a dip and a mould. In the same way, when

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he has been employed in reading Acts of Parliament, he would persuade you that he has been reading *Cleghorn on the Beatitudes*, or *Pickler on the Nine Difficult Points*. Neither can I allow to this Minister (however he may be irritated by the denial) the extreme merit of indifference to the consequences of his measures. I believe him to be conscientiously alive to the good or evil that he is doing, and that his caution has more than once arrested the gigantic projects of the Lycurgus of the Lower house. I am sorry to hurt any man's feelings, and to brush away the magnificent fabric of levity and gaiety he has reared; but I accuse our Minister of honesty and diligence: I deny that he is careless or rash: he is nothing more than a man of good understanding, and good principle, disguised in the eternal and somewhat wearisome affectation of a political Roué.

One of the most foolish circumstances attending this destruction of Cathedral property is the great sacrifice of the patronage of the Crown: the Crown gives up eight Prebends of Westminster, two at Worcester, 1500*l.* per annum at St. Paul's, two Prebends at Bristol, and a great deal of other preferment all over the kingdom; and this at a moment when such extraordinary power has been suddenly conferred upon the people, and when every atom of power and patronage ought to be husbanded for the Crown. A Prebend of Westminster for my second son would soften the Catos of Cornhill, and lull the Gracchi of the Metropolitan Boroughs. Lives there a man so absurd, as to suppose that Government can be carried on without those gentle allurements? You may as well attempt to poultice off the humps of a camel's back as to cure mankind of these little corruptions.

I am terribly alarmed by a committee of Cathedrals now sitting in London, and planning a petition to the Legislature to be heard by counsel. They will take such high ground, and talk a language so utterly at variance with the feelings of the age about Church Property, that I am much afraid they will do more harm than good. In the time of Lord George Gordon's riots, the Guards said they did not care for the mob, if the Gentlemen Volunteers behind would be so good as not to hold their muskets in such a dangerous manner. I don't care for popular clamour, and think it might now be defied; but I confess the Gentlemen Volunteers alarm me. They have unfortunately, too, collected their addresses, and published them in a single volume!!!

I should like to know how many of our institutions at this moment, besides the Cathedrals, are under notice of destruction. I will, before I finish my letter, endeavour to procure a list: in the meantime I will give you the bill of fare with which the last Session opened, and I think that of 1838 will not be less copious. But at the opening of the Session of 1837, when I addressed my first letter to you, this was the state of our intended changes:—The Law of Copyright was to be re-created by Serjeant Talfourd; Church Rates abolished by Lord John Russell, and Imprisonment for Debt by the Attorney-General: the Archbishop of Canterbury kindly undertook to destroy all the Cathedrals, and Mr. Grote was to arrange our Voting by Ballot; the Septennial Act was to be repealed by Mr. Williams, Corn Laws abolished by Mr. Clay, and the House of Lords reformed by Mr. Ward; Mr. Hume remodelled County Rates, Mr. Ewart put an end to Primogeniture, and Mr. Tooke took away the Exclusive Privileges of Dublin, Oxford, and Cambridge; Thomas Duncombe was to put an end to the Proxies of the Lords, and Serjeant Prime to turn the Universities topsy-turvy. Well may it be said that

“Man never continueth in one stay.”

See how men accustom themselves to large and perilous changes. Ten years ago, if a cassock or a hassock had been taken from the Establishment, the current of human affairs would have been stopped till restitution had been made. In a fortnight's time, Lord John Russell is to take possession of, and to repartition all the Cathedrals in England; and what a

prelude for the young Queen's coronation! what a medal for the august ceremony!—the fallen Gothic buildings on one side of the gold, the young Protestant Queen on the other:—

Victoria Ecclesiae Victrix.

And then, when she is full of noble devices, and all sorts enchantingly beloved, and amid the solemn swell of music, when her heart beats happily, and her eyes look Majesty, she turns them on the degraded Ministers of the Gospel, and shudders to see she is stalking to the throne of her Protestant ancestors over the broken altars of God.

