

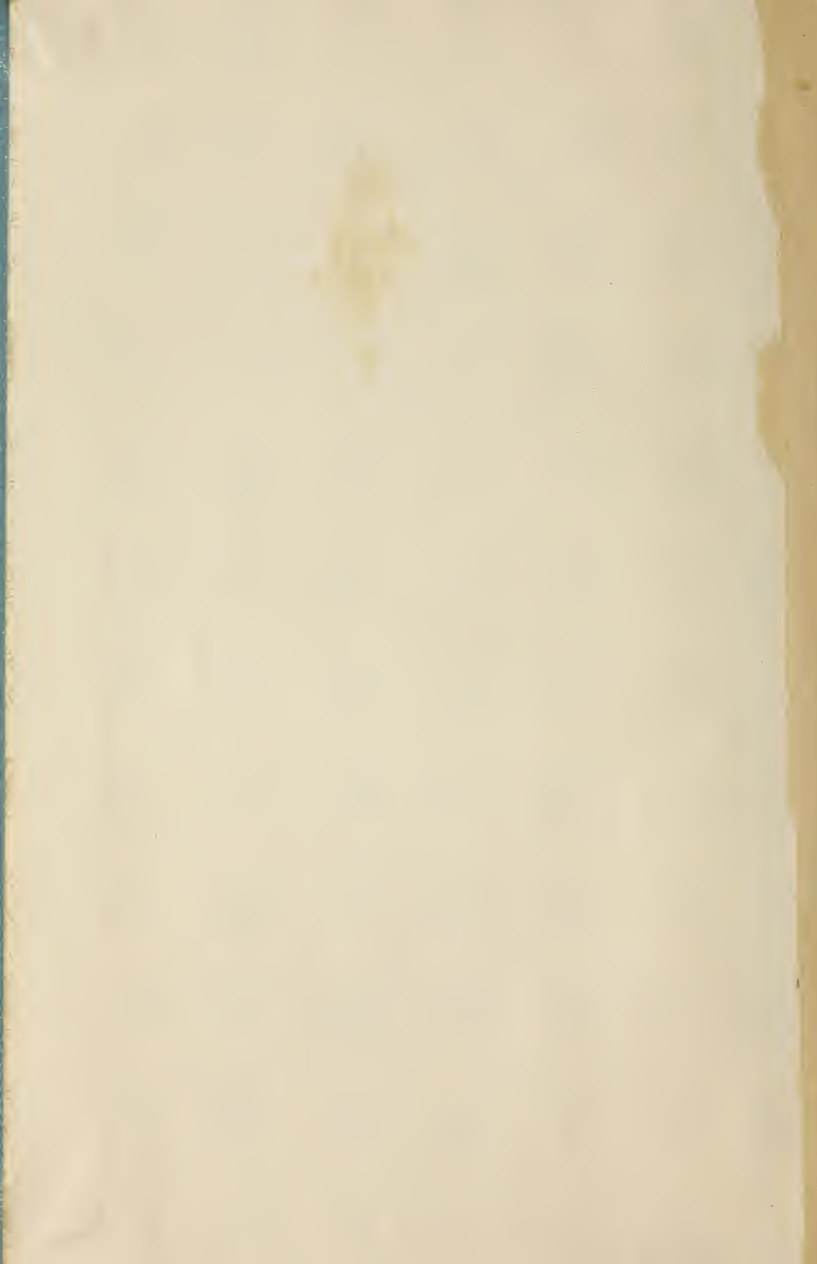
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1857







A

LETTER TO A FRIEND,

CONTAINING SOME MATTERS RELATING TO

The Church.

BY

A CORNISH VICAR.

Frye, Percival

" " Rev. P. Frye ?

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LETTER TO A FRIEND.

 CHURCH RATE.

IN your last letter you express a fear
 That the destruction of our Church draws near ;
 So many enemies without oppose,
 So many friends within, as bad as those.
 For what an open enemy intends
 We guard against, but don't suspect our friends.
 Indeed it is oft difficult to know
 Which is most dangerous, a friend or foe.
 If we surrender outworks, one by one,
 The citadel at last must be undone.
 " It is against my conscience," say Dissenters,
 " To keep up churches which one never enters.
 " And as we never occupy a pew,
 " We are determin'd not to pay the due."
 But when you took the land you knew the rate,
 And paid the less that burden to abate.

If this be given up, on what pretext
Can tithes be paid, must they not follow next ?
If conscience is annoy'd by brick and mortar,
Why should the minister have any quarter ?
He who opposes you in doctrine calls
For greater animosity than walls.
But of two evils why attack the least,
Why wish the building down, but spare the priest ?
In your reforms for minor things why stickle,
Why use that petty instrument the sickle,
When you may take the large, wide-sweeping scythe—
The principle's the same—and cut down tithe ?
Perhaps some hope that if the nests decay,
So thought John Knox, the birds will fly away.
You say that conscience makes you thus object,
Which is a plea that all men must respect ;
But from the cup it often strains a gnat,
And swallows a whole camel for all that.
We often find, when things are very small,
Men have their doubts, when great have none at all.
Thus many leave our Church, and think it safer
To join with those who make of God a wafer.
As to this rate, one cannot but surmise,
Conscience is often interest in disguise.
Hypocrisy, in garb of conscience dress'd,
This question to our blessed Lord address'd :
“ The coin we pay the Romans keeps alive
“ The Pagan priests, and makes their worship thrive.
“ Can we, then, lawfully, this tribute pay ?
“ We wait your judgment, tell us if we may.”

What answer got the calculating Jew ?—
 “ Render to Cæsar what is Cæsar’s due.”
 Shall Christians, then, who hold the sacred name
 Of Christ in honour, grudge the legal claim ?
 Shall they for petty differences refuse,
 And many know not why, to pay their dues ?
 Alas ! some Christians are much worse than Jews.
 Oh, how much better to avoid these frays,
 And voluntary contributions raise.
 Then would the Church enjoy a golden age,
 No parish quarrels, and no vestry’s rage.
 Tenants in haste would free-will offerings bring ;
 E’en tithes abolished, vicars laugh and sing.
 Why not in this way pay all taxes too ;
 And make a pleasure of an odious due.
 So say some friends, and thus their love would prove,
 And spots and wrinkles from our Church remove.
 But take a lesson from the neighbouring fair,
 And see the voluntary system there.
 What staring crowds about the shows are found !
 Few keep their places when the hat goes round.

PUBLIC CEMETERY.

But all who pay, or who refuse, the rate,
 Must one day pass through the sepulchral gate.
 If e’er on earth a peaceful spot be found,
 ’Tis in the ancient churchyard’s holy ground.
 On all the tombs we find one hope express’d,
 That all may rise together, as they rest.

That holy place, from all bad passions free,
Breathes the sweet calm of peace and harmony :
No signs of quarrels, or dissensions there,
The immortality of hate declare ;
But charity and love alone find room
To write inscriptions on the quiet tomb.
But in what now we cemeteries call,
Behold ! a strong division and a wall !
Which shows that they, who quarrelled in their lives,
Are not yet friends, and still their hate survives.
See, Christians cannot in their coffins lie
Without a wall between them, three feet high.
'Tis pity we should make our quarrels clear
In the last place such feelings should appear.
Oh ! that we could at our last hour unite,
Like man and wife, who all day rail and fight,
Content to rest in the same bed at night.
Were it not better, if we can't agree,
And would such dangerous contagion flee,
To raise the wall a little more, and quite
Exclude the parties from each other's sight ;
Or if we cannot thus our fears abate,
Why not be altogether separate ;
And choose some far and very distant ground,
Where no offence could rise from sight or sound,
And all might sleep secure without a fear
Of some dissenting brother slumbering near ;
Nor dread to be commingled in the tomb,
Or rise together at the day of doom ?
When once about, so Bishop Thomas said,

To solemnize the service of the dead,
 A woman pull'd his gown, and begg'd a word,
 'Twas just before her husband was interr'd,—
 “ Oh pray don't bury him,” she weeping cried,
 “ Close to a man who of the small-pox died !
 “ My husband, I am certain, had it not,
 “ Oh, pray, Sir, let me choose another spot ! ”

EDUCATION.

In these improving times, how great the shame
 That so much vice prevails—and who's to blame ?
 Our gaols are full, and yet want room, 'tis time
 To remedy, or stop th' increase of crime.
 'Tis Education only can do this,
 And henceforth, none should education miss.
 Among the various plans to ensure this end,
 Some to make schools compulsory contend :
 All children, whether parents will or no,
 Unto a parish school should daily go.
 But who's to pay th' expense?—a parish rate,
 Which no one shall refuse or deprecate.
 Churchmen, Dissenters, all must now combine
 To teach all truths—but those which are divine.
 For since in doctrines all cannot agree,
 Why—banish Scripture, and let all be free.
 But to prevent these crimes, 'tis rather odd
 All knowledge should be taught—but that of God ;

But give up Scripture, and all sects will join,—
That difficulty gone, all will combine.
This is the only plan to reconcile it,
As Herod once agreed with Pontius Pilate.
But since Religion is this way dismiss'd,
The Sciences are added to the list.
Science enables man the world to roam,
Religion's homely, to be taught at home ;
No longer science on the poor shall frown,
Or look contemptuous on the humble clown ;
The youth, who might with Virgil's muse have sung,
No longer be confined to carts, and dung.
Awake, ye country squires ! your learned hind
Will soon despise, and leave you far behind.
Unless you study hard, and get a-head,
The husbandman upon your heels will tread ;
Peers once of authors were the known protectors,
But now they write themselves, and get up lectures.
Before Professors little men are awed,
But how much more when that man is a Lord !
The rustics now must sciences explore,
To raise their minds when daily works are o'er ;
Must learn geography, the maps to search
For any roads—but those which lead to church ;
Than algebra, what work can suit them better,
Where x may stand for church, the unknown letter.
Who shall find fault if Molly spurns the shovels,
And polishes her mind with plays and novels ;
Or check the feelings of her heart, or hurt her,
By scolding her for weeping over "Werter."

