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No. III.

ART. I.—*The Life of Jerome Savonarola.**

J. N. Anderson
WE are about to fulfil a promise in a former number, and to give some account of a Dominican monk, who was almost a Reformer. Our narrative will be framed chiefly from the materials collected by the diligent and able scholar whose work is cited in the margin: but we shall also collate other authorities, as well Roman Catholic as Protestant. No one who feels any interest in the stirring events which we detail, should be prevented by our sketch from recurring to the work under review, which is a notable specimen of historical compression, and does not well admit of abridgment.

What we offer is history, not panegyric. The foibles, excesses, and errors of the man are obvious to every Protestant reader; yet these are no more than spots on a bright object; and we wish to bring out into day the lustre of this noble soul. To the Protestant, the subject of our sketch will be attractive, as approaching very nearly to the evangelical character; to the American, as an undaunted martyr in the cause of republican rights. We happen to know that

* Hieronymus Savonarola und seine Zeit: Aus den Quellen dargestellt, von A. G. Rudelbach, P. D.—Hamburg, bei Friedrich Perthes. 1835. pp. xvi: 503.

when, in 1832, the patriots of Italy were using means to awaken the dormant spirit of freedom, one of the first acts of a little group of scholars at Bologna was to publish the discourses of Savonarola, which had for scores of years lain under the Romish ban.

Hieronymus Savonarola was descended from a noble family of Padua, which had received special distinction from a famous physician, Michel Savonarola, one of the ornaments of Ferrara. Niccolo, the son of Michel, intermarried with Helena, of the family of Bonacossi; and the fruits of this union were five sons and two daughters. Hieronymus, or Jerome, the subject of this sketch, was the third of these sons, and was born September 25th, 1452.

He was carefully educated, according to the opinions of the age. His grandfather taught him grammar, and his father, who lived until 1461, spared no pains in giving him every literary advantage. It was their hope that he would perpetuate the medical reputation acquired by Michel; but at a very early age he began to make excursions into another field. Among all his studies, he was most pleased with scholastic theology. Thomas Aquinas was the favourite author, whose clew he followed in the labyrinth of speculation; and from this subtle divine he derived his singular acquaintance with the Aristotelian dialectic. In seasons of repose he relieved his mind with the elegancies of the Tuscan language and letters, with such success, as appears from extant specimens, that he might have become a distinguished poet.

Even in youth, Savonarola led a recluse and contemplative life, of which the charms were so much the greater when it was contrasted with the political and military agitation of that period. At times he thought of the conventual life as offering a refuge from these tempests, but from this he was again repelled by the worldliness and the stupendous iniquity of the monks. He was by no means an idolatrous admirer of the monastic institution; as even from boyhood his independent sagacity descried the defects and enormities of the system. Yet he had not so far risen above the superstitious prejudices of the age, as to be proof against the seductions of a life which fell in with all the solitary and ascetic musings of his juvenile enthusiasm; and in his twenty-first year he became a Dominican friar. In thus taking monastic vows he did only what was done thirty years after by Luther; but it was with a temperament more open than was that of the

Saxon monk, to the dark enchantments of the cloister. In April, 1475, without the privity of his parents, he assumed, at Bologna, the habit of that order whose device has been the instrument of torture. Who can remember without a pang the numerous instances in which, from motives that might under other circumstances have formed a Calvin or a Simeon, ingenuous young men have been plunged into the abyss of conventual pollution and misanthropy! "The chief reasons," says Savonarola, "which moved me to enter the monastic order were these: First, the great misery of the world and the iniquity of men, seeing that mankind has arrived at the point where there is not one that doeth good. Many times a day did I therefore sing: 'Hec, fuge crudeles terras, fuge littus avarum!' And, again, I could not endure the wickedness of the blinded people of Italy; for I saw that virtue was altogether prostrate, and that vice exalted its head. Here was the greatest affliction I could suffer in this world; wherefore I constantly besought my Lord Jesus Christ, that he would deliver me out of this filth, and often prayed in these words: 'Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto thee.'" Such are the expressions which he uses in a letter to his father, on the occasion of his forsaking home.

In the Dominican convent at Bologna he was appointed Lector in metaphysics and natural history; he discharged his duties with fidelity and had many pupils. But his private studies were chiefly the Meditations of Augustin, and Cassian's *Collationes Patrum*; and the further he went into the history of the fathers, the more clearly did he see the defects of monkery, as compared with the usages of the early anchorets; and as to the life of genuine Christianity, he found no vestige of it in the cloister. The legendary and devotional books, which are the pabulum of all novices, were unsatisfying. He procured the Holy Scriptures, which henceforth became the great study of his life; and dwelling upon them night and day he received on his memory the whole contents of the sacred canon. At the same time he acted as confessor, and made some beginnings as a preacher. So far as we can learn, he was at this time happier in private than in public discourses. His biographers relate that on a certain occasion as he went from Ferrara to Mantua, thirteen dissolute soldiers who happened to be in the same vessel were brought to penitence by the force of his exhortations.

In 1481, after having sometime taught at Ferrara, Savona-

rola, by order of his superiors, removed to Florence. Soon after his arrival, Vincenzo Baldella, prior of the monastery of S. Marco, appointed him Lector. He preached during Lent, in 1482; and we mention for the encouragement of young preachers, that although afterwards the most eloquent orator of his age, he was at this time far from being either easy or impressive in his pulpit discourses. His hearers amounted to no more than twenty-five. His estimate of his own performances was moderate; for he says he was without good qualities of voice or lungs, and that his manner was highly disagreeable to all who heard him.*

In 1483 and 1484 we find him at Brescia, where he seems to have had some glimpses of the desperate corruptions in which the Romish church was sunken, revealed to him by the light of scripture. In one of his sermons he declares the conviction that reform is indispensable, and that the earth was ripening for a judicial overthrow. "The popes," says he, "acquire their eminence by craft and intrigue, or by the crime of simony; and when they have reached the holy see, either devote themselves to harlots and infamous favourites, or are busied in hoarding wealth. In monasteries, discipline is relaxed, and those who ought to serve God with holy zeal are cold or lukewarm." He then predicts that God will remove the light of Christendom, and bestow it on the dark tribes of Asia and Africa.

At a provincial synod at Reggio, probably in 1484, he became acquainted with the learned and noble Giovanni Pico, of Mirandola; equally celebrated for his scholastic penetration and erudition, and his enthusiasm in Platonic philosophy. This great scholar was so enchanted with the perspicacious intelligence, and argumentative dexterity, which Savonarola evinced in disputation, that he used his influence with Lorenzo de' Medici to have the young Dominican invited to Florence. To this focus of literary activity he was at length attracted in the year 1489. Here he again discharged the duties of a lecturer, and here the singular independence of his character began to shine out. We must suppose our readers to be in some degree familiar with the history and condition of this city, especially under the guidance of the Medicean family. To freshen any one's recol-

* Ogni uno, che mi conosceva gia dieci anni passati, el sa, che io non havevo ne voce, ne pecto, ne modo di predicare, anzi era in fastidio ad ogni huomo el mio predicare.—Sav. Pred. p. xi. Venez. 1520.

lections, nothing more will be needed than a recurrence to the elegant histories of Mr. Roscoe. Let the Protestant reader however guard himself against the subtilty with which this accomplished writer, on all occasions, insinuates statements prejudicial to the character of every advocate for reformation. The power of the Medici was in its 'most high and palmy state,' and there were few who could venture to animadvert, however gently, upon Lorenzo or his creatures. The court-preachers were moral declaimers, who winked at the corruption of manners, and nevertheless—a paradox alas! too familiar—founded salvation on good works. All the world was in raptures at the method, the neatness, the classic grace of their discourses. Such, in later days and other sects, are the sleek and dapper pulpit favourites 'who never mention hell to ears polite.' Among this time-serving company Savonarola appeared like John among the Pharisees; and as he spared not even Lorenzo de' Medici, we need not wonder that Mr. Roscoe should call his sanctity, "pretension," his zeal, "animosity," and his simplicity of rebuke, "morose and insolent." At the same time the historian owns that "he acquired an astonishing ascendancy over the minds of the people," but adds: "The divine word, from the lips of Savonarola, descended not amongst his audience like the dews of heaven; it was the piercing hail, the sweeping whirlwind, the destroying sword."*

We may imagine the relish with which such truths as the following were received by the fastidious Florentines: "Christians have forsaken the true service of God, and are now-a-days fallen into such blindness, as no longer to know the meaning of the Christian name, or the import of genuine worship. They busy themselves with outward ceremonies, but inward service of God they know not. They seldom or never read the holy scriptures, or when they do, they understand nothing; or even when they understand, they have no taste for them. Yea, they say: 'Our soul loatheth this light bread! O that we could listen to the eloquence of Cicero, the melody of the poets, the sweet diction of Plato, and the acuteness of Aristotle! The bible is too simple—food for women only. Preach to us something elegant and grand!' And as they will not endure sound doctrine, they have gone after lies; and having itching ears heap to themselves teach-

* Is not my word like as a fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?—Jer. 23: 29.

ers, turn away from the truth, and are turned unto fables. Even princes and chiefs of the people will not listen to the truth, but say: Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits. Hence it is, that the people are wrapped in the grossest darkness." And again in a sermon on the 73d Psalm, after many direct exposures of evils in the state and the church, he proceeds: "They have invented festivals and usages to supplant those ordained of God. Go now to one of these ceremonious prelates, and lo! they have at their tongues' end the very choicest words one could ask. Lament over the present state of the church, and you shall have for answer, 'Aye Father, you are right; no man can live much longer, if God do not restore us; the faith is sinking.' But in their hearts, they cherish their wickedness, turning God's feasts into devil's feasts. So that if one says to another: 'What think you of our Christian faith? how do you regard it?' the other will answer: 'Surely! you are but a simpleton! It is all a mere dream, a thing for sensitive women and monks.' These ecclesiastics have no spiritual discernment, nor know how to distinguish between good and bad, truth and falsehood, sweet and bitter. The care of souls is not near their hearts; it suffices them, if they get their stipend."

Savonarola began his public acts as preacher in a garden belonging to the convent of S. Marco, and Burlammacchi marks the precise spot as being under a large damask-rose tree. Many learned men came to hear him, and his auditory was soon increased to such a degree that no room was left for the monks; many of whom hung around the walls. The strain of his preaching was no less awakening than before. His chief topics were the necessity of church reform—the imminent danger of Italy, as the land which had been most polluted by crime—and the suddenness and weight of the approaching judgments. There was undoubtedly a mixture of enthusiasm in these exercises of Savonarola, and then, as well as at later periods, he imagined himself to be acting under a prophetic afflatus, when in truth he was only rehearsing the predictions of the Hebrew seers. It was not without a struggle that he brought himself to brandish such unwelcome arms; and sometimes he was on the point of repressing his indignant messages. Particularly during Lent, in 1490, when he had yielded to temporary fear, so as to spend the whole of a certain Saturday as well as the following night in a distressing vigil, filled with doubts as to the

duty of proclaiming the denunciations which he had prepared for the next day; he received about daylight, while in prayer, this divine message: *Demens nonne vides, Deum velle, ut talia in hunc modum annuncies?* The effect of his next discourse, and of those which followed it, was very great. The common people heard him gladly, but there was much diversity of judgment about him. Some said, He is an upright and pious man; some, He is learned, but very wily; and others, He follows false and foolish visions.

In 1490 he was made prior of the Dominican convent of S. Marco. On such accessions of a superior, it had been the usage for the new incumbent to wait on Lorenzo de' Medici, as the chief magistrate, and seek his patronage. One might consider this compliment as at least harmless, but Savonarola declined any such indication of respect, notwithstanding the importunities of his monks. His language always was: Have I been chosen to this place by Lorenzo, or by God? Lorenzo, though offended by the slight, pursued his usual policy, and employed gentle measures to win over the impracticable churchman. In a number of instances, he went to S. Marco under pretext of hearing mass, and walked in the garden. The monks in such cases had been wont to join him, and engage in flattering conversation. They hastened, therefore, whenever he made his appearance, and said to the prior: "Lorenzo is in the garden."—"Has he asked for me?" inquired the prior, and, when they answered in the negative, replied: "Very well; let him walk." In this is manifest too much that resembles the pride of a zealot. In other attempts of the great man to gain Savonarola by largesses to the conventual treasury, he was equally unsuccessful. Dreading the consequences of such an alienation, he then availed himself of friendly embassies, in order to procure a change in the style of the prior's discourses. But Savonarola replied at once to the five noble citizens who came to him with this expostulation: "You tell me you have come hither out of regard for the commonwealth, and for our convent, but I say to you, it is not so. Lorenzo de' Medici has sent you to me. Say to him in my name, that although he is a Florentine and the chief of the state, while I am a stranger and a poor friar, it will nevertheless come to pass, that he shall be forced to depart hence, and I shall remain." And so he dismissed them as they came.

In forming a judgment of this seeming moroseness of Savonarola, it should be considered that his opposition to

Lorenzo was not personal, being excited chiefly by his knowledge that the republican immunities of the state were trampled down by the party of this ambitious potentate. The latter took another method to neutralize the influence of his adversary, by spiriting up and assisting a rival preacher. This was Mariano da Ghenezzano, a monk of the Augustinian Eremites, the favourite pulpit orator of the refined classes, and celebrated as such by pens no less distinguished than those of Politian and Machiavel. Lorenzo instructed him to teach that Savonarola's preaching was fanatical and seditious, which he was the less slow to do, as the popularity of the other had long been food for his envy.

Lorenzo de' Medici had been for a long time valetudinary, having derived only a temporary mitigation of his infirmities from the warm baths of Siena and Porrettana. In the early part of the year 1492 he breathed his last. On his death-bed, as we are informed by the younger Pico and by Burchiellacci, he sent for Savonarola, no doubt in that sincere hour remembering him as a man above the reach of fear or flattery. The account which Roscoe gives of this interview is surcharged with obvious prejudice, not to say dishonesty. Contrary to every authority which he cites, and without the show of any authority for the surmise, he tells us that the "haughty and enthusiastic Savonarola probably thought that in the last moments of agitation and suffering he might be enabled to collect materials for his factious purposes." He likewise garbles, even to mutilation, the testimony of Pico, which we have compared in the original, and represents the prior as unwarrantably withholding absolution.* This is only one instance among many of the injustice which the reformers, and such as like them attacked the papacy, have received at the hands of latitudinarian historians.

Lorenzo, according to Pico, when he felt the approaches of death, sent for Savonarola. The latter, who was at hand, came immediately, in a friendly manner by the dying man was accosted, who requested that he would hear his confession in a Christian manner; especially his confession of three sins which greatly distressed his conscience. "And what sins are these?" said the prior. "The three sins, which I mean," said Lorenzo, "are such that I know not whether God will ever pardon me. The first is the sacking of Volterra, in which the soldiers committed great violence.

* *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, vol. ii. p. 323, 325.