Now, remember, I hate to overstate my case. I do not say that the destruction of Cathedrals will put an end to railroads: I believe that good mustard and cress, sown after Lord John's Bill is passed, will, if duly watered, continue to grow. I do not say that the country has no *right*, after the death of individual incumbents, to do what they propose to do;—I merely say that it is inexpedient, uncalled for, and mischievous—that the lower Clergy, for whose sake it is proposed to be done, do not desire it—that the Bishop-Commissioners, who proposed it, would be heartily glad if it were put an end to—that it will lower the character of those who enter into the Church, and accustom the English people to large and dangerous confiscations: and I would not have gentlemen of the moneybags, and of wheat and bean land, forget that the Church means many other things than Thirty-nine Articles, and a discourse of five-and-twenty minutes' duration on the Sabbath. It means a check to the conceited rashness of experimental reasoners—an adhesion to old moral landmarks—an attachment to the happiness we have gained from tried institutions greater than the expectation of that which is promised by novelty and change. The loud cry of ten thousand teachers of justice and worship—that cry which masters the *Borgias* and *Catlines* of the world, and guards from devastation the best works of God—

Magnâ testantur voce per orbem

Discite justitiam moniti et non temnere divos.

In spite of his uplifted chess-board, I cannot let my old school fellow, the Archbishop of Canterbury, off, without harping a little upon his oath which he has taken to preserve the rights and property of the Church of Canterbury: I am quite sure so truly good a man, as from the bottom of my heart I believe him to be, has some line of argument by which he defends himself; but till I know it, I cannot of course say I am convinced by it. The common defence for breaking oaths is, that they are contracts made with another party, which the Creator is called to witness, and from which the swearer is absolved if those for whom the oath is taken choose to release him from his obligation. With whom, then, is the contract made by the Archbishop? Is it with the community at large? If so, nothing but an Act of Parliament (as the community at large have no other organ) could absolve him from his oath; but three years before any act is passed, he puts his name to a plan for taking away two-thirds of the property of the Church of Canterbury. If the contract be not made with the community at large, but with the Church of Canterbury, every member of it is in decided hostility to his scheme. O'Connell takes an oath that he will not injure nor destroy the Protestant Church; but in promoting the destruction of some of the Irish Bishoprics, he may plead that he is sacrificing a part to preserve the whole, and benefiting, not injuring, the Protestant establishment. But the Archbishop does not swear to a general truth, where the principle may be preserved, though there is an apparent deviation from the words; but he swears to a very narrow and limited oath, that he will not alienate the possessions of the Church of Canterbury. A friend of mine has suggested to me that his Grace has perhaps forgotten the oath; but this cannot be, for the first Protestant in Europe of course makes a memorandum in his pocketbook of all the oaths he takes to do, or to abstain. The oath, however, may be less present to the Archbishop's memory, from the fact of his not having

taken the oath in person, but by the medium of a gentleman sent down by the coach to take it for him—a practice which, though I believe it to have been long established in the Church, surprised me, I confess, not a little. A proxy to vote, if you please—a proxy to consent to arrangements of estates if wanted; but a proxy sent down in the Canterbury Fly, to take the Creator to witness that the Archbishop, detained in town by business, or pleasure, will never violate that foundation of piety over which he presides—all this seems to me an act of the most extraordinary indolence ever recorded in history. If an Ecclesiastic, not a Bishop, may express any opinion on the reforms of the Church, I recommend that Archbishops and Bishops should take no more oaths by proxy; but, as they do not wait upon the Sovereign or the Prime Minister, or even any of the Cabinet, by proxy, that they should also perform all religious acts in their own person. This practice would have been abolished in Lord John's first Bill, if other grades of Churchmen as well as Bishops had been made Commissioners. But the motto was—

“Peace to the Palaces—war to the Manses.”

I have been informed, though I will not answer for the accuracy of the information, that this vicarious oath is likely to produce a scene which would have puzzled the *Ductor Dubitantium*. The attorney who took the oath for the Archbishop is, they say, seized with religious horrors at the approaching confiscation of Canterbury property, and has in vain tendered back his 6s. 8d. for taking the oath. The Archbishop refuses to accept it; and feeling himself light and disencumbered, wisely keeps the saddle upon the back of the writhing and agonised scrivener. I have talked it over with several Clergymen, and the general opinion is, that the scrivener will suffer.