Instead of sweeping cobwebs from the ceiling,
She from her pocket draws the "Man of Feeling."
Improve that noble art gastronomy,
And send the cook to learn astronomy—
To see the solar system in the hearth,
The fire the sun, the leg of mutton earth.
And when she takes the spit in hand to turn it,
Think upon Hutton's method, or of Burnet;
For each philosopher his system boasted,
One said the world was boiled, the other roasted.
The tailor in Laputa's city made
A quadrant the fit measure of his trade.
Taking an observation, and a note
Of the sun's altitude, to make a coat.
The learned cook cut up his joints and hams,
In circles, squares, and parallelograms,
And all his dishes and his trimmings took
From figures to be seen in Euclid's book.
Surely that learning is both sound and good,
That mixes up philosophy with food;
'Twill fix it on the memory, for men vote
The best way to the heart is down the throat.
Go teach the miner who lives underground,
Make him in scientific skill profound,
Will he much longer underneath be found?
But still there must be some men to descend,
Or mining operations find an end.
Those lessons are injurious which teach
Men to aspire to what they cannot reach.
The children of the poor have little need

Of more instruction than to write and read.
Children of those who follow daily toil
Will live, 'tis likely, on the self-same soil ;
Snatch'd early from the school their bread to earn,
They have but little time much more to learn.
He who affords no more, you say, denies
The poor all prospect from their state to rise,
And would to labour's drudgery consign
Men who in science or in arts might shine.
The diamond thus conceals its brilliant light,
Unless by art well polished and made bright.
But genius, worth the name, will find its time,
And from the lowest ground contrive to climb ;
While vanity, on little learning based,
Is often by the name of genius graced,
And fills with self-conceit the shallow brain,
And vain ideas of renown and gain ;
Leaving the victim of false hope to bear
The pangs of disappointment and despair.
Perhaps a village poet may arise,
A man his own companions will despise ;
Consider as an idle, useless wight,
And recommend to work, and not to write ;
While he, on his imaginary throne,
Will his own parents be ashamed to own ;
Buoy'd up by treacherous hope, to London flies,
And struggling hard to get a living—dies.
How many thus above their rank have risen,
And found their dreams concluded in a prison !
How many writers, had they learnt a trade,

Had ne'er this wretched consummation made ;
Whose works are now, too late, with pity read,
While they, when living, often wanted bread !
Posterity with sadness would atone
By monuments—instead of bread a stone.
Why then teach science, which will make men scout
The line which Providence has pointed out ?
Why fill with rudiments the plough-boy's mind,
From which he never may advantage find ?
Why teach cooks sciences, to know a little
On every subject,—save to dress the victual ?
Maids should learn household work, and not be puzzling
Their heads with fashions, or make holes in muslin.
To make men fit to gain sufficient earning,
Each in his station, is the use of learning.
All beyond this will raise them from the sphere
In which they may with happiness appear,
Will foster pride, and nourish discontent,
Make them unhappy, restless, turbulent ;
The proper tools for demagogues to guide,
Who use them for their ends, then throw aside.
Remember, too, all learning weak and base is,
Of which religious truth is not the basis.
He who this wisdom has most surely got,
Will be content whatever be his lot.
Without it all our pains are nothing worth,
But merely dust to dust, and earth to earth.

CONVOCATION.

Would that with those without our feuds were found,
And all within our camp in union bound.

Who shall the questions which the Church divide,
Between the lax and orthodox decide ?

Who shall be judge, when bishops disagree ;
If they cannot, can priests and deacons see ?

In this dilemma some good men are sure
That Convocation is the only cure.

But I much fear 'twill make our quarrels plainer,
When angry zealots meet in the arena.

So many serious questions there may start,
'Twixt high and low, who now are kept apart.

Some families, where warmer tempers reign,
By living separate their love maintain.

In all disputes which from religion date,
Who differ least, the most each other hate.

'Twixt high and low much greater ill-will lurks,
Than between them and pagans, Jews, or Turks.

To learn this paradox we need not search
Deep in the annals of the Christian Church.

Which made the saint of Nazianzum say,
He knew no good of Councils in his day.

Combustibles, when spread o'er heaven's wide breast,
Sleep quietly in elemental rest.

Each atom is in due proportion mix'd,
And o'er the whole an equal balance fix'd.

But when collected in the thunder-cloud,
The mass takes fire, and the explosion 's loud.
So in our Church's ample room and space,
Both high and low may find convenient place.
Here baptism makes the infant quite divine,
There 'tis contingent, or a simple sign.
The exposition which one bishop shocks,
May with another be quite orthodox.
Such is the case, 'tis pity, all men know,
It ever was, and always will be so.
If in some doctrines all cannot agree,
Yet may they live in peace and charity.
But if men meet to settle and declare
Who are the right, and who in error are,
You 'll quickly find them by the ears together,
Depend upon it, you 'll have stormy weather.
One thing is clear, whatever is decided,
The Church, just as before, will be divided.
If all to one opinion were confined,
Where is the freedom of the human mind ?
Infallibility 's beyond the scope
Of all mankind, except, some say, the pope.
Of whom we hear, "*errare non potest*,"
Against which creed we venture to protest.
Except, as Fuller says, some time ago,
When lodged a prisoner in St. Angelo ;
Should we attempt to found a Church where all
Must think alike, it would be very small.
Some modern Gaius might become the host
Of the whole Church within his house—or, most.

In Convocation who cannot discern
Some kindling sparks which under ashes burn ?
Who cannot germs of future quarrels see,
Which only wait for opportunity ?
Some think the Holy Synod not complete,
Unless the laity have their proper seat.
Some make it out a serious gravamen,
That doctrines should be argued on by laymen.
And to themselves the term "spiritual" claim ;
As if to them alone the Spirit came.
And would lay brothers from all share relieve
In search of truth—but only to believe.
So did the pagan priests, for they were shy,
And wish'd not others on their rites to pry ;
But held all men except themselves profane,
And only fit for superstition's chain.
Those doctrines which admit of different sense,
Are subject to the laws of evidence.
All learned men are equal on this score,
Clergy and laity can know no more,—
Each may alike th' historic page explore.
That priests alone can Holy Writ explain,
Is the worst dogma of the popish reign ;
The fruitful cause of errors that o'erlaid
The Church, and traffic of religion made ;
When men were forced at their commands to live.
And take such doctrines as they chose to give.

REVIVAL OF OBSOLETE CEREMONIES.

There lately in our churches have appear'd
 Things which the besom of reform had clear'd,—
 Flowers on the altar, and large candlesticks,
 Crosses, a reredos, and a crucifix ;
 And candles lighted when the sun is high,
 Which make all sober people wonder why.
 A change of dress to make the Holy Table,
 Just like the congregation, fashionable.
 These are essentials deem'd in party's eyes,
 And Christian charity neglected dies.
 As long as these remain some men declare
 They never will go near the house of prayer.
 Unless they 're kept, some vow they 'll never enter,
 Or go to Rome, at least become Dissenter.
 How things which in themselves are good and quiet,
 Often disturb the peace and make a riot !
 Though innocent as any tinkling cymbal,
 They become dangerous as a party's symbol.
 For party always looks through coloured glasses,
 Distorting all that through their medium passes.
 With magnifying powers on its eyes,
 It makes a mole-hill like a mountain rise.
 Such have the causes been of many scandals,
 And serve, moreover, as so many handles,
 To raise suspicions, often wrong, we hope,
 That ministers are veering to the Pope.

Many have left our pale, and many more
Stand on the brink, prepared to quit our shore;
Who have begun by trifling innovations,
Or rather, I should say, resuscitations.
Reviving ancient practices, whose use
Was laid aside by time, or for abuse.
And to attempt such fashions to recall,
Resembles dressing for a fancy ball.
Where nuns, and monks, and anchorites are seen,
Motley revivers of a long-past scene;
And hoops, and wigs, and ancient oddities,
Are thought desirable commodities.
Hence churches are with tawdry show array'd
Like scenes at theatre, or masquerade;
And people eager for amusement go
To see a church, like any other show.
And when they have the alterations traced,
Confess the rector has, at least, good taste.
See Rubricus his little church arrange,
With things to modern congregations strange;
What petty ornaments, and how much stress
He lays upon the altar's frippery dress!
As many covers as there is a season,
Of various hues, but none without a reason;
That by observing these the hearers may,
As the year progresses, be grave or gay.
For when the covering is dull, or sable,
Upon the altar (mind there is no table
Except a credence standing by itself,
Something between a table and a shelf.)

Then should the congregation put on black,
And in due time to gay attire turn back.
Before the altar he puts up a screen,
Within which none but priests are rightly seen ;
Or, what is much the same thing, to keep out
The laymen, a profane, unholy rout.
Since surplices are plain, and often shabby,
As may be seen by going to the Abbey,
Upon his breast a handsome cross he wore,
Which Romanists, not Protestants, adore.
Besides, in a small way to emulate
The style and pomp of a cathedral's state,
He forms processions for the sake of show :
The choristers precede, a surpliced row,
The curates next, with solemn steps and slow,
And last of all, the chief divine goes past,—
The place of dignity is always last.
The bustling vergers with a silver knob,
Make clear the way, and keep aloof the mob.
But stop, we miss the usual reading-desk,
The lectern's more correct and picturesque ;
For, since all things now must be mediæval,
The church's furniture must be coeval.
The prayers are utter'd in a sing-song way,
Call it intoning, or what else you may :
“ Si legis cantas,”—but you know the rest,
Latin in rhymes can hardly be express'd.
Then as to doctrines, many stand aghast,
And think to Rome he's going very fast.