..... The second is the plundering of Monte delle Fanciulle, in which many young women lost their dowries. The third is the affair of the Pazzi, in which much innocent blood was shed." To which Savonarola replied: "Lorenzo, yield not to despair of heart, for God is merciful, and will moreover show mercy to you, if you will observe three things which I shall tell you."—"And what are these?" The prior answered: "The first is that you have a strong and lively faith that God can and will pardon."—"It is indeed great," said Lorenzo, "and thus I believe." The prior added, "It is further necessary that whatever you have wrongfully acquired be restored, so far as is possible; leaving only such substance to your children, as may befit their decent livelihood as private citizens." After some moments of thought Lorenzo replied, "And this also I will do." The monk then proceeded to the third, saying, "Lastly, it is necessary that Florence be restored to her liberties, and her popular state as a republic." At which words Lorenzo elevated his shoulders but made no answer. Savonarola then left him, without any farther confession, and shortly after Lorenzo expired. These events occurred on the 9th of April, 1492.

It does not fall within our plan to record the convulsions which ensued upon the death of this great man, and which are familiar to every student of Italian history. The progress of the French arms, under Charles the Eighth, whose triumphs extended even to Naples, filled the Florentines with extraordinary alarm. Other events made the period remarkable. Soon after the demise of Lorenzo, died also Innocent VIII., whose otherwise useless pontificate had the merit of conducing to the peace of Italy. He was succeeded August 11th, 1492, by the infamous Borgia, under the name of Alexander VI. The character of this pontiff is sufficiently established. "He was," says Guicciardini, "a man of penetration and sagacity, able in counsel, endowed with peculiar powers of convincing argument, and in all affairs of moment was diligent and expert. But his manner of life was debased; he was devoid of honesty, shame, truth, honour, and faith; his avarice was insatiable, his ambition boundless, his cruelty more than savage; and he moreover had the greatest desire to exalt in every way possible his numerous sons."* By the courtezán Vanozza this Holy Father had

* Guicciardini. *Istoria d' Italia*. lib. I. fol. 3. a.

five children; "qui omnes (says the Jesuit Briet) Christi sanguine et pauperum patrimonio ditandi fuere, quum esse debuissent ob natales suos turpissimos ecclesie mendicula."*

Pietro de' Medici, the son of Lorenzo, allowed youthful inexperience and temerity to lead him into a policy diametrically opposed to that by means of which his father had maintained tranquillity in the state. The rage of parties, and the storm of political agitation, increased from year to year, until it became necessary to take some measures with reference to the triumphant approach of the French king. During this period the influence of Savonarola was constantly on the increase, and he had more than one conference, as ambassador of the republic, with this victorious monarch. In 1494, for example, he was one of five who were sent to treat with Charles. Savonarola had long been predicting just such an invasion. In common with all the patriots of Florence he was afflicted at the evils which seemed to impend over their liberties. This grief was poured forth in his public discourses, in which, as was common in that age, he treated no less of politics than of religion; constantly expressing the hope that these revolutions would open a way for the reformation of the church. The five oratori, or commissioners, found the king at Lucca, or, as others relate, at Pisa, where Savonarola made a strong appeal to him in the Italian language; charging the monarch under the most awful sanctions to use his newly acquired authority in behalf of justice and piety. The effect of this harangue, which is extant, can be judged only from the fact that Charles always treated Savonarola with evident favour. The return of Pietro to Florence was the signal for one of those tumults which have scarcely a parallel out of the annals of the Italian republics, and which ended in the downfall of the Medicean dominion. The watchword of the Medici, *Palle, Palle*, which had in former days summoned thousands to the rescue, now proved impotent. The cardinal Giovanni, afterwards

* The sons of the pope were: 1. *Giovanni Pietro Ludovico Borgia*, whom he made duke of Gandia, and who was murdered by the contrivance of his brother Cesare, June 14, 1497.—2. *Cesare Borgia*, cardinal and archbishop of Valencia, 1493; and, after laying aside the ecclesiastical habit, duke of Valentinois, 1498; Ob. 1507.—3. *Giovanni Borgia* the younger; made duke of Gandia after his eldest brother's death.—4. *Giuffre* (Godfrey) *Borgia*, prince of Squillace, who married a natural daughter of Alfonzo of Naples.—The daughter, whose name is the synonyme of monstrous incest and parricide, was *Lucretia Borgia*.

Leo X., tried in vain to appease the mob, and was himself forced to fly to the Appenines, in the disguise of a Franciscan friar. The other brothers, Pietro and Giuliano, escaped to Bologna, where the cardinal soon joined them. The Medicean palace was abandoned to the populace, and the wonderful collections in the fine arts, which had their origin in the exquisite taste of the family, became the prey of the rabble. Lorenzo and Giuliano, the relatives of Pietro, purchased immunity by tearing down the family escutcheon from their marble portals; and the name of Medici was exchanged for that of Popolani. These excesses took place on the 9th of November, 1494. During their continuance Savonarola was absent, but on his return, a few days later, he employed all his influence with the people to restrain their unbridled passions, and so far succeeded as to shield several members of the suffering family; which in a single day lost the supremacy that had lasted sixty years.

On the 17th of November, 1494, Charles VIII. made his triumphal entry into Florence. He rode in full armour, surrounded by the lances of his knights; the reins of his horse being held by the Gonfalonieri. The civil authorities escorted him to the church of S. Maria del Fiore, where he prayed at the altar, and thence to the Medicean palace. The Florentines, ever tenacious of their republican prerogatives, had not expected and could ill brook the open assumption of sovereignty which now took place; yet they were for a time content to discover their dissatisfaction only by suppressed threats. There was indeed a skirmish between the people and the French soldiery, but this was suspended from the consideration that they might jeopard the commerce of the city. Conferences took place between the two parties. The king waved his right of absolute jurisdiction, but imposed certain terms which were publicly read by one of his secretaries, with the remark that they constituted his ultimatum. Here ensued a scene which is characteristic of that republican intrepidity which even the presence and the arms of a victorious monarch could not shake. When the secretary had finished the reading of these conditions, Pietro Capponi, a man equally noted for his talents and his courage, approached this official, took the scroll from his hand, and said to the king, as he deliberately tore the paper to pieces: "We shall see, whether our swords are not as sharp as yours: and if you sound your trumpets, we will sound our alarm-

bells.”* Charles was startled at this display of republican resolution, and naturally suspecting it to be indicative of a widely extended popular determination, conceded most of his previous claims, and indeed at length almost subsided into the plan of amicable alliance proposed by the citizens. On the next day, the 26th of November, both parties convened in the church of S. Maria del Fiore, where the agreement was signed, and confirmed at the altar by an oath; the king laying his hand on the holy evangelists.

Such is the account given by Nerli in his history of Florence, but Burlanmacchi's narrative is different. According to this writer, Savonarola acted a part almost as important as that of Capponi. The words of the latter had so incensed the king, that he swore in his fury that the whole population should be put to the sword. The signal for this vengeance was to be given at five o'clock the next evening. Upon information of this, the consternation of the Signoria was extreme. The people, in this conjuncture fled to Savonarola, in whose patriotism and sanctity they reposed the greatest confidence, and the prior betook himself first to prayer, and then to the presence of Charles. Holding forth the idolatrous emblem of our crucified Redeemer, he cried: “This is He who made heaven and earth: regard not me, but Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, who causeth the earth to tremble, and giveth kings the victory according to his own will and justice; who can sweep away thee and all thy host, if thou dost not desist from thine inhuman purpose. O believe me, the friends and servants of God, the many innocent souls in this city, will cry unto God day and night, and he will not leave their prayer unheard. Knowest thou not that it is a small thing to the Lord to give victory with few or with many? Through the prayer of Moses and Joshua the Israelites overcame their enemies; and thus can God do now. Cease from thy design, and be content with that which thou canst have—the hearts of this people!” By these words, says the historian, Charles was induced to sign the convention. Savonarola himself referred to this very transaction, scarcely two years after, during another critical suspense, in the presence of the whole people; where thousands might have denied the statement if they

* Noi vedremo, se le nostre spade tagliano come le vostre, e se Voi sonerete le vostre trombe, et noi soneremo le nostre campane.

had not known it to be true. The passage occurs in a sermon, October 28th, 1496. On a second occasion Savonarola was sent to treat with the king, who soon after left Florence on his conquering expedition towards the south.

We need not follow the arms of Charles the Eighth through Tuscany or the Ecclesiastical States; but his approach to Rome is too signal a fact to be passed in silence. When it was rumoured that he was drawing nigh, Alexander the Sixth is said to have been stricken with terror; especially as it was believed that Charles was about to summon a general Council for the reformation of the church. These fears were in a good degree dissipated by the assurances of the king himself; yet on his entrance into Rome, Dec. 31, 1494, the pope could not repress his panic, and with a number of his cardinals fled to the castle of St. Angelo. The cardinal di San Piero in Vincola, well known as the enemy of Alexander VI., with a number of like sentiments, availed himself of this opportunity to address the king of the French, and urge him to depose a pontiff whose crimes were an opprobrium to Christianity. They represented that the plighted faith of Alexander could afford no ground of confidence, particularly when extorted by mortal fear. In the sequel, however, it became evident that the pope had found a golden avenue to Charles's heart, for a league was ratified between them. Alexander returned from St. Angelo to the Vatican, and received the ordinary but revolting tokens of homage from his conqueror.

Florence was meanwhile convulsed with the discordant opinions of two great parties, who agreed in nothing but the desire to remodel the government. The question which separated them was whether the democratic element should predominate in their commonwealth. In this contest Savonarola, who viewed all these revolutions as subservient to a great ecclesiastical reformation, took an active part, and defended the project of a constitution in which the people should have, by their representatives, a paramount authority. He seems to have been filled with the conviction that a well organized democracy was the most natural to the Florentines, and his whole life evinces his love for Italian freedom. He saw in this form the most favourable soil for the growth of true religion, so far as he understood it. His contemporaries charged him with seeking an ideal theocracy, rather than a polity which was sound and practicable. In November, 1494, he had delivered a sermon before the Signoria, the other au-

thorities, and the body of the people, in which he declared his views respecting the political changes which were demanded. At the basis of his system, he placed the fear of God, and as its necessary results, Christian activity and reformation of manners. The next principle was, that every citizen should prefer the common weal to his private advantage. The third was a general amnesty for all friends and supporters of the preceding government. And, fourthly, he claimed, for all who in the best days of Florence had enjoyed the elective franchise, a restitution of the same, by means of a popular form of government.* With some temerity of prophetic zeal, he declared that God himself would change the minds of all opposers. After long debates these principles went into effect, and the General Council was erected. The greatest opposition was to the amnesty, but the humane influence of Savonarola prevailed here also; and next to this the predominance given to religion was unpopular, but the republic was reorganized, to the delight of our disinterested monk, who eventually became a sacrifice for these very principles.

Upon the return of the French king from his bloodless conquest of southern Italy, he came into Tuscany in the spring of 1495. The people of Florence were in a state of doubt as to the terms which he might hold with them. On one hand, sumptuous preparations were made for giving him a triumphal reception: on the other, the warlike provision of barricades and artillery showed the apprehension of the citizens. In this critical juncture they once more used the intervention of Savonarola, who was sent on an embassy, and had more than one private and confidential interview with Charles. The fears of the people were not removed until the king passed by them, and hastily pursued his march homewards by the way of Pisa.

The internal condition of Florence was still unsettled, as the new organization of the government did not go into effect without some disturbance and opposition. Among those who were disaffected towards it, was the faction of the Medici, which was kept in continual agitation by Alfonsina, the wife of Pietro; likewise all such as believed their private interest to depend on the aristocratic form; and all who revolted at the strictness of morals introduced under the new regime. The last of these parties made their principal

* *Forma di governo universale.*

assault on Savonarola, who stood forth as the public castigator of vice, no less than the apostle of liberty. The moral reformation, of which he was the instrument, has few parallels in the history of Catholic Europe. We may learn the state of popular feeling from the very names of reproach which were given to the religious party; these being called Weepers, *Piagnoni*, Hypocrites, and the like. It was pretended by the aristocrats and libertines that Savonarola was seeking tyrannical domination. So far as we can judge, his sole intention, whether judiciously pursued or not, was to establish a free constitution, as subservient to the extension of what he understood to be true piety. On the first day of July, 1495, the new government may be said to have gone into operation, by the election of the state officers which it recognised.

Contemporaneously with these political changes, there were ecclesiastical movements, which have for our minds higher interest. It cannot be concealed that the whole course of Savonarola was hostile to the Romish usurpations. It was openly directed towards church reform, the least whisper of which conveyed disgust and terror to the reverend sybarite who occupied the Roman see. Reformation was the element of Savonarola's life; and from first to last he was reforming every evil thing within his reach. Though the scales of popery still covered his eyes, he was not so blind as to mistake the corruptions of monkery for beauties; and one of his darling projects was the restitution of the religious fraternities to what he considered their primeval simplicity and purity. If he failed, it was because he had to deal with institutions which were rotten in their very stamina. The natural consequence of his zeal was that his proceedings were reported at Rome; he was forbidden to preach the Lent sermons, and ordered to leave Florence. In discoursing on this subject, he had been uttering truths which under better auspices might have made Florence the Wittenberg or Geneva of Italy. "Well do I know," said he, "that men may do me great harm. But all men are vanity—kings, pope, and emperor—in this all are alike. They live indeed for a season, and in their time can effect a great deal. But man disappears like a shadow. How fleeting is the image in a mirror! For no sooner has a man quitted the glass than the image vanishes. Thus also when God withdraws his countenance, and removes his life-giving power, man departs from the world, as the reflection from

the glass. And therefore I am afraid of no man—for I fear not the image, but him whose image it is. Many there are who say that I have thrown Italy into confusion, and this is often charged upon me to my face. O foolish Italians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not hearken to the truth? Where are the treasures and the mercenaries, with which I have troubled Italy? Nay, I will answer you, as Elijah, under a like reproach, answered Ahab: ‘I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and hast followed Baalim.’ It is not I who have troubled Italy, but you, who have forsaken the Lord; who have made light of baptism and the sacred blood of our Redeemer; who have made a traffic of his sacraments; who have squandered his church revenues on harlots and panders; who have left all equity, and oppressed the poor; who have been filled with pride, ambition, envy, and hatred; who are polluted with lust, even the most unnatural; and who live in the commission of these sins so openly that heaven and earth cry out for vengeance!”