I cannot help thinking that a great opportunity opens itself for improving the discipline of the Church, by means of those Chapters which Lord John Russell² is so anxious to destroy; divide the diocese among the members of the Chapter, and make them responsible for the superintendence and inspection of the Clergy in their various divisions under the supreme control of the Bishop; by a few additions they might be made the Bishop's Council for the trial of delinquent Clergymen. They might be made a kind of college for the general care of education in the diocese, and applied to a thousand useful purposes, which would have occurred to the Commissioners, if they had not been so dreadfully frightened, and to the Government, if their object had been, not to please the Dissenters, but to improve the Church.

The Bishop of Lincoln has lately published a pamphlet on the Church question. His Lordship is certainly not a man full of felicities and facilities, imitating none, and inimitable of any; nor does he work with infinite agitation of wit. His creation has blood without heat, bones without marrow, eyes without speculation. He has the art of saying nothing in many words beyond any man that ever existed; and when he seems to have made a proposition, he is so dreadfully frightened at it, that he proceeds as quickly as possible, in the ensuing sentence, to disconnect the subject and the predicate, and to avert the dangers he has incurred:—but as he is a Bishop, and will be therefore more read than I am, I cannot pass him over. His Lordship tells us, that it was at one time under consideration of the Commissioners whether they should not tax all benefices above a certain value, in order to raise a fund for the improvement of smaller livings; and his Lordship adds, with the greatest innocence, that the considerations which principally I weighed with the Commissioners in inducing them not to adopt the plan of taxation was, that they understood the Clergy in general to be decidedly averse to it; so that the plan of the Commission was, that the greater benefices should pay to the little, while the Bishops themselves—the Archbishop of Canterbury with his 15,000*l.* a year, and the Bishop of London with his 10,000*l.* a year—were not to subscribe a single farthing for that purpose.

Why does John, Bishop of Lincoln, mention these distressing schemes of the Commission, which we are certain would have been met with a general yell of indignation from one end of the kingdom to another? Surely it must have occurred to this excellent Prelate that the Bishops would have been compelled by mere shame to have contributed to the fund which they were about to put upon the backs of the more opulent parochial clergy: surely a moment's reflection must have taught them that the safer method by far was to confiscate Cathedral property.

The idea of abandoning this taxation, because it was displeasing to the Clergy at large, is not unentertaining as applied to a commission who treated the Clergy with the greatest contempt, and did not even notice the Communications from Cathedral bodies upon the subject of the most serious and extensive confiscations.³

“The plan of taxation, therefore,” says the Bishop, *“being abandoned, it was evident that the funds for the augmentation of poor Livings, and for the supply of the spiritual wants of populous districts, must be drawn from the Episcopal and Cathedral revenues; that is, from the revenues from which the Legislature seems to have a peculiar right to draw the funds for the general supply of the religious wants of the people; because they arise from benefices, of which the patronage is either actually in the Crown, or is derivative from the Crown. In the case of the Episcopal revenues, the Commissioners had already carried the principle of redistribution as far as they thought that it could, with due allowance for the various demands upon the incomes of the Bishops, be carried. The only remaining source, therefore, was to be found in the Cathedral Revenues: and the Commissioners proceeded, in the execution of the duties prescribed to them, to consider in what manner those revenues might be rendered conducive to the efficiency of the Established Church.”*

This is very good Episcopal reasoning; but is it true? The Bishops and Commissioners wanted a fund to endow small Livings; they did not touch a farthing of their own incomes, only distributed them a little more equally; and proceeded lustily at once to confiscate Cathedral property. But why was it necessary, if the fund for small Livings was such a paramount consideration, that the future Archbishops of Canterbury should be left with two palaces, and 15,000*l.* per annum? Why is every future Bishop of London to have a palace in Fulham, a house in St. James's Square, and 10,000*l.* a year? Could not all the Episcopal functions be carried on well and effectually with the half of these incomes? Is it necessary that the Archbishop of Canterbury should give feasts to Aristocratic London; and that the domestics of the Prelacy should stand with swords and bag-wigs round pig, and turkey, and venison, to defend, as it were, the Orthodox gastronome from the fierce Unitarian, the fell Baptist, and all the famished children of Dissent? I don't object to all this; because I am sure that the method of prizes and blanks is the best method of supporting a Church which must be considered as very slenderly endowed, if the whole were equally divided among the parishes; but if my opinion were different—if I thought the important improvement was to equalise preferment in the English Church—that such a measure was not the one thing foolish, but the one thing needful—I should take care, as a mitred Commissioner, to reduce my own species of preferment to the narrowest limits, before I proceeded to confiscate the property of any other grade of the Church. I could not, as a conscientious man, leave the Archbishop of Canterbury with 15,000*l.* a year, and make a fund by annihilating Residentiaries at Bristol of 500*l.* This comes of calling a meeting of one species of cattle only. The horned cattle say,—“If you want any meat, kill the sheep; don't meddle with us, there is no beef to spare.” They said this, however, to the lion; and the cunning animal, after he had gained all the information necessary for the destruction of the mutttons, and learnt how well and widely they pastured, and how they could be most conveniently eaten up, turns round and informs the cattle, who took him for their best and tenderest friend, that he means to eat them up also. Frequently did Lord John meet the destroying Bishops; much did he