The Sacrament he makes it out quite clear,
To Transubstantiation very near ;
If he can prove the real body there
To those who hear him—how, he need not care.
If all the disputants agree in one
And the same fact, why quarrel how 'tis done ?
The basin, too, is banish'd, and behold
A bag, the sum of charity to hold.
This is a safer way, I grant, to carry it,
But wonder it suggested not Iscariot.
These things, some think, devotion raise ; at least,
If they do not, they may exalt the priest.
They show, indeed, an antiquarian taste,
But in a church are most unfitly placed.
Let all things there in decent order be
And decorated with simplicity.
“The world is still deceived with ornament,”
It will the right course of our thoughts prevent.
He knew the heart who wrote that sentiment.
And like that spirit who in Heaven we're told,
Admired the pavement rich with trodden gold,
More than aught else, or holy or divine ;
So, if a church be made too smart, or fine,
We may forget the object of the place,
And find amusement there, instead of grace.
A tenet which distinguishes this school,
Is meek obedience to the Church's rule ;
To hold in reverence almost divine
The true successors of th' Apostles' line.

But should a bishop any change suggest,
Or alteration in a cross or vest,
Or censure any favourite whim, or crotchet,
A fig for all the wearers of the rochet.
Indeed, obedience of this sort we find
Extremely prevalent among mankind,
Who to superiors due allegiance own,
In all opinions—which are like their own.
Fair Ceremony is, by all confess'd,
Religion's handmaid; but too richly dress'd
In gaudy robes, she will attract the eye,
Whilst her neglected mistress passes by.
So, too, much pomp its proper end betrays,
And keeps on earth what it to heaven should raise;
For while we gaze upon the passing show,
Pleased with the scene, our thoughts remain below.
Religion has two parts, which form the whole,
Just like ourselves, a body and a soul.
The body is the ceremonial part,
The soul the prayers, the offerings of the heart,
Those secret aspirations, which alone
To our own consciences, and God, are known.
The former is submitted to the eye,
By faith alone the latter we apply.
But things invisible attract us less
Than present objects, which the sense address.
Hence some neglect all care about the soul,
And to their bodies dedicate the whole.
Thus penance is a form which represents
The inward feeling of true penitence.

But men soon found, on easier methods bent,
'Twas easier to do penance than repent.
And as the morals of mankind grew worse,
The list of penances increased of course.
Men mortified their bodies, every part
Suffer'd some chastisement, except the heart.
Crusades abolish'd every sinful stain,
But might be changed for cash, the papal gain ;
Until all sins, however vile and bold,
Became, like notes, convertible to gold.
No speculation man could e'er invent,
So likely to return a good *per cent*.
When tradesmen wish with customers to treat,
Under a holy firm—suspect a cheat,
A pious bank 's a trap men's cash to win,
It numbers fools without, and knaves within.
It must be so, we need no further proof,
When outward signs usurp the place of truth.
Of all that we have lately heard, precedence
Seems given to a table call'd a credence.
From what slight causes dire effects proceed,
When a mere table can dissensions breed !
They put upon these tables such a price, you
Must not expect to hear " *solvuntur risu.*"
Oh ! Muse, who once the Lutrin's quarrels sung,
Which 'twixt the treasurer and the chapter sprung—
The cause of much confusion in the choir—
Behold ! a subject worthy of thy lyre !
With lofty strains the credence celebrate,
The vicar's idol, the churchwarden's hate.

The famous reading desk was not below
The classic genius of correct Boileau.
Twice in the choir the treasurer fix'd it fast—
Twice did the chapter turn it out—at last
The treasurer brought it back, the victory gain'd,
The desk for ever in the choir remain'd.
'Tis not alone in modern times we find
Tables to turn, and move about, inclined ;
Nor is it stranger, things with legs should walk,
Than that a tongue should move itself and talk.
So in times past our own communion table
Was wont to move, and anything but stable.
Some said, they would not go to church at all,
Unless 'twas fix'd against the eastern wall.
Others declared that they could never enter,
Unless 'twas placed exactly in the centre.
Some men to have it lengthways fix'd protested,
Others would make it to be sideways rested.
And, as it pleased the victors of the hour,
The table got a locomotive power ;
And thus precisely show'd by its position,
Or high or low, the parish disposition.
'Tis pity that a table framed for love,
The scene of fierce disputes and hate should prove.
We smile at these accounts ; but are we grown
More sensible in times we call our own ?
The folly of our ancestors we scout,
Who tables push'd, to show their zeal, about,
When many things we do, as foolish quite,
And please ourselves to think that all is right.

For now a second table on revival,
Threatens to be a formidable rival.
What 's in a table? sure, there 's no pretence
For making that a cause of just offence.
If any one a definition begs,
'Tis a fair board upon four wooden legs.
Your anger is so great, I should not wonder
You thought the pope himself was hidden under.
Why be suspicious? look at once, and search,
There's nothing underneath to harm the Church.
No; but with other novelties combined,
Some think a secret meaning is behind.
So candlesticks and flowers are innocent,
Unless they party's symbols represent.
Lately what feuds the surplice caused! why, bless us,
Some would as soon put on the shirt of Nessus.
When in the reading-desk, it raised no ire,
But when it mounted up a few steps higher,
Transform'd at once into a popish dress,
Who can the fury that it caused express?
But to speak plainly, and quite free from hate,
With Protestants such things are out of date.
Some think it argues no small lack of sense,
For trifles such as these to give offence;
And thus to risk in things indifferent,
In mother Church, by being stiff, a rent.
Concerning those who make such things a point,
And for their sake put all things out of joint;
Which are most foolish may admit of doubt,
Who can't pray with them, or who can't without.

'Tis party blinds men, and when once engaged,
They soon forget the cause why war is waged.
What 's in a colour? no one thinks upon it,
Unless 'tis worn upon a party's bonnet.
Thus at Byzantium once the blues and greens,
Meeting together, caused tumultuous scenes.
How sweet are flowers! how innocent are roses!
And yet they once promoted bloody noses.
For when a man presumed to wear a white,
And met a red, it caused a mortal fight.
Happy the monarch who preserved his power,
By mixing them together in a flower.
This was, in fact, a sort of compromise,
And lower'd neither party in their eyes.
And fortunate it is when things admit
Fierce and contending parties to be quit;
When in this manner quarrels can be settled,
One party is not pleased, the other nettled.
This method was well known, long time ago
At Rome, and managed well by Cicero.
A question much abstruse discussion stirr'd,
About the proper way to write a word.
It puzzled the grammarians, and each side
Their own opinions held with equal pride.
'Twas how to write a consul's title there,
Who the third time had fill'd the curule chair.
Some would inscribe it Tertio, and some
Thought it correcter to be Tertium;
But Tully, by a method somewhat curt,
Gave his opinion that it should be Tert:

So this affair was settled all at once,
And neither party call'd the other dunce.
Neither by this was lower'd, and neither raised,
And both alike the sage decision praised.
Had he said Tertium, or *vice versá*,
There had no ending been of controversy.
Of quarrels this is sure to be the sequel,
Unless both parties think that they are equal.
Permit me on this head a little longer,
'Twill make this method but appear the stronger.
Once on a time a fierce contention rose,
Which threaten'd oftentimes to end in blows.
But know, before I start upon this fable,
There was a bishop once who lived at Babel.
This worthy prelate was as great a sage
As any writer in the classic age.
Some of the priests could not be made to venture
To put their right foot first the church to enter ;
Others thought those of decency bereft,
Who, entering, dared to put forth first the left.
This controversy caused, of course, much shuffling,
And at the church door many brawls and scuffling.
At length before the bishop came the cause,—
A man well skill'd in laying down the laws :—
“Don't haggle at the door,” he said, “go plump in,
Put both your feet together, and so jump in.”
Oh! happy bishop, who could thus appease
A serious feud, and neither side displease.
Oh! that our quarrels could this way be finish'd,
And the self-love of neither side diminish'd.

That Lushington could find out what the art is,
To pacify and please contending parties ;
To find a temper, would that we were able,
But that would puzzle e'en my Lord of Babel.
Men praise the sentence which confirms their hope,
Then is the judge most wise, a perfect pope ;
But when they lose their cause, 'tis different,
They vote the court unfit, incompetent.
Sir Herbert was a grave and learned judge,
But Lushington's opinion is mere fudge.
The first spoke like an oracle of law,
The last his own idea, not worth a straw.
Another plan, though it deserved no less,
Was not attended with the same success.
The Church was vex'd by some crack'd Arians,
Just as the present time is by Tractarians.
Indeed, just like the latter you may fancy 'em,
They caused so much discussion at Byzantium ;
There never was such hot theology,
As with the latter Palæologi.
Polemical divinity, which shows
Our sinfulness, converting friends to foes,
And forcing uniformity with slaughters,
Seems to have made Byzantium head-quarters :
And this most barbarous and unchristian work,
Was a fit introduction to the Turk.
Long time both parties wrote big folios full,
And call'd their adversaries dunce and fool.
At length an Elder, all men must admire,
Proposed to put the writings in a fire.