In pursuance of the vocation which Savonarola had followed, for almost seven years, in the city of Florence, he now felt himself bound to testify against the corruptions of Christianity which were embodied in the hierarchy, and he did so in the spirit of the ancient prophets. In one of the homilies which he was wont to deliver in regular course on the prophetic books, he presented the following views; and the apologue which the passage contains is eminently expressive.—“Lift thy hand, O Lord, against these high-minded prelates, kings and princes, who have destroyed thy people; thy left hand for temporal, thy right for eternal punishment! For what abomination is there which the enemy has not done wickedly against thy saints! I meditated on it with myself. Methought I beheld a glorious temple of marble, inlaid with gold, having columns of porphyry, and gates of the costliest gems, the sanctuary of mosaic and the choir of the choicest ivory. Over it was inscribed, *King Solomon hath builded this for the King of kings and Lord of lords*. In secret, and by night, there came many, and sought to destroy this temple. Some brought axes and hammers to break down the door; some cast fire into the edifice, and others defiled the holy of holies. The glorious temple fell; but anon they set to work and builded another. But in this all was made of wood, painted like marble and porphyry, and overlaid with gold and silver. I beheld the

priests in the vestments of their order with silver staves; before them went the singers, and sang so sweetly and delightfully that Paradise seemed thrown open. The people sent up acclamations of wonder, saying 'Of a truth, our temple grows in beauty day by day; never was there so fair a temple as ours!' Ere long the roof fell through, being insufficient to sustain the weight, and buried in ruins all that was below.—Would you know the interpretation of this vision? The first temple is the primitive apostolic church, builded of living stones, that is, of Christians, who were grounded in faith, and cemented by love, for they had one heart and one soul in Jesus Christ who was the chief corner-stone. These were hewn and fitted by the persecutions of tyrants. This temple shone with gold, the gold of heavenly wisdom. The columns, which arose within, were the prophets and apostles, on whose foundation Christians are builded. All was compacted gloriously; it was an Eden of God on earth. But the devil, the enemy of God and his church, now plotted to destroy this temple. He took for helpers the Jews, the Romans, the Heretics; but all in vain. Then he bethought him of another way. He took into his pay lukewarm and false brethren in the church itself; he dressed them in sheep's clothing; that is, they fasted, they made prayers, they gave alms, they submitted to penances, in a word, they did all that belongs to the externals of true Christianity. And lo! the devil now gained his purpose. These are the brethren who by their lukewarmness have ruined the church of Christ, and corrupted all things by their hypocrisy. The foundation was now cleared away. No one thought any longer of apostles and prophets. The columns of the church are leveled with the ground; evangelical doctrine is no longer heard. The gold of the temple is gone, that true divine wisdom which enlightens and rejoices the heart. The roof is fallen; the pious priests and princes who decorated the bride of Jesus are carried away in storm and whirlwind. The uniting cement crumbles. In our day, where do you find true love among Christians? No longer united to Jesus Christ, they are no longer united to one another, and every one seeks his own. All the church-walls are undermined. Where is the justice of princes and leaders? the pastoral fidelity of preachers? the obedience of subjects? All the treasures of the church have vanished. Ecclesiastical revenues are wasted in empty pomp, and for worldly ends. And what enhances the sin of these children of the devil is that

they glory in what they have done, to render the way of Christian life wider; and they vaunt their crimes for virtues. But they have not only destroyed the true church; they have erected another, after their fashion. This is the Modern Church, which is builded, not of living stones upon the foundation of the faith, but of wood; that is, of those Christians who are prepared as combustibles for hell-fire. Yet one thing in our temple gives us great content, which is that it is so beautifully gilt and painted. Our church has many beautiful outward rites; the ecclesiastical functions are attended in noble walls, with silver and golden lamps, so that it is pompous to behold. There may you see grand prelates with their mitres, glittering with gold and jewels, approaching the altar in the magnificent vestments of the mass. There may you hear, at matins and vespers, adagios which enchant the ear. To use the words of a great bishop: 'Never was the church so honoured as in our days, and never were prelates in such consideration, so that the primitive bishops were but pigmy bishops (*prelatuzzi*) in comparison with ours.' Would you know my meaning? In the primitive church the vessels were of wood, and the bishops of gold—in the modern church the bishops are of wood, and the vessels of gold. Thus on a certain occasion St. Thomas Aquinas answered a great prelate, who was probably of the modern stamp. For the latter showed him a basin, and perhaps more than one, filled with ducats, saying, 'Look-here, Master Thomas, the church can no longer say with St. Peter, *Silver and gold have I none.*'—'True,' replied Thomas, 'nor can she any longer add, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.*' And I declare to you, this my vision will be accomplished. The roof will fall in upon them; the grievous sins of churchmen, as well as princes, will crush them in the midst of their pageantry; for they were far too secure under this structure."*

Our only wonder in regard to these events is that the papal fulminations were delayed so long; for almost every discourse of Savonarola was a war manifesto against the Romish court. In 1495 he was cited to appear at Rome, under pain of excommunication, and the Signoria was warned that unless they enforced his obedience their city should be laid under an interdict. Through the mediation, however, of friends

* *Savonarola Prediche sopra il Salmo*; "Quam bonus, Israel, Deus." (Advent Sermons, 1493.) p. 245, b. — 256.

at the papal court, Savonarola was this time spared; the citation was revoked; and Alexander affected to submit it to the conscience of the offender, whether he should continue to preach or not. He chose for a season to be silent, and did not ascend the pulpit from the 23d of July until the 11th of October. Another Dominican, Domenico da Pescia, an aged and venerable man, and subsequently his companion in suffering, preached in his stead. Yet we are not to regard his influence as suspended during this interval. The reformation of morals wrought by the truth which he dispensed, was such as can be believed only on the concurring testimony of friends and foes, of religious and irreligious witnesses. Nardi assures us, that when Savonarola preached, the whole city of Florence felt the impression. Such was the fame of his piety and eloquence that foreigners and men of the greatest note came to the city for the mere purpose of hearing him. The great church of Santa Maria del Fiore, which like other cathedrals was too vast to have been erected for the auditory of any single voice, was no longer competent to contain the worshippers. Along the inner walls on both sides of the pulpit, rising seats and steps were concentrically arranged for the young people. All accounts agree in representing the change wrought in the manners of the people as amazing. During parts of the year 1495, Savonarola laboured in the adjacent cities. On his return to Florence people flocked from every quarter to hear him. Peasants from the rugged mountainous tracts would travel all night in order to be in the city early in the morning; consequently at daybreak the streets were often thronged with those who were pressing towards the cathedral, in order to secure places. Rich and respectable citizens sometimes entertained thirty or forty of these strangers at once. The greatest brotherly love existed among the people, and this found especial exercise in the dearth that prevailed during that year. Even in winter many would arise at midnight, go to the cathedral, and in despite of wind and weather await the hour of service with uncovered heads. During service, every one who had sufficient learning read the *officium*, taper in hand, while the rest repeated their prayers. It was the custom of many to study at home the portion of scripture which was to be expounded; and all shops and schools were closed until the hour of service was past. In the villages, sacred hymns entirely superseded the *canzoni*, *rispetti*, and other secular songs which had been the delight of the Tuscan peasantry.

After grace at meals, it became customary to read passages of the fathers, and other good books, particularly the published sermons of Savonarola. Games of hazard were excluded, and public temptations to lewdness were abolished. Such is the account given by a contemporary historian.*

From this time forward the important events in the life of Savonarola succeed one another so rapidly, that our sketch can only note such as are most prominent. The reformation attempted in Florence was carried into the details of private life with a rigour which seems to us almost inquisitorial; associations were organized with officers specially appointed to visit every family and remove every abuse, even in regard to the books which they read. These and other less questionable measures tended to strengthen the party of *Arrabiati*, or Enraged, as Savonarola's enemies chose to call themselves. But at the same time the fame of his achievements was spreading not only throughout Italy, but to London, Lyons, Brussels, and even Constantinople, where some of his discourses had been translated into Turkish. The alarm of the pope was natural, and could no longer be kept within bounds. Savonarola had denounced by name the "Romish Babel," and Alexander plied alternately the weapons of menace and flattery, with equal disappointment in both methods.† He offered him, so we are told, a cardinal's hat, but this was an ornament without charms for a monk who was ready to receive the crown of martyrdom; and Savonarola was so far from being won over, that he soon after, in 1497, wrote a circular letter to the kings of Spain, France, Hungary, and England, and to the emperor of Germany, urging them to procure the calling of a general council. The pope next endeavoured to embroil Savonarola with his own order, by transferring to the Tuscan province twelve religious houses of Dominicans which had previously belonged to the Romish states. Alexander then threatened the whole Florentine republic with his interdict, while his emissaries were using every method to foment the dissen-

* Burlammaechi, p. 548—550.

† Theodore Beza has the following apostrophe to Savonarola: "Homini tam perdite scelerato, quam fuit Alexander ille Borgia Pontifex hujus nominis Sextus usque adeo displicuisse, ut non nisi TE indignissime damnato et eremato quiescere potuerit, maximum esse videtur singularis Tuæ pietatis argumentum."—And the orthodox and learned Andrew Rivet speaks of him thus: "No one can deny that he recognised the necessity of a reformation in the church, that he sighed for it, and expected it. It is on this account that we place him among our witnesses for the truth."—*Remarques sur la Response, &c.* Tom. ii. p. 632.

sions already existing in the city. At length sentence of excommunication was pronounced against Savonarola, in May, 1497; on three counts, namely, first, because he had failed to obey his citation; secondly, because he had preached heresy; and thirdly, because he had refused to receive the twelve Dominican convents above mentioned. Savonarola denied the validity of this pontifical act, upon grounds which we shall not detail, as they seem to us altogether inconsistent with the fundamental error of popery, which he still avowed to be a part of his creed. But there were multitudes who rejoiced at this occasion for crushing his power. Priests were known to deny absolution, the eucharist, and even burial, to such as had frequented the preaching of the excommunicated man. In this emergency, while the whole city was involved in frantic tumult, and direct attempts were made to assassinate him, Savonarola manifested not merely his characteristic intrepidity, but a spirit of meekness and love, which shines with undeniable lustre in the copious extracts given by M. Rudelbach from his eloquent discourses.

The reader may be disposed to ask, What were the heretical opinions for which Savonarola was condemned; and we consider this a proper place to afford some notices of his doctrinal views, before we proceed to the last act of his tragical history. While, then, he maintained in a modified and very lax sense the infallibility of the church, the supremacy of the pope, the seven sacraments, and other unscriptural inventions, he added to these, and embraced with far more affection, the very body of Pauline theology.

The rule of his faith was the word of God, and he enjoined the study of the scriptures on all who heard him. Especially did he exhort to the reading of the former books of the canon which had fallen into great neglect. "The old and the new testaments," said he, "are an inseparable whole; they are like the two cherubim above the ark, which faced one another: one casts light on the other, and by means of one we understand the other."—"Some study nobly, but in commentaries, and not in the sacred text, and so can never be well instructed, because they do not rest their doctrine on the foundation."

From these divine sources, thus studied, Savonarola derived the truths which we might have expected. To prevent mistake, we shall give his own representations. And first as it regards the doctrine of Faith. "Faith," says he, "is a gift of God's free grace; not a human opinion founded

on things which are seen, but a light undeservedly bestowed by God, which is not quenched, even when human reasons fail." "This faith alone *justifies*; that is, makes righteous in the sight of God, without works of law. It is the principle of all good, the source of all Christian virtues. Hence almost all the sayings of Christ refer to faith. Hence the apostle is ever crying *Faith, Faith!* This is the basis of the whole. If you have faith, you will at once do good works; but he who is without faith, is for ever in the way of sin."—"Confidence in our own strength is false confidence; that is, where any one thinks he can of his own strength repent, begin a good life, or avoid sin. No, God must prevent us, and we must say to him, Turn thou us, Lord, and we shall be turned! The only true confidence is that which relies on the sufficiency of the merit of Jesus Christ; and this merit has an endless power, because it springs from the very Godhead, and flows from the grace which abides without measure in Christ."—"So that the act of justification is an act of God's mere mercy, through the grace and merit of Jesus Christ. So many righteous as there are—so many acts of mercy. The righteousness by which man becomes just before God, is the righteousness of God, which through faith in Jesus Christ is imputed to us; and, in the next place, it is the not imputing of our sins."

With respect to the *Decrees of God*, he maintained the doctrines of Predestination and unconditional Election.—"How comes it, some are ready to say, that God influences one rather than another, that he draws this man, and not the other? This is purely of grace. Go and say to a potter, 'Why do you make this vessel so beautiful, and that one so rough and mean?' He will answer, 'I am making them for the use of the whole house; and the fine are needed for one purpose, the coarse for another.' Ask him again, 'Why do you make out of one and the same clay, at one time, a beautiful, at another a mean vessel?' He will reply, 'Because such is my pleasure.' Thus also when one asks, 'Why does God draw one and not another?' the answer is, 'In order to manifest his justice and his mercy.'—'Why does God draw one sooner than another?' Answer, 'Because so it seemeth good in his sight.' My Son, here is a great abyss! Augustin says: *Noli judicare, si non vis errare*. St. Paul knew better than we how to solve this question, and limited himself to these words: Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? God knows perfectly the reason why

he so decreed, but thou knowest it not, nor is he bound to tell thee. When we shall have gone up into Paradise, we shall know this. Which is better, to reckon God unrighteous and yourself wise, or God righteous and yourself ignorant? God is justice itself. Go no deeper into this question, otherwise you will strike on a rock of offence. Origen sought to solve this problem, and assumed that all souls were originally created at once, and then placed in these bodies according to their merit or demerit; this contradicts all philosophy. Pelagius sought to solve it, and assumed that he who does good is called of God. But he fell into a shameful error, for according to the scriptures, we can of ourselves do no good, nay we are not sufficient of ourselves so much as to think a good thought, but all our sufficiency is of God. Plunge not into this profound, but consider that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ hath appeared to us, and that he has shown us kindness, not according to our merit, but his own mercy.”

Without proceeding further, we find enough in these extracts to incur the condemnation of the Romish church. It would be easy, however, to show by similar citations, that Savonarola taught all the leading doctrines of the evangelical system, as they were expounded by Augustin.*

There can be no doubt that Savonarola was through many years of his life deluded into the belief that he was endowed with immediate prophetic inspiration. His incautious disciples and biographers have contributed to perpetuate this error. His own claim to divine communications gave a specious pretext to his persecutors, especially when they found many instances in which he had directed these predictions towards the attainment of his republican ends. When the tempest was about to break over him, he did not lose his confidence in divine succour, being possessed with a lofty belief that he should triumph. But this fire was on a sudden met by an equal confidence and enthusiasm from the opposite side. However it may suit the policy of Roman Catholics to denounce the false fire of evangelical Christianity, it stands as an imperishable record in history, that no fanaticism has ever exceeded their own. The incidents which we subjoin are sufficiently humbling.

* For an insight into the doctrines of Savonarola, recourse must be had to his published works, “which,” says M. du Pin, “abound with unction and pious maxims; in these he speaks freely against vice, and inculcates the purest morality.”—D. Pin. *Bibl.* xii. p. 115. *ed de Holl.*

A Franciscan monk, Francesco of Apulia, declared from the pulpit that he was ready to go into a personal trial by fire, to prove by his escaping all injury, that the pope's excommunication of Savonarola was legitimate and just; provided that the latter should undergo the same ordeal as a test of his prophetic legation. Domenico da Pescia, a zealous adherent of Savonarola took up the gauntlet in the place of his master, who, he said, was called to a higher destiny; and he declared his assurance that God would work a miracle for his deliverance. The populace, always eager for the excitement of such spectacles, pressed the combatants to enter this extraordinary arena; and the government allowed itself to sanction this mode of settling the controversy between the holy see and a contumacious prophet. But the Franciscan friar was unwilling to deal with any but the principal, and a subsidiary contest arose as to the spiritual etiquette of this fiery duel. Two other friars, however, Pilli and Rondinelli, offered themselves in place of the Franciscan, and almost all the Dominican monks of the province, a crowd of priests and seculars, and even women and children begged the favour of entering the flames in behalf of Savonarola. At length Domenico and Rondinelli girded themselves for the conflict, and stood ready to pass through a furnace of burning fagots, the very sight of which filled the immense assembly with shuddering. But when the champion of Savonarola was about to enter the fire, a dreadful outcry was made among the Franciscan party, because he insisted on carrying with him the consecrated wafer; and as Domenico absolutely refused to jeopard himself without this safeguard, the matter was suspended, until a violent rain scattered the multitude and refrigerated the zeal of the populace.