commend their daily heap of ruins; sweetly did they smile on each other, and much charming talk was there of meteorology and catarrh, and the particular Cathedral they were pulling down at each time;⁴ till one fine day the Home Secretary, with a voice more bland, and a look more ardently affectionate, than that which masculine mouse bestows on his nibbling female, informed them that the Government meant to take all the Church property into their own hands, to pay the rates out of it, and deliver the residue to the rightful possessors. Such an effect, they say, was never before produced by a *coup de théâtre*. The Commission was separated in an instant: London clenched his fist; Canterbury was hurried out by his chaplains, and put into a warm bed; a solemn vacancy spread itself over the face of Gloucester; Lincoln was taken out in strong hysterics. What a noble scene Serjeant Talfourd would have made of this! Why are such talents wasted on *Ion* and the *Athenian Captive*?

But, after all, what a proposition! “You don’t make the most of your money: I will take your property into my hands, and see if I cannot squeeze a penny out of it: you shall be regularly paid all you now receive, only if anything more can be made of it, that we will put into our own pockets.”—“Just pull off your neck-cloth, and lay your head under the guillotine, and I will promise not to do you any harm: just get ready for confiscation; give up the management of all your property; make us the ostensible managers of everything; let us be informed of the most minute value of all, and depend upon it, we will never injure you to the extent of a single farthing.”—“Let me get my arms about you,” says the bear, “I have not the smallest intention of squeezing you.”—“Trust your finger in my mouth,” says the mastiff, “I will not fetch blood.”

Where is this to end? If Government are to take into their own hands all property which is not managed with the greatest sharpness and accuracy, they may squeeze $\frac{1}{8}$ per cent. out of the Turkey Company; Spring Rice would become Director of the Hydroimpervious Association, and clear a few hundreds for the Treasury. The British Roasted Apple Society is notoriously mismanaged, and Lord John and Brother Lister, by a careful selection of fruit, and a judicious management of fuel, would soon get it up to par.

I think, however, I have heard at the Political Economy Club, where I have sometimes had the honour of being a guest, that no trades should be carried on by Governments. That they have enough to do of their own, without undertaking other persons’ business. If any savings in the mode of managing Ecclesiastical Leases could be made, great deductions from the savings must be allowed by the jobbing and *Gaspillage* of general Boards, and all the old servants of the Church, displaced by this measure, must receive compensation.

The Whig Government, they will be vexed to hear, would find a great deal of patronage forced upon them by this measure. Their favourite human animal, the Barrister of six years’ standing, would be called into action. The whole earth is, in fact, in commission, and the human race saved from the Flood are delivered over to Barristers of six years’ standing. The *onus probandi* now lies upon any man who says he is not a Commissioner; the only doubt on seeing a new man among the Whigs is, not whether he is a Commissioner or not, but whether it is Tithes, Poor Laws, Boundaries of Boroughs, Church Leases, Charities, or any of the thousand human concerns which are now worked by Commissioners, to the infinite comfort and satisfaction of mankind, who seem in these days to have found out the real secret of life—the one thing wanting to sublunary happiness—the great principle of Commission, and six years’ Barristration.