And those that should escape the fiery trial,
Should be deem'd orthodox beyond denial.
All, so to end the quarrel, were delighted ;
The brasier was prepared, the papers lighted,
The coals blazed fiercely—but, alas ! the flame
Made no distinction, but burnt all the same.
The historian says the world got something by it ;
It kept, at least for one day, parties quiet.
But here, methinks, the writer has not stated,
Nay, very much the advantage underrated ;
For sure the public gain'd by the combustion
Of such a load of controversial fustian.
But still, in spite of this device so clever,
The controversy raged as bad as ever.
Whence this new love for mediæval times,
Immersed in ignorance and stain'd with crimes ?
Learning, like truth at bottom of a well,
Was kept close prisoner in the convent cell.
The Pope abused the power of the keys,
To lock up knowledge, and secure his fees.
Few lights could penetrate the general gloom,
When jealous superstition reign'd at Rome ;
And starved the human mind with poor supplies
Of legends, and false miracles and lies.
Many assert religion then was bright :
The Gospel cannot be extinguish'd quite.
At dead of night a taper gives a ray,
But none would use it in the blaze of day.
No doubt some noble spirits we may find
Who left contemporaries all behind.

But if we read their lives, and fate inquire,
We shall hear much of fagots, smoke, and fire.
The light is now diffused, no longer held
In Rome's dark lanthorn, and its radiance quell'd ;
No longer check'd by bigotry and fraud,
The spirit of the Gospel is abroad.
'Tis true some plead old customs, and the rather,
If they can quote th' example of a Father.
Not those who flourish'd next the Apostles' age ;
Their creed was pure, and their behaviour sage ;
But mediæval saints, austere and mopish,
Founders of convents, and in doctrines popish.
And in excuse of what is new and strange,
Say that development accounts for change.
But Protestants have always thought it odd,
Popes should pretend to know much more than God ;
And add to Christian faith, beyond what 's given,
And often contradict the words of Heaven.
Hence they rely upon those Fathers' knowledge,
Who lived remotest from th' Apostles' college.
A word on Fathers, lest we be mistaken,
As if we wish'd their reputation shaken.
That page be blotted, and destroy'd the pen,
That would traduce such good and holy men.
Cold is the heart that cannot those admire,
Who braved, to prove their faith, the pagan's fire.
Their testimony gladly we admit,
Whenever it agrees with Holy Writ :
And amongst those of early centuries
We scarcely see where room for censure is.

But when we come to names of middle ages,
We often find them anything but sages :
Hermits and monks, and mendicants and friars,
Just as it pleased each pontiff to supply us.
Should any ask how latter sainthood made is,
Chiefly by hating and eschewing ladies :
Making the ordinance of God an evil,
Marriage an introduction to the devil.
Their boasted miracles are so ridiculous,
They serve to make us laugh, and tickle us.
Some you may see, and in our churches placed,
That would have children's storybooks disgraced :
So foolish, that 'tis odd it did not hinder
Such tales from being painted on the window.
For miracles like these look like a libel
On what we read of in the Holy Bible.
Where you expect St. Peter, or St. Paul,
You find some legend of St. What-d'ye-call,
Perhaps in Cornwall known,—a list too long
To be inserted in this verse or song.
Cornwall with boroughs was, with saints is, stock'd,
They say they hither with St. Patrick flock'd.
But of these worthy men and all their fame,
There's little else remaining but a name,
Still written in the Book of Life—perhaps—
At least they're number'd on the parish maps.
A Painted Window is a pleasant sight,
It sheds around a dim religious light.
The dazzling sunbeams of meridian day
Offend the eyes of those who come to pray.

But if we cast our wandering eyes around,
Let them on edifying scenes be found ;
Let all we look upon be grave and solemn,
And always taken from the sacred volume ;
That, as from painted books, the flocks may learn,
Where idlers only colours can discern.
Th' excluded sunbeams will no longer blind us,
And windows of the sacred truths remind us.
But we may often see upon them stories,
'Twould puzzle one to find out what the lore is.
The usual defence is—you restore
What has existed in the place before.
Granted,—but in your restorations why
Replace the follies of an age gone by ?
Why decorate a church with staring faces,
The jokes of monkish times, grotesque grimaces ?
These certainly destroy religious feeling ;
For if, perchance, you look up at the ceiling,
Such laughable designs are often seen,
That those who come to pray, remain to grin.
'Tis true that restoration 's understood,
And in the hands of skill producing good.
In this respect, in later times we know
More than our ancestors some time ago.
We hope no longer in a church to view
An oaken, white-wash'd desk, picked out with blue,
Or windows perforated with a flue :
Or pews raised higher than the rest, to hide
The curtain'd squire asleep, or show his pride.

To parish churches there 's no worse disaster
Than the churchwardens, with their lath and plaster.
Coat upon coat of whitewash is applied,
To make the walls look fresh and beautified.
And, proud of having thus the place restored,
Their names are always painted on a board ;
Together with the reigning vicar's name,
His chance of immortality and fame.
It is but lately that a better taste
Has swept away what ignorance had placed.
To make new orders seems quite given o'er,
The best thing we can do is to restore.
A humble path ; but since invention's dead,
We can but follow where our fathers led.
Great names to censure is a bold attempt,
But what great man from error is exempt ?
E'en the great Wren himself has fail'd to raise
A Gothic structure to deserve our praise.
'Twas he, if I mistake not, gave the name
"Gothic," as barbarous, and worthy blame.
And ventured all the rules of art to brave,
By joining Grecian towers to Gothic nave.
Had he done nothing more, tis plain to see,
We never should have said, "*Circumspice.*"
'Tis singular that he did not admire
The fretted roof, the long-drawn aisle, the choir,
The deep recesses that the solar ray
Struggles through painted windows to display,
The vast proportions that combine the whole ;
All aid devotion, and exalt the soul.

Who is not struck with awe who looks around
Our vast cathedrals' consecrated ground ?
These Wren call'd barbarous ; but his own St. Paul,
Its shape, its towers, its size, its transepts, all
Are Gothic ; these the mind with awe impress,
Though cover'd over with a Grecian dress.
All man's inventions fall into decay,
And styles of architecture have their day.
The Gothic has gone through successive stages,
And flourish'd and declined in many ages :
The pointed, perpendicular, and florid,
And then came in a taste most vile and horrid.
By this we trace the progress, or the march
Of what is named by all, the Gothic arch.
It is the pointed arch's gradual stride,
Narrow and sharp at first, it grew more wide ;
And as the space by each receding side
Was more extended, then the point at top
Would become blunter, and still lower drop ;
Until the curve became so nearly straight,
That it no longer could sustain the weight.
So, when the arches could be made no flatter,
The architects at once gave up the matter ;
And mix'd in architecture every order,
Grecian and Gothic, in admired disorder ;
Declaring war against all taste and rules,
As may be seen at Oxford in the schools.
And many other specimens as hideous,
Lest naming one I seem to be invidious.

E'en Inigo himself, so learned and able,
Was an apprentice in this school of Babel.
Then Vangbrough raised his castles, broad and high,
Ponderous and vast, resembling a goose pie.
At length the mists began to clear away,
And architecture knew a better day.
First Gothic faintly dawn'd on Strawberry-hill,
The monument of Horace Walpole's skill.
A feeble imitation of the art,
A tiny castle—yet it was a start—
An emblem of the witty builder's mind,
Where taste was found with littleness combined.
It would require a catalogue, or canto,
To tell the wonders treasured in Otranto.
'Twas pity to disperse so much virtù,
Collected by the Christian and the Jew.
In later times we have the name of Wyatt ;
I would that he had left cathedrals quiet.
For many of his alterations look
Like fabrications from the pastry-cook.
But architects now Gothic understand,
And taste and science guide the learned hand ;
Content to copy what has been before,
And, aiming not at novelty, restore.

INTONING.

Amongst the innovations of the day,
When few can in their old opinions stay,

Such changes, and so many plans proposed,
And all no sooner brought out than opposed,
As bills in Parliament pass'd in review,
Which movers, after long debate, withdrew ;
They serve, at least, to get the session through,
And bring that happy time which stops debate,
And frees the ministry, to eat white-bait.
He who proposed an ancient law to alter,
In Locria, put around his neck a halter ;
And failing to convince whom he harangued,
He paid the forfeit, and was straightway hang'd.
This method would much legislation check ;
Few statesmen would be found to risk their neck.
You spoil your glorious Liturgy, some say ;
You read the prayers, whereas you ought to pray.
And this they do by what is call'd intoning,
And keep their voice in one key ever droning.
But can we by a single note express
Our hopes and fears, our joys and thankfulness ;
And while we forth to Heaven our praises pour,
Take care we do not drop our voices lower ?
This is not natural, and smells of art,
Not like the genuine feelings of the heart—
The prayers to utter in a sing-song pace,
And hurry through the service like a race.
The Psalms at first on David's lyre were strung,
And in the holy places daily sung ;
To them are music's various powers applied,
And lofty sounds to holy thoughts allied.

The powers of harmony combine to raise
 The prophet's fire, and swell the note of praise.
 Fears, hopes, and triumphs, when with music join'd,
 Sway with enthusiastic force the mind.
 But as the Rubric says, "be sung or said,"
 Priests chant or read, by taste or fancy led.

ALTERATION IN THE LITURGY.

There's nothing alteration hopes to spare,
 Less than our Liturgy and Common Prayer.
 What would remain 'tis difficult to say,
 If each rash innovater had his way.
 Should each reformer be allow'd to choose
 What should remain untouch'd and what refuse,
 The Church would be like him in fable told,
 Who had two wives, a young one and an old ;
 And fondly suffer'd both to dress his head,
 As each of them was by her fancy led.
 The young one pluck'd the white hairs from his pate,
 The elder vow'd the black t' eradicate :
 And so between them both the man was bald,
 And his good-nature justly folly call'd.
 So would our Church, beneath reformers' knife,
 Be soon deprived of spirit, truth, and life.
 Faults in our Liturgy, some say, are found,
 But what are these where beauties so abound ?
 The sun has spots, but none can these descry
 But such as search with telescopic eye.