This infatuation of Savonarola gave a blow to his influence, and exposed him to ridicule. Soon after this he took leave of his congregation in a touching discourse, declaring that he foresaw the persecution of which he was to be the victim, but that he freely devoted himself for his flock. That very evening a great tumult broke out in the city among his adversaries. They attacked the convent of S. Marco, where he lay, and while a few of his adherents stood on the defensive, a number of his other friends in the city were robbed or murdered by the contrary faction. At last, the Signoria sent an order to the monks of S. Marco, to deliver their superior, together with Domenico da Pescia and Silvestro Maruffi. The three friars were given up to the officers, and

the populace loaded them with every outrage on their way.*

Couriers were despatched to Rome on the day of his arrest, and the pope was filled with joy at the prospect of speedy revenge. He wrote to the Signoria expressing his sense of the favour, and demanded that Savonarola, after the necessary inquisition, should be consigned to the tender mercies of his Holiness. He also gave authority to the Archbishop and the Chapter of S. Fiore, to absolve any one of any sin into which he might have fallen in securing the culprit, not excepting murder. Between twelve and fifteen commissioners were introduced to the Senate to conduct the trial: almost all these were passionately inimical to the prisoners. Francesco degli Albizi, however, quitted them on the first day, declaring that he would not stain his house with innocent blood.

On the 10th of April Savonarola had his first audience. Here he was menaced with the rack, if he did not show some miraculous confirmation of his predictions; his answer was, that this proposal was a tempting of God. On the 11th, each of the three monks having been put into a solitary cell, the inquisitors proceeded to the *question*; which was after this manner. The hands of Savonarola were fastened behind him crosswise with very strong chains; these were attached to a suspended rope, by means of which he was drawn up to some height, and then all at once suffered to fall, without however reaching the earth; the effect being a luxation of the shoulder-joints. This mode of torture is known in the Roman Catholic discipline by the name of the *strappado*. It was repeated upon the wretched prisoner once the same day, and again on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter eve. During the anguish of the torture, his frail body was so far overcome that confessions were wrung from him, not however to the extent demanded by the demons who tempted his endurance; and in the intervals of ease he constantly retracted these concessions, and witnessed to the truth of his doctrines and the purity of his intention. This he persisted in, even when burning coals were applied to his feet. These tortures were continued daily, except on Easter Sunday, until the 17th of April. The half-dead sufferer often exclaimed during these examinations, "Lord, it is enough!

* In these particulars we follow the condensed relation of M. Sismondi.

Oh receive my spirit!" at the same time praying for his tormentors.

Finding the established methods of inquisition to be unavailing, as no consistent acknowledgment of crime could be extorted, they sought a new method; and adroitly substituted for the minutes of the confessions, which a notary had taken down, a counterfeit and self-condemnatory statement, forged by Cecconi, one of Savonarola's most bitter foes.* The signature of the exhausted and, on this point, unsuspecting monk was fraudulently obtained to this instrument.

It is not often that we have it in our power to learn with precision what are the exercises of a good man under the alternating suspenses and pangs of inquisitorial butchery. This however we are permitted to learn more intimately in the case before us; not indeed from the supposititious confessions, but from two Meditations on the thirty-first and fifty-first Psalms, which he wrote while awaiting execution. These reveal to us the recesses of his bursting heart.

"Distress," he exclaims, "hath encompassed me, and besieging me day and night, ceases not to war against me. My friends have gone over to the enemies' camp. All that I see, all that I hear, wears the hues of sorrow. I am troubled by the remembrance of my friends, and my spiritual children; distressed by the thought of my cell; pierced at the consideration of my studies; and crushed by the weight of my sins. As to those who lie ill of a fever, every sweet thing is bitter, so to me all things are turned into pain and misery. Oh the burden that is on my heart! The venom of the serpent works within—murmuring against God—unceasingly tempting—seducing me to despair. Oh wretched man that I am! who will deliver me from the hand of the adversary! Who will fight for me, defend me, or help me? Whither shall I flee? Nevertheless, I know what I will do; I betake me to that which is invisible, and thus defend myself against all that is visible. But who is my guide? It is HOPE, that contends with Sorrow and will gain the victory. Hear the prophet's words: 'I will say of the Lord, Thou art my refuge and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust.' Who can withstand the Lord? Who can storm his high tower, which he has made our defence? Lo! he cometh! he brings

* The proofs of this falsification are given in full by M. Rudelbach, who cites Burlammacchi, Pico, Nardi, Magliabecchi, and other historians.

joy in his train: he teaches me to fight; he says to me, 'Cry aloud, spare not!'—What shall I cry?—Say (he answers) confidently, and with the whole heart, 'In thee, Lord, do I put my trust, let me never be ashamed; deliver me in thy righteousness!' Yea, now comes consolation. Now let sorrow come on with all her armies; let the world stand in array and rise against me; my trust is in God, and my resort is to the Highest. In thee, Lord, do I put my trust, and therefore pray I, first, that thou wouldst free me from my sins; for sin is the greatest affliction, and the source of all afflictions. O Lord, take away my sins, and all my troubles shall depart. In thee, Lord, do I put my trust, and thou wilt redeem me; not by my own righteousness, but by thine; for I ask for mercy, and offer no righteousness of my own. But if thy grace make me righteous, then I have thy righteousness. The Pharisees went about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God; for by works of law can no man be just before God. But the righteousness of God is manifested without works of law, through the grace of Jesus Christ. The Philosophers plumed themselves on their own righteousness, and therefore never found thine; they were thieves and robbers who entered not by the door. Thus it is thy grace, O Lord, which is righteousness for us; and it would be no longer grace, if it came from the merit of works. Save me by thy righteousness, that is by thy Son, Jesus Christ, who is the righteousness by which men are justified."

By a large majority of voices in the council, the three monks were found guilty, and the sentence of death was communicated to them on the twenty-second of May. They received it with tranquil submission. Savonarola, in particular, was enabled both to restrain the undue zeal, and dispel the doubts of his fellow-sufferers. They were then publicly degraded by the hands of the bishop of Vasona. As a part of his function, this prelate said to Savonarola, *Separo te ab ecclesia triumphante*; to which the excommunicated martyr replied—"From the *militant*, not from the *triumphant* church; for that lies not in your power."

After communicating in the rites of the church, and after having severally pronounced a clear confession of their faith, they were burned alive at the stake, on the very spot where exactly five weeks before, Domenico had offered to submit to the ordeal. Silvestro cried with a loud voice, from amidst the flames, *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo*

spiritum meum! [Savonarola repeated the apostles' creed as he approached the stake. Death relieved him from his torments much sooner than his companions. The ashes of the three were cast into the Arno.

Here we close our notice of this singular man, regretting that we cannot introduce from his works more numerous proofs of his comparative orthodoxy and ardent piety. To our readers we must leave the task of passing judgment on his character, and discriminating between the good and evil in his character; as well as of forming the conclusion which these facts warrant, concerning the tendency of the Romish system.*

Joel Jones

ART. II.—*A Discussion of the question, Is the Roman Catholic Religion, in any or in all its Principles or Doctrines, inimical to Civil or Religious Liberty? And of the question, Is the Presbyterian Religion, in any or in all its Principles or Doctrines, inimical to Civil or Religious Liberty?* By the Reverend John Hughes of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Reverend John Breckinridge of the Presbyterian Church. Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard. 1836.

(Continued from p. 266.)

OUR review of this work was suspended more abruptly in the last number than we could have wished, for want of room. We were upon the topic of "the Divine right," as defined by the Rev. Mr. Hughes, (see p. 258.) We took the liberty of assuming, that this right (as defined) was claimed to be vested exclusively in the priesthood of the Roman Catholic church. We are not solicitous to prove that the assumption is warranted by the fact,—on the contrary, we would almost be willing to receive a disavowal of the claim *ex cathedra*, or even from the archiepiscopal chair, as a proof that we were mistaken. Still, as we cannot expect such a disavowal,

* We have learned, not without surprise, that the German is not the vernacular tongue of M. Rudelbach; though even Germans detect no constraint in his diction. He has been devoting himself for some time to the Bohemian language, in order to avail himself of documents hitherto unpublished, and illustrating the history of John Huss. The life of this great reformer, from a pen so able, will be hailed as a treasure.

it may not be out of place to add a citation or two upon this point. The first shall be taken from a former controversy between our authors "relative to the existing differences between the Roman Catholic and Protestant religions." In No. 23 of that controversy, the Rev. Mr. Hughes, after a good deal of argument, proceeds as follows: "Whence did Luther derive his authority? Until you are pleased, Reverend Sir, to answer this all-important interrogatory, I feel warranted in maintaining that Luther and Calvin and their associates during that epoch of ecclesiastical anarchy and religious phrenzy, which has been mantled into a decent appearance at least, by the word 'Reformation,' had not a particle of authority from either God or men. They were mere laymen in this respect, and their successors in the ministry are not and cannot be substantially any thing more." It is very obvious from this passage, that our Rev'd author does not admit this Divine right to be vested in the ministers of the Lutheran or Calvinistic churches.

We will add a citation from a higher source, broad enough in its terms to exclude the ministry of all the protestant churches from participation in this Divine right. Pius VII. published in 1808 a protestation, in which he took the title of the pastor of the universal church. (*Il papa non è il semplice rescovo di Roma, come si è impropriamente asserito, ma il pastore insieme della chiesa universale, ed ha perciò il diritto di scegliere i ministri ed i cooperatori del suo apostolato fra tutte le nazioni dell' orbe.*) "The pope," said he, "is not simply the bishop of Rome, as is improperly asserted, but the pastor also of the universal church, and he has therefore the right to select the ministers and co-workers of his apostolate among all the nations of the earth." It follows from this passage that the popes claim to be, by way of eminence, the "legitimate successors" of the apostles. And the subordinate clergy, in communion with the pope, derive their authority from him, and are merely co-workers with him in his apostolical office. There is much involved in this idea of legitimate succession. It needs to be developed somewhat in detail to show clearly all its bearings and fully its consequences. We had thought of attempting it in this place, but it would detain us too long from the topics now before us. We shall therefore pass this subject for the present, and proceed to the definition given us of "Ecclesiastical rights." The "Divine right," the reader must have observed, belongs to the priesthood. It

implies correlative duties. The duties as they are (assumed to be) rightfully exacted cannot be rightfully withheld. Of course, the ecclesiastical rights of an individual cannot exceed the *residuum* of liberty (shall we call it?) remaining after the duties exacted by divine right are paid. These ecclesiastical rights are said to be (p. 258, ante) the "privileges secured to individuals, according to their stations, and resulting from the ecclesiastical constitution or usages of the religious society to which he belongs." We marvel greatly, that our Rev'd author should have given this turn to his phraseology. He claims that there is but one church—but one legitimate succession—that Luther and Calvin and their associates had not a particle of authority from God or men; and yet he says "the ecclesiastical constitution or usages of the religious society to which he belongs," as if the church was not a single but several jurisdictions, or as if there can be an ecclesiastical constitution when there is no church. This, however, by the by. And we do not lay much stress upon it, because it may have been a mere accommodation, or a deference from motives of politeness to the notions or humours of those who differ with him upon the character of the Reformation.

We ask the reader now to collate these categories of the "Divine right" and the Ecclesiastical rights," and in doing so, it is proper that he should apply these abstract and somewhat general definitions to the system of religion under consideration, because such an application only would be pertinent to the *question* under consideration, and also because the exclusive pretensions of that system cannot without absurdity admit of any other just application. It is fair also to test principles by their tendency. We may suppose them universally admitted and acted upon, and then conjecture their results. Now let us suppose for a moment that our countrymen universally should concede to the Roman Catholic priesthood the "Divine right" which we have been considering: what ecclesiastical privileges would remain to the laity of the United States? To solve this question we must remember that the divine right claimed includes the right to select and appoint the clergy. This appears from the first article in this volume, and from a passage just now cited from the protestation of Pius VII. It extends also to all matters of doctrine and discipline. This appears also from the same article. It also appears from the very definition of the "Divine right" before us. Within the sphere of this

right the priesthood act by authority, and disobedience cannot be justified on the ground of any ecclesiastical right, unless rebellion against lawful authority may be a right. To show the extent and rigour of this principle of authority, we give the following passage from M. De Pratt's history of Jesuitism. That author was formerly archbishop of Malines, and appears to have been a zealous advocate of Romanism, although hostile to the Society of Jesuits. "The principle of authority," says he, "is constant and clear. We must adopt it wholly or wholly reject it. The holy water and the eucharist repose upon the same principle of authority—the teaching of the church. This teaching has many exigences, it is true, but it contains also many conveniences in relieving the human mind from the burthen of discussions. The whole labour of a catholic is reduced to the knowledge of a fact, that of the teaching of the church—*Has the master spoken?* that is all for him. The church is to the Christian what Jesus Christ is to the church. She does not contest the matter with him—she does not explain him—she only states the reality of his word, and asks also *if the master has spoken?* When she announces it to the catholic, her authority is to him what that of Jesus Christ is to her, for her authority is not her own, but that of Jesus Christ, and every catholic in his turn ought to submit himself to hers. *Thus catholicism is a fact*; a part of its beauty comes from the clearness of its principle of authority—a beauty of which the dissenting forms of worship are deprived. Under these relations the council of Trent is the benefactor as well as the instrument of the triumph of catholicism. This council and that of Nice are the two great acts of catholicism. At Nice catholicism claimed a God for her father, and declared Him alone to be worthy of her. . . . At Trent she set forth her genealogy, her titles, her doctrines; she opened and shut the book of the seven seals—she sounded the prelude to the last judgment, by placing at the right all those that follow her, and at the left all who remove from her. A religion so clear is very convenient, from the nature of the human mind. With it all must be taken or all left, and a religion sure of itself ought not to proceed otherwise. It is by this clearness, cutting off all access or all retreat to doubt, that men are conducted vigorously and efficaciously. Men desert the path only when the reins float. When they are held up, they advance." (Hist. Jesuitism, Ancien et Modern p. 35, note.) Now we ask the reader to sum up the items specified

and put them under the head of "Divine right"—viz. the right of the pope to select the ministers and co-workers of his apostolate among all the nations of the earth:—the right of the pope, as the supreme judge of controversies and the living rule of faith, to deduce and declare all the doctrines of faith:—the absolute power of the pope to decree all that concerns morals and the discipline of the church, from the holy water to the eucharist. Will the reader now tell us what are the privileges and immunities remaining for the category of ecclesiastical rights? May they not all be summed up in one word, "obedience," and if so, was it worth the while to make a category for the ecclesiastical right to obey?—the right "to be conducted vigorously and efficaciously under a tight rein," as De Pratt has it? Or is the category ideal merely, and designed only to conceal a false definition? Still we are not strenuous upon this point. We will not take it upon us to affirm that there are not many ecclesiastical rights enjoyed by those who admit that they have no right to choose their religious teachers nor any right to think for themselves upon matters of faith, nor to disobey their priesthood in the smallest matter of discipline or ceremony. Yet we confess we should be glad to see them catalogued. But we have supposed these views of the divine right of the Roman Catholic priesthood to be *universally* admitted by our countrymen, and the reader may perhaps be curious to know what changes it would probably work in the exterior of our community, and what effects it would probably produce upon the moral and intellectual condition of our countrymen? To answer this question in detail would require a volume. But it is unnecessary. Like causes every where and always tend to produce the like effects; and the reader may satisfy the inquiry by recurring to the history of times and countries in which this principle of authority was universally admitted. The most valuable lessons in history are those which exhibit the practical results of principles: because results are the best proofs of the necessary tendency of principles.