Then, if there be a better method of working Ecclesiastical Estates—if anything can be gained for the Church—why is not the Church to have it? why is it not applied to Church purposes? what right has the State to seize it? If I give you an estate, I give it you not only in its present state, but I give to you all the improvements which can be made upon it—all that

mechanical, botanical, and chemical knowledge, may do hereafter for its improvement—all the ameliorations which care and experience can suggest, in setting, improving, and collecting your rents. Can there be such miserable equivocation as to say—I leave you your property, but I do not leave to you all the improvements which your own wisdom, or the wisdom of your fellow-creatures, will enable you to make of your property? How utterly unworthy of a Whig government is such a distinction as this!

Suppose the same sort of plan had been adopted in the reign of Henry VIII., and the Legislature had said,—You shall enjoy all you now have, but every farthing of improved revenue, after this period, shall go into the pocket of the State—it would have been impossible by this time that the Church could have existed at all; and why may not such a measure be as fatal hereafter to the existence of a Church, as it would have been to the present generation, if it had been brought forward at the time of the Reformation?

There is some safety in dignity. A Church is in danger when it is degraded. It costs mankind much less to destroy it when an institution is associated with mean, and not with elevated, ideas. I should like to see the subject in the hands of H. B. I would entitle the print—

“The Bishops’ Saturday Night; or, Lord John Russell at the Pay-Table”

The Bishops should be standing before the pay-table, and receiving their weekly allowance; Lord John and Spring Rice counting, ringing, and biting the sovereigns, and the Bishop of Exeter insisting that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has given him one which was not weight. Viscount Melbourne, in high chuckle, should be standing, with his hat on, and his back to the fire, delighted with the contest; and the Deans and Canons should be in the background, waiting till their turn came, and the Bishops were paid; and among them a Canon, of large composition, urging them on not to give way too much to the Bench. Perhaps I should add the President of the Board of Trade, recommending the truck principle to the Bishops, and offering to pay them in hassocks, cassocks, aprons, shovel-hats, sermon-cases, and such like ecclesiastical gear.

But the madness and folly of such a measure is in the revolutionary feeling which it excites. A Government taking into its hands such an immense value of property! What a lesson of violence and change to the mass of mankind! Do you want to accustom Englishmen to lose all confidence in the permanence of their institutions—to inure them to great acts of plunder—and to draw forth all the latent villainies of human nature? The Whig leaders are honest men, and cannot mean this, but these foolish and inconsistent measures are the horn-book and infantile lessons of revolution; and remember, it requires no great time to teach mankind to rob and murder on a great scale.

I am astonished that these Ministers neglect the common precaution of a foolometer,⁵ with which no public man should be unprovided: I mean, the acquaintance and society of three or four regular British fools as a test of public opinion. Every Cabinet minister should judge of all his measures by his foolometer, as a navigator crowds or shortens sail by the barometer in his cabin. I have a very valuable instrument of that kind myself, which I have used for many years; and I would be bound to predict, with the utmost nicety, by the help of this machine, the precise effect which any measure would produce on public opinion. Certainly, I never saw anything so decided as the effects produced upon my machine by the Rate Bill. No man who had been accustomed in the smallest degree to handle philosophical instruments could have doubted of the storm which was coming on, or of the thoroughly un-English scheme, in which the Ministry had so rashly engaged themselves.

I think, also, that it is a very sound argument against this measure of Church Rates, that estates have been bought liable to these payments, and that they have been deducted from the purchase money. And, what, also, if a Dissenter were a Republican as well as a Dissenter—a case which has sometimes happened; and what if our anti-monarchical Dissenter were to object to the expenses of kingly government? Are his scruples to be respected, and his taxes diminished, and the Queen's privy purse to be subjected and exposed to the intervening and economical squeeze of Government Commissioners?

But these lucubrations upon Church Rates are an episode; I must go back to John, Bishop of Lincoln. All other Cathedrals are fixed at four Prebendaries; St. Paul's and Lincoln having only three, are increased to the regulation pattern of four. I call this useless and childish. The Bishop of Lincoln says, there were more Residentiaries before the Reformation; but if for three hundred years three Residentiaries have been found to be sufficient, what a strangely feeble excuse it is for adding another, and diverting 3000*l.* per annum from the Small Living Fund, to say, that there were more Residentiaries three hundred years ago.