So in our Service it requires some skill,
Amongst our prayers, to point out what is ill.
Drawn from the Scriptures, humbly we believe
That man may offer them, and God receive.
In due succession, and throughout the year,
The whole of Scripture verities appear :
No doctrine is omitted ; each in turn
Is mark'd, that e'en the illiterate may learn,
By due attendance at the stated hour,
The saving mercies of Almighty power.
As long as they upon the desk remain,
They will the pulpit's ignorance restrain.
Some ministers a favourite point pursue,
And keep all others from their hearers' view.
Contracting Scripture to a narrow sect,
And forcing all to this, all else reject.
Ill-judging preachers thus may lead astray
Their flocks by partial views, but when they pray
The antidote 's at hand, that holy book
The errors of the sermon will rebuke.
Which is the only reason, I suspect,
Why many wish the Service to correct ;
To make it speak a language like their own,
And represent their sentiments alone.
But it was not arranged for me or you
To suit our judgment, whether false or true ;
But form'd upon a comprehensive scheme,
Avoiding doubtful points, and all extreme ;
That, petty differences kept out of sight,
The greatest number might in peace unite.

The object of reformers was to hold
The gate wide open for the greatest fold.

LENGTH OF SERVICE.

Some think the Service long, and wish it shorter,
And more adapted to the winter quarter :
Complain they feel the frost upon their fingers ;
Which shortens sermons, and abridges singers.
Many there are who deem this point important,
And would not pass it over, or be short on 't.
These few remarks on such a theme excuse,
On airing churches and on warming pews ;
For few in these degenerate days are warm,
By mere devotion, in the winter's storm.
Our country churches are in winter airy,
Especially in months that end in " ary."
This want of warmth deters the elder people
From coming near, when cold, the parish steeple ;
Who, when the sky looks black, and threatens weather,
Sit comfortably round the fire together ;
And stirring it to make it brighter, say,
" I fear our vicar will get wet to-day."
But should he not, good man, be well to go,
Or be detain'd at home by rain, or snow,
The parish all look grave, and wonder why,
But on due explanation pass it by ;
Save who their neighbours' duties strictly search,
And stay at home themselves, and cut the church.

Fair-weather Christians, by a sort of proxy,
 Show their religion and their orthodoxy,
 By keeping others to their work, or lesson,
 And think by this their own defects to lessen.
 But *qui per alium facit* acts *per se*,
 Though good in law, is bad theology.
Pro aris atque focis is an adage
 Which has been much neglected in this sad age.
 For in the country seldom they 're in union,
 Near to that table which is call'd Communion.
 Churchwardens are of fuel very chary,
 They seldom place the *foci* near the *aræ*.
 Except in high, aristocratic pews,
 Where tongs and poker are in constant use.
 'Tis not to be expected high-born knees
 Should come to church to shiver and to freeze.
 Those whom the example of the great inspires,
 Should join with me in recommending fires.
 The cold of churches was deplored by Sydney,
 A sage philosopher, of merry kidney.
 He, like Democritus, was much amused
 At all the follies by which man's abused ;
 And under quaint conceits and laughing guise
 Cover'd important truths to make men wise.
 He said that English preachers were so cold,
 Their hearers scarce their eyes could open hold :
 And they imagined, that as Eve was ta'en
 From Adam's body when in slumber lain,
 The best way to take sins from out mankind,
 Was first their bodies in deep sleep to bind.

And further, says this satirizing rogue
Of many preachers who were then in vogue,
That they resembled holy lumps of ice—
No warmth or energy in their advice ;
Or, rather, like field-preachers in Kamschatka—
And more to this effect in that same chapter.
So Sydney spake, for you must not suppose I
Made all these witticisms on the *foci*.
Such being the case, full well it then behoves
All good churchwardens to provide us stoves.
This would prevent the too impatient sinner
From thinking of his fire at home, and dinner ;
And stop the usual noise of coughs and sneezing,
Which are provoking when the sermon's pleasing ;
Also deprive of all excuse the vicar,
For reading, than he ought to do, much quicker.
Besides, when leaving church, it is not meet
To hear such rubbing hands and stamping feet :
As if the congregation had been frozen,
While the good vicar has been dull and prosing.
Some think, however, this would only strengthen
The preacher's lungs, and so the sermons lengthen ;—
Which they consider would be worse than frost—
And, therefore, hope this measure will be lost.
And rather would be short and shivery,
Than have a warm and long delivery.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE.

Some think the Church's Discipline too lax,
 And would increase the rod for Churchmen's backs.
 'Tis right o'er shepherds a strict eye to keep,
 They should be watch'd as carefully as sheep.
 Once in three years the bishop travels down,
 To meet his clergy in the neighbouring town ;
 Th' archdeacon next, who is the bishop's eye,
 Visits, meantime, his absence to supply ;
 Then comes the rural dean, who yearly views
 The church's fabric, and inspects the pews ;
 And last, churchwardens annually present
 A note, to show how vicars' lives are spent.
 Methinks the clergy are well watch'd, but still
 Laymen escape, however they do ill.
 In olden time it was not so, for all
 The Church's sons might under penance fall.
 Many regret some ancient forms in Lent,
 And Commination has their glad assent ;
 Would listen, with the meekness of a lamb,
 To forms of prayer which only curse and damn.
 One who laments this, in his zeal entreats
 That wicked persons should be put in sheets ;
 And as they thus exposed in public stood,
 All others might take warning, and be good.
 But I much fear that penances won't do,
 Nor standing in a white sheet in a pew.

Such exhibitions, at the present day,
Would sadly hinder those who came to pray.
I have a story read, though somewhat pert,
'Tis written in a book by Captain Birt.
'Twas at the time when great Field Marshal Wade—
That mighty conqueror with pick and spade,
The first McAdam—roads and bridges made.
Among the benefactors of our race
The road-maker deserves a lofty place.
Proud Rome, to make mankind obey her code,
Thought no way better than to make a road.
If we can make a road to Timbuctoo,
We may send merchants there, and bishops too.
But now the railroad soon the world will master,
It makes civilization travel faster.
Birt wrote some letters from the north of Scotland,
For zeal and penances a very hot land.
Where once that furious reformer, Knox,
Rejoiced to give unhappy Mary shocks;
To him it would have been a glorious treat,
Could he have placed her in the penance sheet.
A captain bold seduced a foolish maid,
And, forced by kirk, this very penance paid—
His gallant body, in a white sheet wrapp'd,
Was in the usual place conspicuous clapp'd.
I wonder why our fathers thought it right
To dress a sinner in a robe of white;
For white 's the symbol of the pure and holy,
Angels dress white, and for that reason solely.

So surplices imply a sort of surety,
That those who wear them should abound in purity.
No doubt our fathers meant to antedate
The reformation of the candidate :
That he in future should be pure and white
In morals, as in what he stood upright.
But we must not forget the gallant captain
We left the penitential garment wrapp'd in.
All the beholders were much edified,
And on a perfect change of life relied.
I doubt the cure when thus you vice expose,
Under the public eye it harden'd grows ;
And many learn things, which, such sights without,
They never could have known or thought about.
Whene'er we see reforming drunkards meet,
And stagger in procession through the street,
We look with doubt upon them as they pass,
And tremble for the bottle and the glass.
Man should be humble when his sin is great,
And true repentance never walks in state ;
Nor proudly boasts of its reform aloud,
To gain th' applauses of a laughing crowd.
That zeal and piety we justly doubt,
Which observation court, and look about.
Music and flags will not remove the shame,
Nor purify the drunkard's tarnish'd name.
Besides, processions in the dusty throng
Engender thirst, and make temptation strong.
The sot who boldly pass'd the alehouse door,
Determined in his mind to drink no more,

Exclaim'd, "Well done!" and straightway made a stop,
"Such resolution well deserves a drop."
'Tis said, that many who have ta'en the oath,
To take a little dram are nothing loth.
But is not this flat perjury, a dread sin?
No, not if taken in the way of medicine.
Let him who wishes from his sin to part,
In his own chamber commune with his heart;
He there will find a witness to his tears,
That Holy Spirit who in secret hears.
There are, indeed, who seem to take a pride
In publishing what others gladly hide.
Who freely own through every sin they've ranged,
Until by sensible conversion changed.
And though before by sinful habits harden'd,
Were suddenly by full assurance pardon'd.
Can tell the day, the hour, the very minute,
Their soul felt sensible conversion in it.
And think themselves commission'd by this plea—
Which they affirm, but others cannot see—
To take a lofty tone, and censures deal
On all who cannot this conviction feel.
Convinced the Spirit must despise a book,
And with contempt on written sermons look,
Declare no preacher can converted be
Unless prepared to preach extempore;
With anecdotes, and stories, interspersed,
Of their own hearers saved, and others cursed.
Who rants the most is ever most admired,
And with the Spirit's greater gifts inspired;

And often, when they blunder, stop, and stammer,
They make the Spirit author of bad grammar.
Despising quiet Christians, those alone
Are real converts who can scream and groan.
But he who in his private chamber writes,
And carefully weighs all that he indites,
That no rash word, or low expression, find
A place that may offend the pious mind ;
With such the Spirit can have no concern,—
Poor ignorant divines, with much to learn !
It is the fashion of the present day,
Upon the clergy all the blame to lay.
Their written sermons and their cold appeal,
Fail to stir up, and make the people feel.
These are defects which some are ever urging,
And as a cure bid us resemble Spurgeon.
But eloquence, and a commanding voice,
Are gifts of Providence, and not our choice.
'Tis rather hard a man should turn Dissenter
Because his rector is not quite a Stentor.
But eloquence is rare, which is a reason
So many flock to hear him, for a season.
New preachers ever put the old aside,
And lessening numbers show the ebbing tide.
A clergyman of twenty-Spurgeon power
May live to find his reputation lower.
If all to preach extempore were able,
Would it not cease to be so fashionable ?
Its rarity attracts ; were all alike,
The rare exception would no longer strike.