Nor do we quite like the definitions given us of Natural rights and of Political or Civil rights, although the latter is said to have been taken from a Protestant jurist. Political or civil rights "are said to be that *residuum* of natural liberty which is not required by the laws of society to be sacrificed to public convenience," &c. (ante p. 258.) Natural right is not defined at all, but it is exemplified by an hypothesis, (ante p. 257,) which, in fact, nullifies it, so that really

the whole of natural liberty is necessarily absorbed by the civil or political power the moment a man enters into society, except so much as may be claimed by the priesthood under pretence of divine right. Assuming then these notions of rights and this distribution of them, it depends upon the civil government alone whatever be its form or nature, whether this *residuum* of natural liberty shall be much or little, or nothing, and also whether any, and if any, what civil privileges shall be provided in lieu of those natural liberties given up when a man enters into society. Some of the remarks of Mr. Breckinridge (extracted ante on pp. 260, 261,) are applicable to this view of the subject. He has shown, we think, very clearly that this "residuum of natural liberty," which is said to constitute political or civil rights would be a very variable quantity according to these definitions and this distribution of rights. In connexion with these definitions, we will advert to another idea of the Rev. Mr. Hughes, relative to those rights which the American constitutions denominate imprescriptible, or unalienable, or indefeasible, because the few remaining remarks we have to make, apply equally to the category of constitutional rights as to those of our author.

These imprescriptible rights, he asserts, if we understand him, do not belong to the category of the purely civil and social relations, (ante p. 257,) they "have no reference to the civil or political rights secured by the national instrument in question, but to religious spiritual rights which are to be inviolable." Perhaps we do not perceive the force or the object of this distinction. Is it to exclude these imprescriptible rights from the limits of the question under discussion, by showing that they are a *sort* of rights, of which neither civil or religious liberty can be predicated? Is it intended to argue, that the Roman Catholic religion (though its principles and doctrines should be proved to be destructive of "these natural and imprescriptible rights which lie *aback* of all conventions,") still is not opposed to civil or religious liberty, because these rights do not belong to the category of the civil and social relations, and have no reference to civil or political rights? Was it to prove that the sphere of these imprescriptible rights, though closed to the operation of the majority-principle, is nevertheless the proper province of the self-styled "legitimate successors," appropriated to them by divine appointment? If such be the object of the distinction, and the distinction itself be just, it would indeed

prove, that the introduction of this topic, was an offence against logic, and it would also prove that the question was not propounded in fit terms. But the distinction though subtle is not just. We freely admit that natural and imprescriptible rights are not civil and political rights *in the sense of origination*: and if nothing more than this is meant by the assertion, that they are not of the *purely* civil and social relations, it is not worth the while to dispute the matter. The other proposition of our author, viz. that they "have no reference to the civil or political rights secured by the instruments in question," we cannot agree to. We think they are the *very* rights which those instruments were especially intended to secure. It is idle to dispute about the category to which they would be referred by foreign publicists. In fact we question whether any approved author of continental Europe who wrote before 1776 has any category for them. But it is enough for us that they belong to the categories of the American constitutions. We could more conveniently, even altogether, dispense with authentic categories for our rights than with the rights themselves.

Rights are not called *natural* because they are to be enjoyed in a solitary state. This idea may be according to Gratian and the canonists, but it is purely theoretical. God made man for society, and the rights (aye, the unalienable rights,) with which God has endowed him have respect to his condition in society. It is idle to talk of alienating rights in a solitary state, and it would destroy the sense of the constitution to suppose that by natural or indefeasible rights, such only are intended as must be enjoyed by man as a solitary being. Every man born or coming into society bears with him all his natural and indefeasible rights. It is in society only that they can be infringed. It is in society only, that they need protection; and society is well constituted, only when it provides the protection needed. This is not a mere speculation. The declaration of our independence—the initiatory act of the American government—affirms, that "*to secure these rights governments are instituted among men.*" Now here is a great principle, the developement of which constitutes no small part of *our* political science. If it be a just principle, then we are safe in assuming, not only that men were not born for the purpose of being made the subjects of government, but on the contrary, that governments are instituted for the security and protection of men's unalienable rights, not in a solitary, but social condition. For

surely no man will pretend that a constitution or frame of government is designed "for a man to live by alone, having no connexion with his fellow beings." How then can it be shown that "these (natural and indefeasible or unalienable) rights have no reference to the civil and political rights secured by the national instrument in question?" If this can be shown, it will prove that the end—the chief end,) of the institution of governments is not to secure the unalienable rights of men, which is the very thing which the declaration of our independence affirms. The fact is, the Rev. Mr. Hughes has adopted his notions of rights from European systems of political science, without adverting to the contrarieties between them and the American system. The *point of projection*, (if the expression may be allowed), of the European systems is the throne, and the science of those systems may aptly be described as *the art of governing subjects*. There the problem has been to determine, by what means men may be made to submit to the *maximum* of constraint. In the United States the point of projection is taken upon the natural and indefeasible rights of men, and our political science may be described as the art of preserving the order and peace of society with the least possible government. And the great problem with us has been and now is to determine the *minimum* of constraint upon individual action, consistent with order in society. Now it is obvious, from this contrariety in fundamental principles, that trans-atlantic systems will not furnish us even with safe analogies for the exposition of our own. We may add, that the means suitable to carry out these great and fundamental principles are as opposite as the principles themselves. But this is not the place to enter upon this topic.

Such then being the end for which government is instituted, one object of a constitution is to establish by a superior law a means to regulate the ordinary functions of the body politic, and to control its functionaries. In this respect a constitution may be described as a check or restraint upon the action of the body politic in favour of individual liberty of action. It is the very thing which restrains and directs the majority-principle, and converts it from a destructive into a conservative agency. It says to the body politic, *huc usque venies nec amplius procedes*. It is for the want of such a principle in the British constitution, the parliament is often said (in strong but irreverent language) to be omnipotent. Hence that oppressive legislation, to which the Rev.

Mr. Hughes refers on pp. 273, 276, of the discussion, and of which he complains not without reason. Hence, too, the tyranny exercised in former times under that government towards all non-conformists and dissenters.

If it be said that this is properly *political* liberty, not *civil* liberty—but a means only to preserve civil liberty, we have only to reply, that the distinction can at most prove that the question was not propounded in fit terms: for whether this sort of liberty be properly called *political* or *civil*, it is liberty to be enjoyed in the social condition, and a kind of liberty which it concerns us very much to preserve.

Another remark: The restraining power of a written constitution (such as we have described) can derive its force only from a *social compact*. The constitution itself is in essence a compact. It is often said that the social compact is wholly ideal. This may be true in respect to the governments of Europe, but not in respect of our own. Our constitutions are, so to speak, *civic covenants*, between the citizens individually and between each citizen and his fellows collectively. They are founded in good faith, and require an adoption *ex animo* of the principles and engagements expressed in them. Certainly they were made for social and political benefits, and that is enough for our purpose: for it proves that the difference between the citizens of the United States and the subjects of a monarchical regime in church and state, is not that our countrymen have fewer civil or political rights, but more; not that their social relations are fewer, but less constrained and better protected.

The reader may perhaps suppose we have dwelt too long upon these abstract doctrines concerning rights and liberties. But our authors evidently considered this part of their discussion highly important, and upon no points are they in more decided conflict than upon these. The Rev. Mr. Hughes considers his views of the various and distinct orders of rights so clear that they cannot be denied consistently with sense or reason—that they constitute the pulse of civil and religious organization. We cannot think, however, that a pulse which beats in harmony with such principles could healthfully invigorate a body politic like our own. And we have given some reasons for the opinion. Our liberties certainly cannot be distributed under the categories of the “Natural,” “Divine,” “Political or Civil,” and “Ecclesiastical,” as they have been defined, without mutilation. We invite the reader to pursue the subjects which we have but imper-

fectly sketched. Let him first consider and put down all that is implied in each of these definitions. Let him then consider the general scheme of affairs which these notions of our rights imply. Let him then contrast that scheme, with a form of institutions contrived with a view to the securing of civil and religious liberties, growing out of those rights which our constitutions denominate natural or unalienable and sometimes indefeasible. He will then be prepared to determine the source of these abstract doctrines, and whether they can be received by our citizens without jeopardy of their liberties. The fact is, the happiness, and even the fate of society depend under God, in a great degree, upon the elementary notions which the people entertain touching their social rights and interests and their religious duties. The world has for ages been the victim of false opinions upon government and religion. So long has the mystery of iniquity been at work that it has not only pervaded every department of society, but it has infected even the language of men. It lurks in the elements of thought. It has curiously wrapped up its deceit sometimes in a word, (a technical word perhaps,) or a phrase. Men do not expect to find sophistry within the narrow limits of a single word. Hence the danger. Men are taken unawares, because they do not consider that the current languages of Europe contain no inconsiderable sprinkling of terms which embody not only complex notions, but false notions and false theories. The reader has already had a signal illustration of the mischiefs wrought by the illusion of a word in the history of the crusades (ante p. 253.) The evils physical and moral which have been inflicted upon the world under the false notion of a "Divine right" in an order of men to govern in church or state, are incalculable. We might specify many other words and phrases current in the science of government, as understood and practised abroad, in illustration of our position. But it is not necessary. We will only add, that our countrymen are in greater danger of losing their liberties by fraudulent than by violent means. Our duty therefore as Christians and philanthropists, as well as patriots, requires us to prevent, as far as we can, the undermining of our constitutional edifices by false doctrines, whether they respect philosophy, political science, or religion: for if they fall, our religious liberties, which are inseparable from our civil and political liberties, will perish in a common ruin.

We must now ask the attention of our readers to some of

the specific allegations of the Rev. Mr. Breckinridge—the proofs produced by him, and the answers given by the Rev. Mr. Hughes.

(1.) The doctrine of Baptism. On this subject Mr. B. asserts that the Roman Catholic religion teaches that physical force may be used to compel persons who have been baptized in infancy to lead a Christian life. The proofs which he cites are the decrees and canons of the council of Trent, particularly the 14th canon on baptism, (p. 37.) Mr. Hughes, in his reply, flatly denies it, (pp. 53, 54.) The canon is cited thus: “Whoever shall affirm that when these baptized children *grow up* they are to be asked whether they will confirm the promises made by their godfathers in their name, at their baptism; and that if they say they *will not*, they are to be left to their own *choice*, and not to be *compelled* in the mean time to lead a Christian life, by *any other punishment* than exclusion from the eucharist and the other sacraments, until they repent: let him be accursed.”

Mr. Hughes remarks upon this canon: “The decision of the council of Trent, on the subject of baptism, merely defines, as an article of *Catholic* doctrine, that persons baptized in infancy, are bound to discharge the duties of a Christian life, the same as if they had been baptized in adult age. And that the church has a right to employ *other* means to enforce this obligation, besides ‘exclusion from the eucharist and the other sacraments.’” —“The council asserted the right of the church to employ *other means* besides ‘exclusion from the eucharist and other sacraments;’ and it does not follow, that those other means *must* be ‘physical.’” On p. 66, Mr. B. enters more largely into the exposition of his proof, which leads to a criticism upon the latin word “*co-gendos*.” On p. 84, Mr. H. adverts to the subject again, but relies upon this former argument.

(2.) The second specification of Mr. B. is auricular confession. After stating several propositions from the council of Trent, he remarks: “Now we say this is usurping the peculiar prerogative of God. It is blasphemously setting up a *priest* as *judge* in God’s stead, and *forcing* the poor subject, as the *condition* of *pardon*, to unveil the secrets of the heart *to a priest*, when this is due to God alone! Never, perhaps, was such a device found out to rule with a rod of iron a subject world. No *secrets* from the priests, or *else no salvation!* and that too with the *priest alone!* Hence it is called *auricular*. Think of your daughter, your sister, your wife,

thus secretly opening to a priest alone, all her feelings—on all subjects—as the medium of pardon. Think of the confessor of a prince! think of that great *army of priests*, located all over the world, prying into all the secret thoughts, feelings, acts, intentions, desires, of all their subjects. Think of the *power* it gives. Was there ever such a scheme of espionage; such a system of omnipresent police! Can there be *liberty* under such a *regime*?"

Mr. H. replies (at p. 54) as follows: "Here, again, if the gentleman had stated our doctrine as it is, and saved himself the trouble of *inventing* a creed for us, his apprehensions for the safety of 'civil and religious liberty,' from the dangers of 'confession,' would have dissolved into thin air. The question is not whether our doctrine on this subject is true;—it is enough that Catholics believe it to be so. It is then an article of our faith, that when Christ, speaking to his apostles, said, '*Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained;*' they and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic church, received power to absolve any truly penitent sinner from his sins. God having thus given them the ministry of reconciliation, and made them Christ's legates,* Christ's ministers, and the dispensers of the mysteries of Christ,—and given them promise, that '*whatsoever they should loose on earth, would be loosed in heaven.*'† It is an article of Catholic faith, that whoever comes to them, making a sincere and humble *confession* of his sins, with a *firm purpose of amendment*, and a sincere *resolution of turning from his evil ways*, may, and does, through their *ministry*, receive absolution and release from his sins. It is equally an article of faith, that whoever comes *without* the due preparation—without repentance from the bottom of his heart, and a sincere intention of forsaking his sins, receives no benefit from absolution, but adds sin to sin, by a high contempt of God's mercy, and abuse of the sacraments."

It is but just to say, that this is only a portion of the reply. The same topic is continued in the succeeding argument of Mr. B., and in the reply to it, but we cannot pretend to follow them.

(3.) The next specification concerns the liberty of the press. We give the following extracts from this part of the argument.

* 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

† Matt. xviii. 18.

“Without dwelling,” says Mr. B., “at present upon the other sacraments of the church of Rome, as constructed and administered for the destruction of human liberty, *I draw my next argument from her tyrannical interference with the freedom of the press—of reading, &c.* The freedom of the press has justly been called the palladium of our independence. It is the glory, the pledge, and, under God, one of the chief securities of our liberties. Unlimited freedom of printing and reading has never been permitted by the Roman hierarchy, where she had power to prevent it. Speaking of printing, one has racily said, ‘Hereby tongues are known, knowledge groweth, judgment increaseth, books are dispersed, the Scripture is seen, the doctors be read, stories be opened, times compared, truth discerned, falsehood detected, and with finger pointed, and all through the benefit of printing. Wherefore I suppose, that either *the pope must abolish printing*, or he *must seek a new world to reign over; for else, as this world standeth, printing doubtless will abolish him.*’

“The great council of Lateran, held at Rome, A. D. 1515, under Leo X. session 10th,* thus enacted: “We ordain and decree that *no person shall presume to print, or cause to be printed any book or other writing whatsoever*, either in our city, (Rome,) or in any other cities and dioceses, unless it shall first have been carefully examined, if in this city by our vicar, and the master of the holy palace, or if in other cities and dioceses by the bishops or his deputy, *with the inquisitor of heretical pravity for the diocese*, in which the said impression is about to be made; and unless also it shall have received under their own hand, their written approval given without price, and without delay. Whosoever shall presume to do otherwise, besides the loss of the books, which shall be publicly burned, shall be bound by the sentence of excommunication.’ Caranza, from whom the above is extracted, more wisely than honestly omits several parts of this decree, such as, ‘That the transgressing printer was to pay 200 ducats, to help in building St. Peter’s cathedral at Rome;’ ‘be suspended for a year from his trade,’ &c.