Must everything be good and right that is done by Bishops? Is there one rule of right for them, and another for the rest of the world? Now here are two Commissioners, whose express object is to constitute out of the large emoluments of the dignitaries, a Fund for the poorer Parochial Clergy; and in the very heat and fervour of confiscation, they build up two new places, utterly useless and uncalled for, take 3000*l.* from the Charity Fund to pay them, and they give the patronage of these places to themselves. Is there a single epithet in the language of invective which would not have been levelled at Lay Commissioners who had attempted the same thing? If it be necessary to do so much for Archdeacons, why might not one of the three Residentiaries be Archdeacon in virtue of his prebend? If Government make Bishops, they may surely be trusted to make Archdeacons. I am very willing to ascribe good motives to these Commissioners, who are really worthy and very sensible men, but I am perfectly astonished that they were not deterred from such a measure by appearances, and by the motives which, whether rightly or wrongly, would be imputed to them. In not acting so as to be suspected, the Bishop of London should resemble Cæsar's wife. In other respects, this excellent Prelate would not have exactly suited for the partner for that great and self-willed man; and an idea strikes me, that is not impossible he might have been in the Senate-house instead of Cæsar.

Lord John Russell gives himself great credit for not having confiscated Church property, but merely remodelled and redivided it. I accuse him not of plunder, but I accuse him of taking the Church of England, rolling it about as a cook does a piece of dough with a rolling-pin, cutting a hundred different shapes with all the plastic fertility of a confectioner, and without the most distant suspicion that he can ever be wrong, or ever be mistaken; with a certainty that he can anticipate the consequences of every possible change in human affairs. There is not a better man in England than Lord John Russell; but his worst failure is that he is utterly ignorant of all moral fear; there is nothing he would not undertake. I believe he would perform the operation for the stone—build St. Peter's—or assume (with or without ten minutes' notice) the command of the Channel Fleet; and no one would discover by his manner that the patient had died—the Church tumbled down—and the Channel Fleet been knocked to atoms. I believe his motives are always pure, and his measures often able; but they are endless, and never done with that pedetentous pace and pedetentous mind in which it behoves the wise and virtuous improver to walk. He alarms the wise Liberals; and it is impossible to sleep soundly while he has the command of the watch.⁶

Do not say, my dear Lord John, that I am too severe upon you. A thousand years have scarce sufficed to make our blessed England what it is; an hour may lay it in the dust: and can you with all your talents renovate its shattered splendour—can you recall back its vir-

tues—can you vanquish time and fate? But, alas! you want to shake the world, and be the Thunderer of the scene!

Now what is the end of what I have written? Why everybody was in a great fright; and a number of Bishops, huddled together, and talking of their great sacrifices, began to destroy other people's property, and to take other people's patronage: and all the fright is over now; and all the Bishops are very sorry for what they have done and regret extremely the destruction of the Cathedral dignitaries but don't know how to get out of the foolish scrape. The Whig Ministry persevere to please Joseph and his brethren, and the Destroyers; and the good sense of the matter is to fling out the Dean and Chapter Bill, as it now stands, and to bring in another next year—making a fund out of all the Non-resident Prebends, annexing some of the others, and adopting many of the enactments contained in the present Bill.

¹ The Church, it has been urged, do not plant—they do not extend their woods; but almost all Cathedrals possess woods, and regularly plant a succession, so as to keep them up. A single evening of dice and hazard does not doom their woods to sudden destruction; a life-tenant does not cut down all the timber to make the most of his estate; the woods of ecclesiastical bodies are managed upon a fixed and settled plan, and considering the sudden prodigalities of Laymen, I should not be afraid of a comparison.

² I only mention Lord John Russell's name so often, because the management of the Church measures devolves upon him. He is beyond all comparison the ablest man in the whole Administration, and to such a degree is he superior, that the Government could not exist a moment without him. If the Foreign Secretary were to retire, we should no longer be nibbling ourselves into disgrace on the coast of Spain. If the amiable Lord Glenelg were to leave us, we should feel secure in our colonial possessions. If Mr. Spring Rice were to go into holy orders, great would be the joy of the three per cents. A decent good-looking head of the Government might easily enough be found in lieu of Viscount Melbourne; but in five minutes after the departure of Lord John, the whole Whig Government would be dissolved into sparks of liberality and splinters of Reform. There are six remarkable men, who, in different methods and in different degrees, are now affecting the interests of this country—the Duke of Wellington, Lord John Russell, Lord Brougham, Lord Lyndhurst, Sir Robert Peel, and O'Connell. Greater powers than all these are the phlegm of the English People—the great mass of good sense and intelligence diffused among them—and the number of those who have something to lose, and have not the slightest intention of losing it.