Are all in Scotland better men than we,
More pure in morals, and from vice more free ?
For there all preachers are extempore.
Are foreign churches, which observe this rule,
Of sound morality a better school ?
Are all Dissenters more devout than they
Whose written forms instruct them how to pray ?
Men love excitement, and would rather go
To something new, than practise what they know.
If clergy by their failings are to blame,
Still with the laymen let them share the shame.
Has not a layman oft an itching ear ?
And do they practise all the good they hear ?
Was it to hear a sermon, or sing psalms,
That hurrying crowds endanger'd legs and arms ?
Few of the numbers who so lately ran,
Went to learn doctrines, but to see the man.
How few of those who struggled through that day
To hear a new divine, went home to pray !
Unless it was their thankfulness to own
For an escape without a broken bone.
And as to doctrines, what could they learn more
Than they had heard a thousand times before ?
Does not your parish priest proclaim the truth ?
Yes,—but he's rather old, and lost a tooth.
Young ladies love divinity with youth :
For it, like virtue, seems to be more fair,
When coming in a handsome shape and air.
Without the fear of God before their eyes,
How many go to church to criticise ;

Complain sometimes the sermon is too long,
Seldom too short, that is a smaller wrong !
Regard not what, but how their pastors teach,
The manner, not the matter which they preach.
Sometimes the preacher's personal defects—
Perhaps he's plain—disgust the weaker sex ;
An odd pronunciation hurts their ears,
Provincial truth ridiculous appears.
Some voices are too weak, they can't be heard
By the old people who are rather surd.
This man has one fault, that another got :
Too long, too short, too high, too low,—what not ?
Must Holy Scripture fail to touch the heart,
Unless enforced by histrionic art :
And reverend performers play their part ?
Must fierce exaggeration and wild rant
Reason's calm voice, and argument supplant ?
Are churches emptied, and the world gone mad,
To hear the declamations of a lad ?
To go where rage hebdomadal astounds
The prudent hearer and the weak confounds ?
Men love to hear such high perfection taught,
It makes all human efforts poor and nought.
Then imitation scarce can be exacted,
It's only to be listened to, not acted.
Doctrine with them too high can scarcely go,
Their creed exalted, but their practice low.
And fickle fashion leads the town, and such is
The rage, that lords go there,—sometimes a duchess ;

And all the great and fashionable host
Next day reported in the "Morning Post."
The sudden comet anxious eyes detains,
Which never look up to the starry trains.
'Tis thus a deputation fills the church;
The rector's left entirely in the lurch.
So in that hall where once the lions roar'd,
What numbers crowd before the annual board!
Where those who plays abhor, and balls eschew,
Find some amusement, and hear something new!
Where those who on the stage won't brook a player,
Listen to him who sings Elijah's prayer;
And warbles forth the awful words of God,
Obedient to Da Costa's hand and nod!
The love of novelty must find a vent,
And oratorios fill a void in Lent.
'Tis novelty attracts where folly leads,
One folly gone, another still succeeds.
Disciples soon their masters overtake,
And if they will not further go, forsake.
Thus the quack's servant, bent on sordid pelf,
Quits his old master, and sets up himself.
Impostors are prolific; in this manner
Were Huntingdon (not Selina) and Johanna.
And unknown tongues the public ear abused,
And frighten'd some, but others much amused.
In this the secret of clairvoyance lies:
It is an art to see without the eyes.
And some believe a spirit, that is able
To speak without a tongue, and move a table;

Or rap upon the wall, but this, 'tis plain,
Is but a new edition of Cock Lane.
And many more abominations since
The shameless Agapemone, and Prince.
And last, not least, of all disgraceful sects,
The degradation of the female sex,
Oh, Mormon scandal! hide thy guilty head,
Alas! by Britain's children yearly fed.
Where is the law, meantime, the magistrate,
To crush this growing monster ere too late?
What notion is so strange and so extreme,
But what will float in fashion's buoyant stream?
For what more blasphemous, or more absurd,
Than what we have from modern teachers heard?
Our times, I fear, are not much wiser grown,
Than when great Tully said this of his own:
That there was nothing too absurd and bold,
But some philosopher was sure to hold.
But stop, my Muse, while other errors branding,
We all this while have kept the captain standing.
While there he stood, I greatly have my fears,
A sight like this would stir up strange ideas.
Unluckily a pretty girl he saw,
Contemplating this victim of the law:
And said, with whispering accents, o'er the pew,
"I gladly would come here again for you."

THE CLERICAL DRESS.

Some wish that Clergymen should wear the gown,
 And thus their office and their lives be known.
 The gown, they say, would keep us out of scrapes,
 From which the guilty, being unknown, escapes.
 Alas! the Clergy, when they wore these dresses,
 Got into taverns, bagnios, and messes.
 Those who are bent this fashion to recall,
 Do sometimes into contradictions fall.
 We often hear the same reformers say,
 How much the clergy are improved to-day!
 In the last age their duty they ignored,
 And Mother Church not only slept, but snored.
 So I have lately in a novel read,
 Writ by an Oxford sage, in Magdalen bred:
 At least, th' incumbents of the age he paints,
 Rivall'd the sleepers, and were pillow saints.
 If this be true, pray can a dress efface it,
 Since they of old did oftentimes disgrace it?
 The gown, or robe, befits the House of Prayer,
 And should be kept for ministrations there:
 And never used, save at the time of worship,
 And not at dinners, tea-tables, and gossip.
 I spoke just now of many who decry
 Divines who lived in times long since pass'd by.
 When we the faults of former days deride,
 Perhaps we only gratify our pride.

We 're apt to take our notions upon trust,
 And universal censure 's never just.
 Many, like Quixotes, to find errors roam
 All round the world, but never look at home;
 And their chief knowledge gain of former days,
 By what they read in novels, or in plays.
 And if you praise the last age, or extol it,
 They put you down with Fielding, or with Smollett :
 And Parson Trulliber, his hogs and sty,
 To all the clergy of that time apply.
 The object writers such as these run after,
 Is always to amuse, and create laughter.
 In such works serious truths are rarely found,
 But jests, oft not convenient, there abound.
 In ludicrous positions priests are certain
 To make an audience laugh before the curtain.
 What sight can greater mirth or fun create,
 Than a fool's cap upon a wise man's pate ?
 Thus many judge, from what they see a farce on,
 This a true picture of the country parson ;
 And like the Latin grammar they would herd us
 Amongst sad friends—*Bos, fur, sus, et sacerdos.*
 Forget not many a great and sacred name
 Of those departed,—would we had the same !
 For, to speak plainly, and without enigmas,
 Compared with such our moderns are but pigmies.
 But still, in many things we are improved,
 And many faults and blemishes removed.
 To little purpose would its years extend,
 Unless the world grew wiser near its end.

Let us be thankful, and not proud ; in fact I
Am not a blind "*laudator temporis acti.*"
In times denominated good, I fear,
Who wrote a verse like this might lose an ear.
For in those days, who ever dared oppose
An error in high places lost his nose.
There was a famous place, as I remember,
Somewhere in Westminster, and call'd Star Chamber ;
But all who had compassion on their face,
Were very cautious to go near the place.
We cannot wonder it was much abhorr'd,
Though patronized by an archbishop, Laud.
His was sharp logic, and stopp'd all dispute,
Cut short the argument, and nose to boot.
But, to speak fair, this prelate did not do ill,
Nor was he more than many others cruel ;
For at that time all privy-council sitters
Were wont to crop the ear, and nostril-slitters.
Then men opposed in controversy stood,
Prepared to run all risks, and shed their blood.
The Romanists, and Puritans, were then
As ready with the sword as with the pen.
What was Laud's fault ? why, it was nothing more
Than trying to bring back what was before.
Reviving popish customs, which the nation
Had happily removed by Reformation.
Yes, and your own improvements, Rome, arise—
For such no candid Protestant denies—
From that same Reformation you despise.

Knowledge diffused, compell'd proud Rome to hear
Public opinion, and its judgments fear.
Enormous scandals shock'd the general sense
Of all mankind, and were beyond defence.
The Roman court, which saw the coming storm,
Was forced their lives and morals to reform :
No Borgias now, the curses of their time,
Disgraced by every vice, and every crime ;
No bastards,—I beg pardon,—nephews crown'd
With holy mitres their High Priest surround.
No longer in the Vatican they hear
The atheist's jest, the Medicean sneer.
For since our great reform the world has known
Many good pontiffs worthy of their throne.
Great Cato said, the world when Cæsar won,
“Curse on his virtues! they have Rome undone.”
At least they are the words of Addison.
And here some danger lurks ; can those be wrong,
Whose acts we see with moral virtues strong ?
Such fruits can only grow in heavenly light ;
His creed cannot be wrong whose life is right.
In modern times we hear disputers say—
There is but little difference in our way ;
We have been blinded in our zeal in fight,
And neither party understood aright ;
We vary but in words, believe the same,
We hold the same facts, with a different name.
'Tis thus some men expound the sacrament,
As if it transubstantiation meant.

Some, when they go to Rome, make out a creed,
Quite different from that at Trent decreed ;
But take such parts as suit their reason best,
Choose here and there, and leave out all the rest,
And make a decent faith, but far removed
From many follies by the Pope approved ;
But this is to reform, and not consent
To every article confirm'd at Trent.