“By authority of the council of Trent, this decretal, and all others of a similar kind, are thus confirmed, viz. Rule I. ‘All books condemned by the supreme pontiffs or general councils, before the year 1515, and not comprised in the pre-

* See Caranza, p. 670.

sent index, are nevertheless to be considered as condemned.' The *creed* also, as adopted by every Roman Catholic, requires all 'to receive undoubtedly all things delivered, defined and declared by the sacred canons and general councils, and particularly by the holy council of Trent.' These decretals, &c. being thus confirmed by the *last* council, stand to this day, and bind every Roman Catholic on earth. That same *last* council, thus sealed with its *last* act the destruction of all liberty of printing, reading, and of thought itself, among all its subjects, viz. 'Concerning the index of books; the most holy council in its second session under our most holy lord Pius IV. entrusted it to certain select fathers, to consider what was needful to be done in the case of divers censures, and books either suspected or pernicious, and then report to the holy council; and having heard now, that their labours are completed, but yet seeing that on account of the variety and number of said books, the holy council cannot minutely, and with convenience, judge in the case; therefore it is decreed, that whatever may be determined by them, shall be laid before the most holy pope of Rome, so that it may be completed, and published according to his judgment and authority.' Here then is the decree of the council sanctioning the acts of the committee and pope."

And again: "Now if this be not restraint of human liberty, I know not what restraint is. Here the conscience, the intellect, and the means of knowledge—printing, selling, circulating, holding, importing, reading books, are, by the decree of an infallible council, and their authorized rules, trampled in the dust."

Mr. H. replies—"The third argument on which the gentleman would make it appear that the doctrines of the Catholic church are opposed to 'civil and religious liberty,' is the *freedom of the press*. Now the freedom of the press is as much a DOCTRINE of the church as Symmes' Theory of the Poles. Hence, the objection on this ground has no force. There is not in the whole creed, a doctrine which forbids me, as a Catholic priest, to advocate the most unbounded freedom of the press.

"If the gentleman knew a little more of the history of printing, as an *art*, it would not be necessary to inform him, that the popes, and cardinals, and bishops were its patrons, and the first use to which it was applied was the publication of the Scriptures. If he will consult the writings on bibliography, of Le Long, or of Clement, a Protestant, he will

discover that there had been published *in the Italian language* alone, forty different editions of the Scriptures, before the first Protestant version of Geneva, which was in 1562. There had been ten editions of the Italian Bible of Malhermi, printed between the years 1471 and 1484. These facts ought to shame the *ignorance*, and silence the *hereditary slanders* of those who, like the gentleman, pretend that printing, and the publication of the Holy Scriptures are against the doctrine of the church. One single Italian city, within thirty years after the invention of the press, and *before Protestantism was born*, publishes the Bible in the Italian language, at the rate of an edition every year, of eight, out of ten years, and yet it is said that this was against the doctrine of the Catholic church, and credulity swallows the falsehood!

“The object of all the regulations made in regard to the printing, publishing, and reading of books, was to preserve the faith of Christ from the admixture of errors, introduced at the apostacy of the 16th century. It was to check the *licentiousness*, not to destroy the *liberty* of printing, publishing, and reading. The church, as the depository of the true doctrines, has a right to condemn and exclude, by the exercise of *spiritual authority*, all heretical and impious books, those of Calvin as well as those of Voltaire. Wherever this right has been maintained by *temporal* penalties, the penalties are for the violation of the laws of the state. The rules of the Index from which the gentleman has multiplied quotations, never took effect, except where the civil power had adopted them. There were many Catholic nations in which they were never published or heard of,—a sufficient proof that they constitute no portion of Catholic doctrine.”

On p. 68 Mr. B. appears again. “In reply to my argument so largely dwelt on, concerning *the freedom of the press, of reading, &c.*, the gentleman says: ‘*Now the freedom of the press is as much a doctrine of the church as Symmes’s Theory of the Poles. Hence the objection on this ground has no force.*’ This is surely an ominous confession! Do her doctrines assert no liberty of thought? Do her Scriptures enjoin no inquiry after the will, and into the word of God? Has she not forbidden, in the manifold citations just given by me from councils and popes, the free printing and reading of books in general, and especially of God’s *holy word*? Does her system hold *no doctrine* which would forbid such tyranny on the soul, and such daring restraint on the Bible? Then does not that *omission*

ruin her system? Or will the gentleman tell me it is only *discipline*? Then can that church regard the rights of God or man, which will tolerate, nay, which will enact and enforce, such *discipline*? and with such temporal and spiritual pains and penalties?—*Impossible!* The gentleman says that ‘*forty editions of the Scripture were published in the Italian language, before the year 1562!*’ Admitting it true, (which however is *not*,) and what then? Does this disprove what the Lateran and Trent councils did, and what a host of popes did against the printing, and reading, and circulating the Bible, and of other books? Bibles were printed—therefore the popes and councils did not oppose reading them! But, sir, here are *decrees* of councils, and bulls of popes! No matter! forty editions of Bibles were printed in Italy before 1562! But, sir, the decrees *forbade* any to print or read *without the pope’s license!* Had the church a right to make such decrees? Oh they were only *discipline!* Then you own that the discipline was wrong, and repressed freedom; and that *no doctrine* of your church forbids such discipline? No! doctrine has nothing to do with it. But what is doctrine? will you please give me an infallible *definition of doctrine?* I find, when you speak of the Presbyterians of Scotland as punishing those who read the prayer book, you consider it *doctrine*. How are similar things in your church only *discipline*? How is it so wrong for Scotch Presbyterians, (as it was I think very wrong,) to hold such a principle as to restrain free inquiry, and yet is *no error* in the church of Rome to do infinitely more, and greatly worse things, *under the same principle?*”

Mr. H. in reply holds the following language, p. 86: “On the discovery of printing as an art, all encouragement was given to it by the dignitaries of the church. It was employed to multiply copies of manuscripts in every department of knowledge. The Holy Scriptures were the first; the Greek and Latin classics, works of science, and elegant literature, followed in order. This undeniable fact is a proof that printing in itself is by no means opposed to the doctrines of the church. But when the press became the *irresponsible agent of mischief* in the hands of wicked men, who employed it to *corrupt* the Scriptures, to *excite the people to sedition*, to *disseminate FALSEHOOD* instead of truth;—the natural law of self-preservation, both in church and state, dictated the necessity of restricting the freedom of the press within such limits as would render it compatible with the

safety of society. The object was to prevent the *abuse* of the press, and protestant, Presbyterian governments were as prompt and as unrelenting in prosecuting this object as Catholic governments.

“The Presbyterian parliament of England, on the 12th of June, 1643, (just two days before the calling of that Westminster Assembly which framed the gentleman’s Confession of Faith,) published an act, commanding ‘*inquiry after private presses, and to search all suspected shops and warehouses for UNLICENSED BOOKS and pamphlets, and to commit offenders against this order to PRISON, to be PUNISHED as the parliament shall direct.*’* Even at this day, Presbyterians hinder, as much as they can, the *reading*, and, if they could, would hinder the printing of Catholic books. The pope, as the chief visible pastor of the Catholic church, *has a right, and it is his duty*, to warn, exhort, entreat the whole flock, and every member of it, against the danger of printing, publishing, selling, circulating, or reading books, calculated to destroy their faith or corrupt their morals; this is a right exercised by every *Presbyterian minister in the country*. The civil restraints and penalties appointed by governments, whether Catholic or Protestant, are chargeable to those governments, and not to the *doctrines* which they profess. The pope has no authority to inflict civil punishments out of his own dominions.”

It is difficult, not to say impossible, adequately to deal with this subject by specifications *alone*, because such a method would, in a great degree, shut out of view the relations of the parts specified, with the general system. Especially would it be difficult to do so under restrictions, which, while they confine inquiry to abstract principles, exclude the only infallible test of their tendency, namely their actual results. But this method was made necessary by the form of the question.

For our own satisfaction we should prefer to commence an investigation with a survey of the system as a whole, and we should like to be allowed the liberty of choosing and of changing the position from which to view it at pleasure, until we should suppose ourselves in possession of all its various, or at least of its most significant aspects. We should like to take a survey of it when in action as well as at rest,—or in other words as portrayed in theory and “according to the order of its constitution,” and as exhibited in its operations upon society.

* Neal, Hist. of Purit. vol. iii. p. 72.

Take for example the *structure* of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church and its monastic appendages, (we say nothing at present of the rights or authorities claimed by it)—does it not look more significantly towards a temporal dominion than towards a spiritual edification? If the reader doubts how this question should be answered, history may aid him. We will show how. The German and French monarchies arose (as the reader probably knows) from the division of the empire of Charlemagne. The German monarchy, after the death of Otho III. in A. D. 1002, became purely elective. Between that time and the Reformation there was a constant struggle between the empire and the church. The popes, intent upon limiting the power of the imperial crown in favour of the church, took part in all the wars. They excited discord among the electors upon the occasions of vacancy in the throne. They roused the people to take up arms. Besides, there were for ages a multitude of petty elective monarchies in the hands of the ecclesiastics, modelled upon the sovereign pontificate at Rome, though comparatively insignificant, for want of the important prerogative of the domination (which that see was allowed) over the consciences of all professing Christianity throughout the world. This prerogative of the Roman see attracted politicians and statesmen to the government of the Roman church. "The popes," says a popular writer, "and the cardinals were neither recluses nor men who had renounced the politics of this world. In fact Rome has shown, in a certain line, an address and a degree of energy which perhaps no other court has equalled." Yet in the number of inferior sovereign prelacies, the tendency of the system is revealed. In Germany alone there were four archbishops sovereigns, twenty-one bishops, twenty-nine abbots or priors, fifteen abbesses, one grand master of the Teutonic order; in all seventy elective royalties reserved for the members of the clergy.

But not to dwell on this idea which is digressive. There are certain pervading principles or doctrines which determine or regulate the systematic action of the whole, and the system itself is better examined and more justly appreciated through one of these principles than in any specific action of a subordinate principle. The system, whatever may be said of its truth, cannot be justly accused of incoherency or *inconsequence*. The whole is fitted together with wonderful congruity and skill. There is a regular dependence and connexion between its doctrines and its practices. We believe

there is no practice or discipline adopted or enforced by that church which does not find its full warrant in some specific (or if not, some general) doctrine or principle. On this ground we do not think it at all necessary to distinguish between doctrine and the approved or customary discipline of the church. It is certainly a *doctrine* that the church may use *discipline*, and it is certainly a *fact* that the church has used discipline of various kinds, and it seems to be a fair inference that the church *doctrinally* approves of the discipline which she customarily has used. The question however which our authors discussed, limits the inquiry to the influence of the principles or doctrines of that church upon civil and religious liberty. We think the restriction ought not to have been made for the reasons given, still so far as *discipline* (either as it respects the kind or severity of it) have been made the subject of doctrine, it is within the terms of the question. We have an instance of this in the bull of Leo X. called *Exsurge Domine* fulminated against Luther. That reformer in his zeal for liberty, maintained that it is contrary to the will of the Spirit to burn heretics in punishment of their heresy, (*Hereticos comburi est contra voluntatem spiritus.*) In this he is supposed to have alluded to John Huss, and Jerome of Prague. This proposition was condemned by the bull of Leo above-mentioned; and whether it be considered a proposition touching the discipline which the church herself may use, or as teaching for doctrine that the civil power may burn heretics for offences against the Catholic faith is not a matter of much consequence.

To the same purpose may be cited the Council of Constance, Sess. 15, against John Huss.

This reformer advanced the following proposition which was condemned by that council as heretical and false. *Doctores parentes, quod aliquis per censuram Ecclesiasticam emendandus, si corrigi noluerit, seculari judicio est tradendus, pro certo sequuntur in hoc, pontifices, scribas et pharisaeos qui Christum, non volentem eis obedire in omnibus, dicentes, nobis non licet interficere quenquam, ipsum seculari judicio tradiderunt; et quod tales sint homicidae graviores quam Pilatus,* (see John 19: 11.) Upon this proposition, and with a view to show its falsity, De Kurtz (*Theologica Sophistica*) remarks: *Coeterum, quod penes Ecclesiam sit potestas clericum excommunicatum, ac in haeresi aliisque criminibus atrocioribus (de quibus videri potest P. Engel de poenis) contumacem ac*

incorrigibilem, praevia solenni degradatione, curiae saeculari tradendi loquuntur omnia jura. Neque per hoc episcopi cooperantur homicidio, prout ultimae particulae innuere videntur; constat enim quod facta traditione saeculari potestati, Ecclesia intercedat, ne mortem patiatur degradatus.

It is then at the least a doctrine of the Roman Catholic church touching heresy, that the secular power may treat it as a capital crime, if the bull of a pope or decree of a council be a proof of doctrine. This will probably be admitted as a proof formally within the terms of the discussion, yet it is not in fact any better than many proofs which might be gathered from the canonists. Eugenius II. instituted *prisons* to coerce the clergy, (Fr. Duaren. De Ecc. Min. lib. 1, c. 4.) Gregory speaks of exile and deportation as allowable punishments, in one of his decretal epistles, (ibid c. 3.) But even excommunication (*αφορισμον και αναθημα*) which Innocent IV. called the nerve of ecclesiastical discipline, was scarcely less severe and peremptory in its effects upon the liberties of men. Its effect was to remove the excommunicate not only from the sacred rites, but from the society of men. In a certain sense he was interdicted the use of fire and water, and it was like the punishment inflicted by the Druids, spoken of by Cæsar, (*de bello Gallico, lib. 6.*) Absolution was in fact re-admission to civil society as well as to communion with the church, and the power thus exercised is said to be the power of the keys—the power of binding and loosing, &c. (Fr. Duaren *ubi sup.*) An ecclesiastical interdict—another species of discipline—differs but little from excommunication as to its effects. By excommunication a man is deprived of the sacraments,—of the divine offices,—of ecclesiastical burial. By a local or personal interdict, he is forbidden to administer the sacraments (during a time at least)—also to celebrate divine services—to give ecclesiastical burial in certain places or to certain persons. But the interdict differs from excommunication in this, that the latter is aimed only *against the guilty*,—the former is directed against an entire community, for the fault of one or more individuals,—as when a kingdom is put under an interdict for the fault of a king,—or a district for the crime of a magistrate,—a church for the disobedience of a bishop or of the clergy,—a village or a family for the excesses of its chief inhabitants or members. It would be difficult to find in the apostolical or even primitive times examples of this kind of discipline, although sub-

sequently it was common enough. And are we to understand that there is no doctrine to warrant these various sorts of discipline? or that the Catholic church does not teach for doctrine that she has the power to use such discipline, and that such discipline is proper in the cases in which the church has customarily used it? In fact what is to be gained by excluding *discipline* from the question, so long as the bull of Leo X. stands, teaching as it does for doctrine the *auto da fe* of heretics?