³ Upon this subject I think it right to introduce the following letters, the first of which was published Jan. 23, 1838:—

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

“Sir,—

I feel it to be consistent with my duty, as Secretary to the Church Commissioners, to notice a statement emanating from a quarter which would seem to give it authenticity—that, of seven Chapter memorials addressed to the Board, the receipt of one was only acknowledged.

“It is strictly within my province to acknowledge communications made to the Commissioners as a body, either directly or through me; and it is part of their general instructions to me that I should do so in all cases.

“To whatever extent, therefore, the statement may be true, or whatever may be its value, it is clear that it cannot attach to the Commissioners, but that I alone am responsible.

SECOND LETTER TO ARCHDEACON SINGLETON

“In the execution of my office I have endeavoured, in the midst of my other duties, to conduct an extensive correspondence in accordance to what I knew to be the feelings and wishes of the Commissioners, and to treat every party in communication with them with attention and respect.

“If, at some period of more than usual pressure, any accidental omission may have occurred, or may hereafter occur, involving an appearance of discourtesy, it is for me to offer, as I now do, explanation and apology.

“I am, Sir, your obedient humble servant,

“C. K. MURRAY.

“Whitehall Place, Jan. 21.”

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

“Sir,—

A more indiscreet and extraordinary communication than that which appears in your own paper of the 23rd instant, signed by Mr. C. K. Murray, I never read. *‘Apparet domus intus.’* It is now clear how the Commission has been worked. Where communications from the oldest Ecclesiastical bodies, upon the most important of all subjects to them and to the kingdom, were received by the greatest prelates and noblemen of the land, acting under the King’s Commission, I should have thought that answers suitable to the occasion would, in each case, have been dictated by the Commission; that such answers would have been entered on the minutes, and read on the Board-day next ensuing.

“Is Mr. C. K. Murray quite sure that this, which is done at all Boards on the most trifling subjects, was not done at his Board, in the most awful confiscations ever known in England? Is he certain that spoliation was in no instance sweetened by civility, and injustice never varnished by forms? Were all the decencies and proprieties which ought to regulate the intercourse of such great bodies left without a single inquiry from the Commissioner, to a gentleman who seems to have been seized with six distinct fits of oblivion on six separate occasions, any one of which required all that attention to decorum and that accuracy of memory for which secretaries are selected and paid?

“According to Mr. C. K. Murray’s account, the only order he received from the Board was, ‘If any Prebendary calls, or any Cathedral writes, desiring not to be destroyed, just say the communication has been received;’ and even this, Mr. Murray tells us, he has not done, and that no one of the King’s Commissioners—Archbishops, Bishops, Marquises, Earls—ever asked him whether he had done it or not—though any one of these great people would have swooned away at the idea of not answering the most trifling communication from any other of these great people.

“Whatever else these Commissioners do, they had better not bring their Secretary forward again. They may feel wind-bound by public opinion, but they must choose, as a sacrifice, a better Iphigenia than Mr. C. K. Murray.

“SYDNEY SMITH.”

⁴ “What Cathedral are we pulling down to-day?” was the standing question at the Commission.

⁵ Mr. Fox very often used to say, “I wonder what Lord B. will think of this!” Lord B. happened to be a very stupid person, and the curiosity of Mr. Fox’s friends was naturally excited to know why he attached such importance to the opinion of such an ordinary common-place person. “His opinion,” said Mr. Fox, “is of much more importance than you are aware of. He is an exact representative of all common-place English prejudices, and what Lord B. thinks of any measure, the great majority

SECOND LETTER TO ARCHDEACON SINGLETON

of English people will think of it." It would be a good thing if every Cabinet of philosophers had a Lord B. among them.

⁶ Another peculiarity of the Russells is, that they never alter their opinions: they are an excellent race, but they must be trepanned before they can be convinced.