Let Romanists be good and worthy men,
Yet still, while we allow all this, the main
Objections to their doctrines now remain.

Though Rome be now respectable, improved,
The errors of her creed are not removed.

Popes wish'd reform, but, like an Indian caste,
Infallibility still bound them fast.

A candid Pope 's impossible, because
Infallibility can have no flaws.

'Tis perseverance in this haughty creed,
That laws can never change when once decreed,
Just as what bound the Persian and the Mede,
That stops improvement in the Roman see,
Where errors once embraced must ever be.

What ! must the Church then change ? is Truth untrue ?
To-day must we hesternal dogmas rue ?

Not so ; the Scriptures you confound with man,—
They cannot err, but human nature can.

Truth and the Gospel ever are the same,
Interpreters oft grievous errors frame.

The Scriptures never err, 'tis those who rule ;
The law is wise, the judge sometimes a fool.

Banish this dogma from the papal door,
E'en Rome might be reform'd, but not before.
When Laud into our English ritual tried
To force new rites to Romish forms allied,
It shock'd the public mind, and raised suspicion,
That something further he had set his wish on—
As when a man is gone as far as Dover,
'Tis natural to suppose he's going over.
About such questions now all men may think,
And write opinions, not in blood, but ink.
All martyrdom has ceased, except the rash,
Who go to law, and lose their cause, and cash.
Granted, the world's improved in most respects,
Save that religion has too many sects.
No longer do we value human life
Less than the beasts we fatten for the knife.
Our laws were cruel, and inscribed in blood,
And on our roads the frequent gibbet stood.
Whene'er the judges travell'd through the land,
What numbers perish'd by the hangman's hand!
On this, O Romilly! thy fame is built,
That no more blood in wanton waste is spilt;
Thou wast the first, in this most righteous cause,
To clear our statute book from Draco's laws.
For such reforms, while gratitude we feel,
How can we thee forget, lamented Peel!
Thy useful course too short a space confined,
A prudent statesman with a candid mind.
There's always danger in a change of plan,
It makes a great look like a little man.

All petty geniuses are glad to see
 A statesman can, like them, in error be.
 But then, the only difference is, that they
 As they began, in error always stay.
 Some men on change as proof of folly look,
 Particularly if they 've writ a book ;
 And all mankind would drench, and bleed, and kill,
 Rather than alter drugs and change a pill.
 Besides, some cause of anger is supplied
 To those who on the Premier's word relied.
 Too sudden turn disturbs the lengthen'd " tail,"
 And causes some confusion to prevail.
 Few statesmen dare the world's surprise to face ;
 Candour is rarely tenable with place.
 Some, still perverse and obstinate, presume
 To heap reproaches on the great man's ~~name~~. *Tomb.*
 Complain of Party sacrificed, and laws
 Broke wantonly for popular applause.
 Unreasonable men ! why discontent ?
 Ireland has peace, and you have kept up rent.
 How just the resolution then, how strong,
 T' acknowledge, by a frank confession, wrong ;
 That scorns to hold opinions that are found
 No longer to rest firm on solid ground ;
 That gives up interest, party, friends, and all,
 In stern obedience to conviction's call.
 When once the course to be pursued was plain,
 Whate'er the sacrifice, whate'er the pain—
 The friend's reproaches, and the foe's disdain—

All these he braved, and power's high seat resign'd
For conscience' sake, and an approving mind.
Gaols of starvation and disease were dens,
Where hopeless wretches rotted in their chains ;
But now our prisons are reforming schools,
Where mercy chastens, and religion rules.
The frequent duel, once the country's shame,
No longer murders under honour's name.
Wars, which were long for petty causes waged,
And combatants knew scarcely why engaged,
Are now detested by the general sense,
Save when our country's safety needs defence.
War is a game which mighty kings have play'd,
And gain'd some glory, for which subjects paid.
A shameless woman, her own country's curse,
Causes a ten-year war for Homer's verse.
A monarch's jest provokes a monarch's ire,
For which the people pay in blood and fire.
A bucket stolen from the city gates,
A bloody war in Italy creates.
A statesman now—or people will prevent—
Must find a just cause, or at least invent ;
Or else begin a war, and fight it out,
Before he lets us know what 'tis about.
For when it 's over, then it is too late
To save our money by a vain debate.
No longer Britons, who of freedom boast,
Kidnap the slave on Afric's guilty coast ;
But chief of all, because from that we trace
Each great improvement in the human race,

The locks which shut up learning are destroy'd,
And the free use of Scripture truths enjoy'd ;
Hence, no man hindering, all may serve their God,
Without the dread of Persecution's rod.
Oh, Toleration ! precious gift of Heaven !
To few on earth amongst the nations given :
The privilege of Britons, and their pride,
Won on the field where stern Oppression died ;
Offspring of liberty, and equal laws,
The faithful servant of Religion's cause ;
Thy power, had many noble spirits known,
With what superior lustre had they shone !
We should not now on More's, and Cranmer's name
Look with regret, and poor excuses frame.
By Cranmer was retaliation learnt,
In flames did he remember those he burnt ?
Did those dire torments to his memory bring
The vain entreaties of the saint-like king ?
Relentless zealots cut off mercy's way,
And forced reluctant power to obey.
Thy soul, O Edward ! soar'd above the throne,
Too good for earth, Heaven claim'd thee as her own.
Thy light extinct, stern Bigotry regain'd
Her seat, and sullen Superstition reign'd.
E'en good old Latimer, with zeal on fire,
Help'd, in his youth, to hang a simple friar.
Were such good men ? no doubt, but blinding zeal,
Zeal without knowledge, taught them not to feel,
And to believe that, when they used the sword
On those who dared to differ in a word,
They but perform'd the judgment of the Lord.

St. Paul, before conversion, was their guide,
Not He who for mankind's salvation died.
Then statesmen thought the famed Six Articles
Would be the Church's best Catharticles ;
And toleration gave to those alone
Who held the same opinions as their own.
Why have we not the same sad scenes of blood ?
Christianity is better understood.
The Puritans, who flourish'd at that hour,
And fled, complaining, from the bishop's power ;
And to New England's shores pursued their way,
Were not improved, but just as bad as they.
No sooner landed, than they took their turn,
And heretics began to hang and burn ;
Quakers and witches there no mercy found,
But by the godly to the stake were bound.
One grieves at this for human nature's sake ;
But slaves will ever the worst tyrants make :
As in our public schools the juniors learn
To be big bullies o'er the young in turn.
Though angry bigots now may vent their spite,
They can but show their teeth, they cannot bite.
And conscience, now deliver'd from the rod,
Men, as it pleases them, may serve their God.
'Twas long depress'd by bigotry and power,
Till rear'd by Reformation's happy hour.
Yet liberty of thought was slow of growth ;
To part with ancient errors men are loth.
But, shaken off, they sometimes go too far,
Against their old opinions waging war.

Pulling all former bulwarks down, and seem
Resolved to reach the opposite extreme.
In most things of this transitory scene,
There is, as Aristotle says, a mean :
Between two evils, and to each inclined,
As difficult to keep, as 'tis to find.
Men forfeit it by falling short no less
Than they who go beyond it by excess.
Thus, in reforms, while one extreme we fear,
The opposite extreme we go too near.
As when a stick is bent, we try to mend it,
And in the opposite direction bend it.
Extremes, too, hate each other, and withdraw,
Further and further from the middle law.
The Romanists, by their oppressive sway,
For the old Puritans prepared the way.
The Puritans abused the power they gain'd,
And fell into contempt, and Popery reign'd.
Reaction is the law by which it seems
Opinions oscillate between extremes.
The good which men with too much zeal pursue,
They often as a bitter curse may rue ;
As too much gold may cause severe distress,
And liberty become licentiousness.
Oh, may we not discover to our cost
The value of this blessing when 'tis lost ;
Nor bend ourselves beneath the papal yoke,
Which the sound wisdom of our fathers broke !
But when a land by factious men is torn,
And democratic force is upward borne ;

When innovaters, a rash band, employ
Their skill, less apt to mend, than to destroy ;
E'en Liberty herself becomes insane,
And to preserve her we must use a chain ;
Must raise fresh armies to protect the throne,
Not more from foreign countries than our own.
That liberty 's a luxury, 'tis clear,
But we may pay for luxuries too dear.
For when a state by liberty is troubled,
The estimates are raised, and taxes doubled.
Our liberty, 'tis said, begins at home,
Like charity, but seldom likes to roam.
Quite a domestic sort, or contraband,
Which other nations cannot understand.
And though sometimes we promise to assist,
When it appears to be our interest,
And help the struggling nations to be free,
By holding out the gift of liberty ;
Yet when a peace is made, forget to give it,
But join with despots the old chains to rivet,
And leave our friends much worse off than before,
To their old masters calmly handed o'er,
(But these are libels) cheated of their hope,
To settle as they can with king or pope.
Beware, Italians, Poles, and eke Hungarians,
Who with your governors have any variance ;
Think on the desperate strife before you rise,
Nor rashly lives, and fortunes, compromise,
By vain reliance on a foreign friend—
Who would be free, must on themselves depend.

'Tis little for a nation to have right,
Unless it can establish it by might.
Weak nations fall before the stronger foe,
Expediency says, it must be so.
Barbarian China wishes to be free,
To shut out opium, and to deal in tea.
They gladly Europeans would discard,
Who always take an ell when given a yard.
They lately may have heard how kind and good
The India Company have been to Oude:
To make their small domains a trifle larger,
They borrow from the little Maharajah.
No wonder that the Chinese shut the gate,
And on the outside make the stranger wait.
By this exclusion they have shown their wit,
But as they cannot force it, must submit.
For not prepared the contest to prolong,
'Tis wise to give up right, and suffer wrong.
Alas! the weak must quail before the strong.
Be quick, resolve, or soon will Doctor Bowring
Upon your houses shot and shells be showering.
'Tis what in England we call moderation,
Though stark ambition in another nation.
In saying this, I fear no sharp rebuke,—
They are the words of our illustrious Duke.
England! disdain thy great renown to sully,
In Europe cautious, in the East a bully.