But although we should not be able to find a bull or brief or decree teaching doctrinally, and with reference to each particular kind of discipline, that it is not contrary to the mind and the will of the Spirit, yet it can be easily shown that her general principles justify all her particular practices, and being so understood, are liable to the objections which might be brought against doctrines which should justify specifically the obnoxious practice.

We can do little more than exemplify what we mean. The church, says Mr. Hughes, is a spiritual commonwealth. As such it has governors or magistrates and has power in the order of its constitution over all persons who are its members, and all things which belong to it for its use. (Discussion, p. 212.)

This is a doctrine of the Roman Catholic church, as appears by a passage on p. 152. "All Catholics hold, as a doctrine, that the church, in as much as it is a visible society, is invested by its Divine author with all powers necessary for its own government; that it has jurisdiction over all its own members; that it has authority to make laws, and require obedience to them; that it has authority to judge in controversies; condemn new doctrines; cast out heretics by excommunication, and do all other things necessary to the purity of doctrine and unity of faith, by the exercise of those spiritual weapons which Jesus Christ bequeathed for her defence, preservation, and government."

The church then is a visible society, organized into a spiritual or ecclesiastical commonwealth, having governors or magistrates, &c., and this is a doctrine of the Roman Catholic church.

Now this may be thought to be merely *figurative* language, but wherever the church has been established by law, these terms have not been received as tropes, nor has the doctrine been so considered in practice. In fact it is the fundamental idea upon which the whole system is constructed,

and from which it borrows its energies. It is a *commonwealth*, and therefore it has power, in the order of its constitution, over its members, and authority to make canons or laws prescribing or changing its modes of discipline. And because the church is an infallible community it cannot be supposed ever to have erred. On this ground—though it may be inexpedient or wrong at the present time to teach all the doctrines inculcated by the bull *Exsurge Domine*—yet it cannot be admitted that it was not infallibly right to teach at the epoch of the Reformation what that bull taught.

But to pursue the idea.—Baptism is the ordinance by which a person becomes a member of the church (which is a spiritual commonwealth). Upon baptism, the recipient of it becomes a *subject (reipublicae Ecclesiasticae)* of this commonwealth, and because he is a subject, he may be compelled to adhere to the Christian faith. If a baptized person departs from the faith, he becomes either an apostate or a heretic. On this ground the council of Trent (Sess. XIV. *de Sacram. poenit.* c. 2) considers the heretic *as a rebel*, because he refuses obedience in the matter of faith and impugns an article of faith, and being *a rebel*, the ecclesiastical commonwealth may proceed against him as an *enemy*.

These are consequences involved in the relation between the baptized person and the church, which is a spiritual commonwealth. The duties created by these relations are summarily as follows:

(1.) He must implicitly believe what the church believes; that is, what the Roman pontiff and the priesthood in communion with him believe: for their faith is the orthodox faith, and the orthodox faith is the foundation of the ecclesiastical republic, consequently impugning this faith tends to the destruction of the ecclesiastical republic—in fact, to the destruction of the Roman Catholic religion itself: for the chief article of that religion is that the church is a republic under the government of priests.

(2.) It is a maxim "*Salus ecclesiae (i. e. reipublicae ecclesiasticae) suprema lex est.*" Hence every thing is just, pious, salutary, which is done for the preservation of the orthodox faith: for the preservation of that is the preservation of the ecclesiastical republic.

(3.) Hence any means adopted to prevent or extirpate heresy and preserve the orthodox faith are proper. On this ground laymen (the subjects of this ecclesiastical commonwealth) may be forbidden to dispute concerning the faith—

to read the sacred scriptures—to read the books of heretics. Hence also the censorship of the press must be submitted to. Hence the *indices* of prohibited books have the obligatory force of laws to them. (The reader will please bear in mind our definition of divine and ecclesiastical rights as we go along, p. 258, ante.)

(4.) Other duties growing out of this relation as taught in canonical jurisprudence are that the members of the church may be compelled, under pain of excommunication to discover and denounce heretics and those who are strongly suspected of heresy, and to bear witness against them. Relationship is no excuse. Persons suspected of heresy are considered as guilty of it, unless they submit to a canonical purgation.

(5.) Bishops are required under severe penalties to find out heretics and proceed against them. In aid of the bishops extraordinary inquisitors are appointed by the pope, to proceed conjunctively with the bishops, or separately from them, against heretics.

(6.) Finally, civil rulers who are members of the church may be required to pursue heretics, with armed force, under pain of excommunication; not that they have power to decide upon such causes, but that they may be required by the bishops and inquisitors promptly to take heretics into custody, and execute the sentences of condemnation *in fidei augmentum*.

(7.) It is a rule, too, that partners in crime may be heard as witnesses *in favorem fidei*; that neither their names nor the names of the accusers shall be made known. The relapsed (that is those that have fallen back to a heresy which they have abjured) are liable to be delivered to the secular arm without a hearing.

(8.) Heretics condemned by an ecclesiastical judge must be delivered to the secular arm—if ecclesiastics they are first degraded. The secular authority is required within six days to bring them to the stake. Their property (unless they have left orthodox children) is to be confiscated. They are to be deprived of ecclesiastical burial, and if interred, they must be *exhumed*.

These then are some of the consequences which flow from the doctrine “that the church is a *commonwealth*, having governors and magistrates and power in the order of its constitution, over all persons who are its members, and all things which belong to it for its use.” This summary is taken from

canonical compilations; but as we could not within a reasonable space extract the text of approved authors, we must refer the reader to treatises upon the canons of that church, and he may select almost any of them at pleasure. But by the *corpus juris canonici* he will be able to verify our statements.

[To be continued.]

ART. III.—*A Recovered Tract of President Davies: now first published.*

IT is seldom that we have it in our power to lay before our readers so interesting a relic, as that which follows. The name of Samuel Davies needs no tribute of mere praise; for he who has it not embalmed in his heart must be devoid of enlightened piety, or ignorant of American annals. But we greatly need, in this and similar cases, access to authentic documents, and ascertained facts. The difficulty of supplying these chasms in our information increases every day. The generation among which ample recollections and traditions concerning the fathers of the American church might have been gained, has departed; and few autographs or other written memoranda are extant. It is therefore with singular pleasure that we rescue from forgetfulness this tract of President Davies, on the Philosophical works of Lord Bolingbroke.

The manuscript from which we print is a copy; bearing every mark, however, of having been made with great care, and about the time of the original composition. For the use of this valuable paper we are indebted, in no common degree, to the Reverend William M. Atkinson, of Virginia, whose name will secure universal credit to the claims of the manuscript.*

* PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA, May 8th, 1837.—In examining the papers of a deceased friend, a few days ago, (thus writes a gentleman of Virginia,) I found the accompanying manuscript. The gentleman to whom the original was sent was probably a Scotch merchant, then residing in this colony. I believe this copy to be in the hand-writing of another merchant, who there lived in this neighbourhood, as many of his descendants still do. The letter was evidently not written for publication; but as Mr. Donald was permitted freely to show it, (which indeed the writer probably desired, as a means of neutralizing the poison of Bolingbroke's infidelity,) it is probable that he permitted his friends to retain copies. I presume this is the only one now in existence; and it appears to me that the force with which it is written, as well as the interest we all feel in the

Our limits and the straitness of our leisure forbid us to enter on such a biographical sketch of Mr. Davies, as we might, under other circumstances, attempt. We have visited the scenes of his labours in Virginia, perused his diary in his own hand-writing, mingled with some of the survivors who bless him as the instrument of their awakening, and conversed with several of his descendants; and we pen these lines in the town, and almost on the spot, whence his sanctified spirit, seventy-six years ago, took its homeward flight, and in view of the quiet burial ground where his ashes rest.

It will be seen from the date annexed, that this letter was written in the thirty-third year of the author's age, and the tenth of his ministry; about two years before his removal to this place, and about four years before his death. This falls therefore within the period of his most active labours in Hanover.

Let the reader observe that these remarks of Mr. Davies were manifestly written without any view to their being printed, and that as addressed to a private friend engaged in mercantile business they called for no special accuracy or polish. Yet, *ex pede Herculem*, we recognise in every paragraph the hand of the graceful, pathetic, awakening and eloquent author, who among American preachers of pure doctrine in powerful and persuasive diction must in our judgment ever hold the first place. It is short; we wish it were in our power to give more; and we here most seriously entreat our friends and patrons, especially in the Synod of Virginia, to seek and preserve, for the coming race, every similar manuscript, though it be but a tattered fragment. Americans have had, beyond all people, the opportunity for perpetuating the monuments of their origin; but we have few Mathers, Farmers, and Spragues, and the feverish haste of our times contemns the sedulous importunity of collectors. Yet we hope it will be adopted as a maxim, and observed with Mohammedan scrupulousness, that no scrip of ancient paper be lost. It is gratifying to see the persistency and success of Mr. Edwards in historical accumulation; while his statistical and alphabetical enumeration of names, ages and classes sometimes excites a smile, "a fellow feeling makes us wondrous kind." *Semel insanivimus omnes*. It is a fault

honoured author, indicate the propriety of snatching it from the oblivion in which it has so long reposed. I think too that there is probably no other periodical, on the pages of which the illustrious Davies, were he now living, would so willingly place it, as on those of the Biblical Repertory.

on virtue's side, and for the behoof of antiquaries, in this age of garbling and falsification, we shall give the letter of Mr. Davies, with the printer's good will, word for word, capital for capital, and point for point, according to our faded copy; only excepting one or two manifest lapses of the copyer's pen.

Remarks on the Philosophical Works of Lord Bolingbroke.

Sir,

I have glanced over the three Volumes of my Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophical Works, which you were pleased to put into my Hands, with an unusual Degree of eager Curiosity. And now, when I have just shut the last Vol. and the Impressions of what I have been reading are fresh upon my Mind, I sit, and pause, and review my Author. I recollect those Remarks which occurred to me, as I went along; and I form some new ones from a Survey of the Whole. These, Sir, I throw upon Paper, to help me at present to digest them, and hereafter to retain them. And I model them into the Form of a Letter to you, that I may make you some little Returns, to whom I am obliged for the Perusal of an Author, who has made so much Noise in the World; and that you may have an opportunity of comparing your own Remarks with mine: for I doubt not but you made your Remarks in reading him.

You know my Circumstances, Sir, so well, that I need not tell you, you cannot expect from so hurried a Mortal, a regular or full Examination of so miscellaneous and voluminous an Author. Expect no more than a few general Remarks, warm from the Brain, and unpolished from the Pen; referring, not to particular Pages, but to the general Character of the Writer, and the general Nature and Drift of his Sentiments and Reasonings, or to that Epitome of his Works, which I have preserved in my Memory.

No Man of taste can read this noble Author, without being pleased with his manly Style, and strong Imagination. His Imagination appeared to me his Characteristic; much superior to the other Faculties of his mind; and at once the Source of his many Beauties as a Writer, and his many Extravagances as a Reasoner.

As a Reasoner, I must place him very low in the learned World. I have hardly ever read an Author, even of the lowest Character, so inconsistent, not only with my Sentiments, which I could easily forgive, but with himself; so full

of right Conclusions from wrong Premises, and wrong Conclusions from right Premises, so apt to imagine strongly, and to miscall it strong Reasoning; so sceptical in the midst of Evidence, and so dogmatical and confident in the absence of Evidence; so apt to mistake his own Importance as the Patron of a Cause, for the Importance and Evidence of the Cause itself, in the View of others. This last, I dare say, you could not but observe. Pray, Sir, have you ever read an Author so full of himself? an Author, that from the Height of Self-Sufficiency, looks down with so much Disdain and sovereign Contempt, upon other Authors, even a Plato, a Clarke, and a Woollaston, as hardly worthy of such an Antagonist? Is this the humble, candid, modest spirit of an impartial Searcher after Truth?

My Lord Bolingbroke was once a Courtier: from him therefore I should expect the utmost Delicacy of Language, and the most consummate Politeness in his Characters. But, amid all the angry Squabbles of Divines, or the Rage of Party-Writers, have you ever seen the Arms of Billingsgate brandished with more Rudeness and Violence? Can you direct me to the Author, where I shall so frequently meet with the Compliments, Madmen, Fools, Knaves, Villains, Enthusiasts, Impostors, and a hideous Group, that would more than fill up the Whole of this Letter?

One would think, from his Lordship's loud and reiterated Clamours, that the Science of Metaphysics is some terrible Thing, the Source of almost all the pernicious Errors that are in the World, and that have debauched all Religion, Revealed and Natural. But will you believe one that has had the Misfortune of learning it? it is as harmless a Science as the Art of Book-keeping. It is no more, nor worse than "*A Science concerning Being in general, and its Properties.*" It teaches you only to rank Being under the various Classes of Body and Spirit, Substance and Accident, Cause and Effect, &c. This, Sir, no more leads us into Mistakes, than your Sorting your Goods in your Store causes you to blunder in retailing them.

All Mankind agree that the Mysteries of Venus require Secresy. But you may remember his Lordship resolves this Affectation of Secresy into the Vanity of human Nature. And it is no forced Consequence, that the Effects of Vanity ought to be reformed. But Modesty will not suffer me to tell you, what would be the Consequence of this Reformation. There may be many Things in his Lordship's Works more

impious and immoral than this: but I have observed nothing in them more indecent, savage and brutal.

The bad Lives of Christians, and especially the Ambition, Avarice and Tyranny of Ecclesiastics under religious Pretences, are favourite Topics with this Author; and upon these he declaims, to the Subversion not only of the Clergy, but of Religion itself. Many of the Facts I acknowledge and lament: though not a few of them are extravagantly exaggerated. But were they all truly represented, they would no more furnish an Argument for his Lordship's Purpose, than general and civil Wars, Tyranny, and the other Mischiefs of a mismanaged Government, for the Subversion of all civil Society, and the Reduction of Mankind into the Anarchy of what is called the State of Nature; or the Dishonesty of Merchants, for an universal Prohibition of Trade.—The grand Question is, Has the Christian Religion this Tendency? This Question his Lordship has repeatedly answered, in Favour of Christianity, though against himself.

His Lordship repeatedly grants, nay, strongly asserts, without an Irony, the Truth of the Christian Religion, at least as taught by Christ himself, and such of the Apostles and Evangelists, as received their Instructions immediately from his Lips. And yet, he as strongly asserts, and labours to prove, that the Jewish Religion, as instituted by Moses, was a gross Imposture; a System of foolish, unjust and sanguinary Laws, unworthy of God, and destructive of the Law of Nature. But need any Man, that has but once read his Bible, be informed, that Christianity is evidently founded upon the Mosaic Institution, and supposes it true? that Christ himself, as well as his Apostles, derives many of the Proofs of his divine Mission from the Old Testament? and consequently, that if the one be an Imposture, the other must be undoubtedly so too? The Art of the most subtle Disputant cannot clear his Lordship from the grossest Inconsistency in this.