MEDIÆVAL ASCETICISM.

The late revivals, which we sang before,
Fall very short of what we read of yore.
There were flagellants once, for ever stripping,
And giving to themselves a wholesome whipping ;
Who thought to gain the love of Heaven, which odd is,
By punishing, and treating ill, their bodies.
Methinks there are some brethren in the church,
To whom might be applied a little birch.
Who flog themselves are apt to spare their skin,
And would decline a friend as whipper-in.
Under a drummer's or a boatswain's hand,
Flagellants had been but a scanty band.
Thus Sancho, when he scourged himself, took care
The tree should all the ends of lashes bear.
To conquer Nature's feelings men may feign :
" Pain is no evil," stoics preach'd in vain ;
The text 's refuted by a tooth in pain.
E'en with a fork Dame Nature you may spurn,
Yet she will ever to your door return.
The pilgrim gave his feet and conscience ease
Who took the liberty to boil his peas.
How singular that men should think it right
To vex their skin, and their own flesh to spite ;
And build a reputation on this plan,
To be reputed something more than man.

These voluntary penances, which soar'd
 Above all human pains, became adored.
 To raise their merits and exalt their worth,
 Saints spurn'd the ground, and lived above the earth;
 And many thus were elevated high,
 On lofty pillars, to be near the sky.
 So might their great humility be shown
 At greater distance, and to more be known.
 The visible High Church to represent,
 The highest pillar had the highest saint.
 But penances and ragged garbs may hide
 A soul ambitious, and a heart of pride.
 'Twas thus the cynic dress'd, to catch the eyes,
 By feigned humility and sordid guise.
 A man who met him in the market cried,—
 Not a bad judge of mankind's weakest side,—
 "E'en through your garments' holes I see your pride."
 All such displays, of which the real cause
 Is human approbation and applause,
 Will find no favour with the Sovereign Lord,
 Who reads the heart—they have their own reward.

THE HISTORY OF ST. GODRIC.

RECOMMENDED FOR MODERN IMITATION.

St. Godric was a saint, who lived near Durham,
 Legends are soon forgot unless you stir 'em.
 It is not likely we shall see again
 Such amateurs of self-inflicted pain.

Maniac or saint, 'tis puzzling what to call
Such men as these,—the difference is small.
Innumerable pilgrims flock'd toward
These self-tormentors, which was some reward.
'Tis difficult to credit, men would groan,
And whip themselves, if they were let alone.
This kind of fame in middle ages rose
In just proportion to the force of blows,
And he the greatest congregation got,
Who used a whip with the severest knot.
For who could tell which had the prizes won
Without some witnesses to see it done.
The worthy Godric wore upon his back
No finer texture than the common sack ;
Was prouder of a vest well stock'd with vermin
Than costly robes of silk, and lined with ermine.
He plunged, each winter's night,—it makes one shiver,
To think about it,—headlong in the river.
Where holy Finchale's deep, secluded ground,
With lofty banks and woody steeps is crown'd,
Where through its rugged channels foams the Wear,
And forces o'er the rocks its wild career.
These scenes which once re-echoed with the rod,
Are now by strolling pic-nics often trod,
Enjoying, as they lounge upon the sod,
Not pulse and water, the poor hermit's dole,
But savoury pasties and the flowing bowl ;
And often, with irrev'rent mirth and riot,
Profane romantic Finchale's holy quiet :

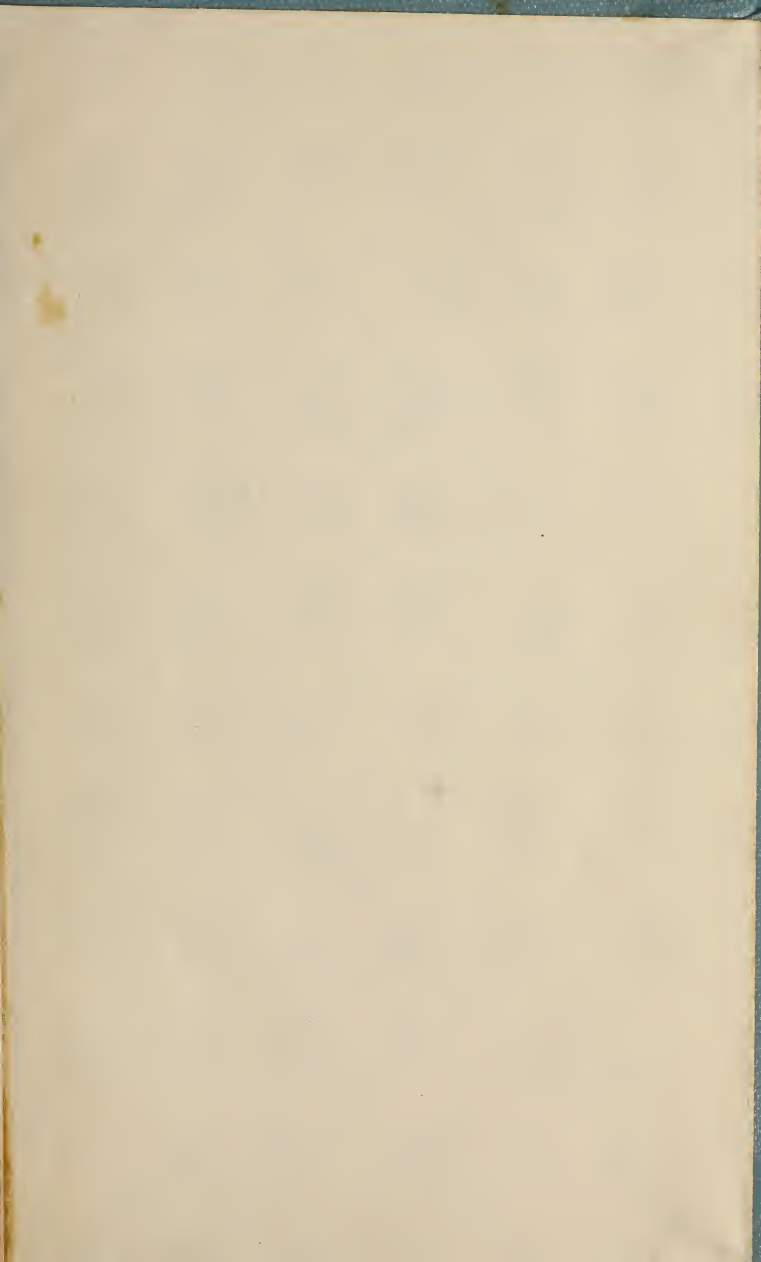
Who should resemble Godric in their walks,
And hide for very shame their knives and forks.
This hermit hoped his peccant blood to cool
By braving colds and agues in the pool.
'T was not a sudden plunge, and straightway out,
Like modern bathers, but he stayed throughout
The winter's night, nor left his watery berth
Until the sun was seen above the earth.
About his bed-clothes he was rather nice,
The snow his pillow was, his sheets were ice ;
And further to bring down this wicked fever—
Tradition says so, and we must believe her ;
For all the wonders of the middle ages
Are deem'd authentic as the Gospel pages,—
To whip with birch he thought was downright folly,
So gather'd for this end a bunch of holly,
Our Christmas nosegay, full of points and prickles,
Compared with which the common birch but tickles.
Think upon this, O ye on dinners bent,
Whene'er you look upon this ornament ;
See to what use St. Godric put this shrub,
To you the symbol of good cheer and grub.
The holly is no sooner seen in churches
Than straightway it suggests sirloins and turkeys.
Talk what our fasts and Lenten dinners are,
Think upon pulse and water, hermit's fare ;
For now, in these degenerate days, men wish
To show devotion by an extra dish,
At least a change to egg-sauce and salt-fish.

And thus, by alteration in their diet,
Keep a safe conscience, and their stomach quiet ;
At which no man can decently repine,
But comfortably and devoutly dine.
Ever since Godric thus in penance bled,
The rustics think the berries turn'd to red.
You 'll find in Ovid's Metamorphoses
Something like this about the mulberries ;
And truth to say, the saints of middle ages
Did often steal their deeds from classic pages,
And made the heathenish mythology
Look Christian in the new theology.
The monks of Durham, in explaining how
They chose a building site, stole Cadmus's Cow,
And fix'd upon the church this image high,
Where to this day it stands, and meets the eye.
Strangers who pass by think it very odd,
Supposing it to be some pagan god,
Such as upon Nile's banks were seen to stand,
When Isis and Osiris ruled the land ;
Whilst others think it still more wonderful,
And fancy it must be a papal bull.
The neighbouring farmers, when they saw it, thought on
The country's boast, the famous Durham short-horn.
But as the cow to wanderings put a stop,
We 'll take the hint, and let these subjects drop.

POSTSCRIPT.

Few thoughts in letters fully are express'd
 Without a postscript—which is oft the best ;
 And, as in ladies' notes, worth all the rest.
 Since law has lately settled the extent
 To which we may indulge in ornament,
 The question is—how far expedient ?
 The humble poet ever views with awe
 The sage determinations of the law.
 But it is wisdom's rule ; all law above,
 To sacrifice indifferent things for love,
 That Peace may flourish, and on no pretence,
 To raise suspicions, or to give offence.

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