But even this is not all. He has strongly asserted, over and over, without the least Appearance of Irony, that he looks upon the Christian Religion as true, and a Revelation from God. And yet the same Man, in the same Philosophical Works, (who would believe it, that has not seen it?) strongly insinuates, over and over, that he looks upon the Christian Religion, as well as the Jewish, to be false, and all Revelation an Imposture. I could easily point out these inconsistent Passages to you; but I doubt not you will be able to recollect them. The boasted Authority, therefore, of this

noble Author, can be of no Service at all to the Patrons of Infidelity; for it is an inconsistent self-subversive Authority; and therefore no Authority at all. He is now a Theist, now a Jew, now an orthodox Christian: and yet in the mean Time, he is none of these, but a down-right Infidel, whose God has neither Justice nor Goodness; whose Soul is as mortal as a Monkey; whose Concerns are under no providential Direction; whose Religion has no Prayer in it. This, he tells you, is his Creed, or rather his Anti-Creed. And whether *Atheist* be not a Name which he may more justly claim, than that of Theist, in which he vainly glories, I leave you to determine.

What is the metaphysical Madness of reasoning *a priori*, about which his Lordship makes such a rude Outcry? It is Nothing worse than this, That, supposing there is a God, he must have such Perfections as are essential to the Idea of such a Being; e. g. He must be eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, perfectly wise, holy, just, and good. What Absurdity is there in this? If I argue *a priori* in other Cases, as, Supposing a good King to exist, he must be just and merciful, because Justice and Mercy are essential to the Idea of a good King, what Absurdity is there in it; any more than if I should argue *a posteriori*, I see he exercises Justice and Mercy, therefore I conclude he is just and merciful?

There is hardly any Thing in the Vols. I have been reading, that I review with more Horror and astonishment, than the Author's Sentiments concerning the moral Perfections of the Deity. Justice in Him, according to his Lordship, may be a very different Thing from our Ideas of Justice, and from what it is in Fact among Men. Justice, as we conceive of it, and as it is a human Virtue, consists in enacting righteous Laws, in dealing with the Subjects according to these Laws, or in dealing with every one according to his Works. But if we can have no Ideas of divine Justice, and if it be quite a different Thing from what bears that Name in the Language of Mortals, then it may be the very Reverse of all this: it may consist in violating the Law of Nature, in enacting iniquitous Laws, in punishing the Innocent and Guilty promiscuously, or in punishing the Righteous, and rewarding Criminals. This may be the Case, for what we know, if we can have no Ideas of divine Justice, or if it be not the same in God, as among Men. But what a horrendous Deity is this, which Bolingbroke sets up at the Head, of the Universe! Is this a proper Object of our Adoration, our Love or Confi-

dence? Can we live resigned under the Administration of such an *Unknown* God? This is not the God of Christians, nor even of Moses and the Jews: for Moses characterizes Him as “a God of Truth, and without Iniquity; just and right is He”—I might easily accommodate these Remarks to Bolingbroke’s Notions of the divine Goodness also.

The only Attributes of the Deity, which his Lordship strongly asserts, are infinite Power and Wisdom. Mere Power, may, perhaps, be conceived without Goodness or Justice: but how Wisdom, infinite Wisdom, can be conceived abstractedly from these moral Attributes, is beyond my Comprehension. Can Wisdom, infinite Wisdom, form the Plan of the moral World, without including the Rules of Goodness and Justice in it? Knowledge or Craft may be, without these moral Attributes: but Wisdom cannot. In short, that Power and Wisdom which his Lordship ascribes to the Deity, seems to be nothing nobler than a good mechanical Genius, or infinite Skill in *World-making*; that is, in forming the vast Machine of the Universe in a *workman-like* Manner. But as for reasonable Creatures, or moral Agents, there was certainly no Wisdom displayed in forming a Constitution by which they should be governed; since a wise Constitution for this End necessarily supposes Goodness and Justice. Indeed, a Supreme Ruler, without these moral Attributes, appears to me much the same with none. Such Theism is only disguised Atheism: and the Disguise is very thin.

This Author asserts a *general* Providence over the World, and its grand Subdivisions into Systems, Planets, Kingdoms, Nations: but he denies a *particular* Providence towards Individuals. But does not a Whole include Parts? And can a general Providence be exercised over the Whole, while the Parts are neglected? Does not Society consist of Individuals? And have not the grand Revolutions that have happened among the Nations of the Earth, been brought about by Means of a few Individuals, sometimes of one or two? How then can Society in general, and those grand Revolutions be under the Management of Providence, if Individuals and particular persons are exempted?

His Lordship’s Reasonings to shake the Belief of a future State of Rewards and Punishments, I must pronounce so weak, that I am afraid Himself rather wished than believed them conclusive. Because Divines have, upon the known Maxims of Justice, inferred a future State of *equal* Retribu-

tions, from the *unequal* promiscuous Distributions of Providence in this; he represents them as arraigning divine Justice, and finding Fault with the Author of Nature on Account of its present Constitution. But is it an Impeachment of divine Justice to assert, that the present Scheme of Things, which is not absolute and final, would not be perfect, if it were considered as absolute and final? that is, if it were considered in a false Light? If we confine the entire Scheme to this World, then these Divines do indeed impiously charge the Supreme Ruler with Injustice. But it is undeniable, that they consider it but as a very small Part of the grand Plan, which takes in the Administration of both Worlds, and extends to the whole Conduct of Providence towards the moral World in all the Periods of its immortal Existence. To say, therefore, that the present Administration is imperfect, if considered separately from the Whole, to which it belongs. And where is the Absurdity or Impiety of this?

Here, I know, his Lordship has a ready Answer, such as it is. "If an unequal Distribution of Good and Evil be consistent with the Divine Attributes for some Time, during the present State, then so it may be always and forever; and consequently there may be no future State at all, to rectify these Irregularities." But may there not be valid Reasons for the Delay of Rewards and Punishments, which yet may not be sufficient for the entire Abolition of them? Will it follow, that Criminals may always pass with Impunity, because they may, for wise Reasons, be spared for a Time? A future State, according to his Lordship, is introduced by metaphysical Theologues, to rectify those Irregularities, that they imagined in this: or that the Deity may make Amends to his Creatures for the Injuries He is now doing them. But is the Delay of Justice, especially towards offenders still in a State of Trial, an Injury? An Injury it would be, were it to be always delayed: but this is contrary to the Hypothesis. The Retributions of the future State are not considered by one Author that ever came under my eye, as Reparations of the Blunders in Government committed in this; but Executions of the divine Law, in *due Season*, which for wise Reasons are now delayed.

His Lordship represents it as the common Creed of Divines and their Followers, That all Degrees of Virtue or Vice, however different, shall be rewarded or punished exactly *alike*, in the World to come. What Umbrage he had for this, I cannot devise, unless it be their believing that the

Rewards and Punishments are equally everlasting. But is Duration the only Standard of Happiness and Misery? Suppose Tortures of the Rack, and the slow Languors of a Hectic Fever, to be of the same Duration, is the Misery, therefore, of the same Degree? Suppose the Happiness of the Deity, and that of the lowest Rank of celestial Spirits, to be equally immortal, may there not be an infinite Difference in Degree, notwithstanding? Besides, his Lordship fights here almost without an Antagonist. The Bible, I am sure, supposes no such Equality of future Rewards and Punishments: nor have I ever met with one Christian Writer, but Camero, of this absurd levelling Opinion. And as to the Opinion of the ancient Stoics, Revelation has nothing to do with it, but to confute it.

On this, as well as upon almost every Thing else, his Lordship reasons very inconsistently with himself. For in order to shew the Injustice of everlasting Rewards and Punishments (he seems to include the one, as well as the other) he argues from the Notions of *human* Justice among men. But he had repeatedly told us, that Divine Justice may be quite another Thing; a Thing of which we can form no Notions at all, derived from that Virtue which bears the same Name among Mortals.

Upon the Whole, I could defie his Lordship's strongest Advocate to point out one Thing offered by his Lordship upon this Head, that has the Appearance of a solid Argument. He declaims, he paints well, he supposes ingeniously, he clamours loudly; and this is all he does. This, and a thousand other Things in these Volumes, convince me, that it takes much less Reason and Evidence to make an Infidel, than a Christian. I am sure, if I had no better Evidence to be a Christian, than his Lordship had to be Something else, I should not be so long.

Upon his Lordship's Harangue to invalidate the Pentateuch, or the Writings of Moses, the following general Remarks occurred to me.

1. The ancient Nations in general had their heroic and fabulous Times, conveyed down to Posterity through the uncertain medium of oral Tradition, and afterwards committed to Writing, at least in Egypt, Greece and Rome, as true History. These traditional Histories tell us strange Things, very unlike the present Course of Nature, of Gods conversing with Men, and of a thousand romantic Miracles. But Fable and Romance do universally owe their Origin to some simi-

lar Facts: and without such Facts in some Instance, there never would have been such fabulous and heroic Times; nor would the Taste of the Ancients have run so much upon the *Marvellous*. The Principle upon which I now reason, is established by Lord Bolingbroke himself, in Favour of the Tradition, "That the World had a Beginning." And where are we so likely to meet with those genuine and authentic Facts, which first gave Umbrage to those fabulous Histories, as in the History of Moses? If there must be true History at the Bottom, where else are we likely to find it?

2. The Romantic Histories of Tradition in other ancient Nations, were calculated to do Honour to those Nations, upon the Score of their Antiquity, the Virtues of their Ancestors, the heroic Exploits of their Founders, &c. This is evidently the Case with Regard to Greece and Rome, with whose History we are best acquainted. But can there be a severer Satire upon the main Body of the Jewish Nation, than we find in the Books of Moses? Can any one that reads them, imagine, they were intended as a Panegyric upon that Nation? He may as well imagine, Tacitus wrote a Panegyric upon them.

3. The Mosaic Law was evidently a burdensome, and expensive Institution. Its various Ablutions and Purgations were very burdensome: its Sacrifices, the Building and Repairing the Tabernacle and Temple, were very expensive. The Sabbatical Year, and the Jubilee, in which they neglected all Labour, and particularly the Culture of their Land, would have brought on a Famine, if they had not been under an extraordinary Providence. Three Times every Year all their Males, their only Militia, repaired to Jerusalem, and left their Country, their Possessions and Families, naked and defenceless; while all the Nations around were at perpetual Hostility with them. To all which, we must add, that the Jews, for many Ages, were not at all fond of their own Law: they were perpetually violating it, by incorporating the Idolatry of the Neighbouring Nations with their Religion; and Nothing but the Destruction of their Church and State, and 70 years Captivity, could cure them of this. Now I appeal to common sense, is it likely, is it credible, is it possible, such a People, in Favour of such a Law, should conspire in a Body, or suffer a few Impostors to conspire to interpolate the writings of Moses, by adding so many astonishing Miracles, to authenticate an Institution so heavy, so disagreeable and unpopular, and bind it the faster upon them? Or if

Moses left no Writings, can it be supposed, that this People, or a part of them, in the Interspace between Moses and David, the Space his Lordship assigns for this Forgery, would conspire to digest this Law into a written System, intermixt with legendary Tales of Miracles to enforce it? The Miracles are of so striking a Nature, that they could not possibly be inserted surreptitiously, without the whole People immediately discovering the Forgery, upon first hearing. If, therefore, it was a Forgery, it must be owing to a voluntary Conspiracy of the whole People, or a voluntary Submission of the Whole to the gross Imposition of some Impudent, I cannot say artful, Men, to enslave their Posterity to an Institution, they were perpetually violating, and which appeared to themselves contrary to their Interest, their Temper, and their Reputation in the World.—Whether there be any Probability, or even Possibility, in this Hypothesis of his Lordship, I may submit to common Sense.

But if the Law of Moses had in Fact such miraculous Attestations, as are recorded in the Writings that bear his Name, I suppose the most Sceptical Unbeliever upon Earth, that acknowledges the Existence of a Deity, will not have the Front to deny or dispute its divine Authority.

I am far from exhausting the Remarks that occur to me in this Review. But my other Studies call me off. What I have written, though with a hasty and negligent Pen, I can venture under your Inspection. And I wish it were worthy of Circulation in the Sphere of your Friends. But as I am sensible it is not, I must request you to communicate it only to such, who, like yourself, will make candid allowances for the Blunders and Inaccuracies of,

Dear Sir,

Your obliged, affectionate,

and most humble Serv't,

SAM'L DAVIES.

Hanover,
April 5, 1757.

MR. DONALD.

As a suitable addition to this interesting document, we submit to our readers a few particulars respecting the venerated author, which seem to be the more appropriate, as we observe with pleasure that there is a demand for authorized statements on this subject, and particularly concerning the descendants of Mr. Davies. The facts now to be presented are furnished by one whose opportunities for satisfactory re-

search have been much greater than those of most ministers now living.

First, as it regards the descendants of this revered man. Mr. Davies married, in Virginia, a lady whose name was Holt. At his decease, his widow returned to her friends. He left three sons, William, Samuel, and John Rodgers, and one daughter. Provision was made for the education of these boys at the college in this town, where two of them, at least, were graduated. William, the oldest, is said to have been a man of extraordinary abilities. The writer has heard men of judgment, who were well acquainted with him, say, that, in powers of intellect, he had no superior in this country. When the war of the revolution began, he entered the army, and before its close, rose to the rank of Colonel. He was, it is said, an excellent tactician, but never distinguished himself in the field. After the close of the war, Col. Davies was occupied in the complicated and arduous work of adjusting the accounts of the States with the General Government. His residence was at Norfolk, in Virginia; but much of his time was necessarily spent in Philadelphia. He sometimes visited Capt. William Craighead, of Lunenburg, Va. who had been one of his father's elders in Hanover; and who was also the intimate friend of Mr. Davies, and in regular correspondence with him after his removal to Princeton. From this gentleman the writer learned that Col. Davies always spoke with high respect of the character and talents of his father; but his own religious opinions seemed to be loose and unsettled. He expressed the opinion that the Presbyterian religion was not well adapted to the mass of mankind, as having too little ceremony and attractiveness; and, on this account, he thought the Romanists possessed a great advantage. He was never connected, so far as is known, with any religious denomination; and, it is probable, did not regularly attend public worship. His death must have occurred before the close of the last century, but in what particular year is not known. He died, however, in the meridian of life.

Samuel Davies, the younger, it is believed, was engaged in some branch of mercantile affairs. His residence was in Petersburg, Virginia, where the writer saw him, as well as Mr. Davies' only daughter, in 1792. He was said, by those who knew his father, to have a considerable personal resemblance to him; but his daughter, as far as the mere countenance is concerned, was said to be the express image of her father. Samuel Davies was an amiable but indolent man.

His success in business was small, and having a rising family of children, he removed to Tennessee, where both he and his sister died, but the date is not known. One of his sons, also named Samuel, returned to Petersburg, and now resides in the vicinity, and is a reputable member of the Presbyterian church in that place. The only child of 'the Rev. Mr. Davies, who is known to have made a public profession of religion, was his daughter. When the writer knew her, she was a member of the church; although, at that time, no Presbyterian church existed in Petersburg. It is probable that she was a member of the church in Hanover, of which her father had been the pastor. This lady was never married.

The third son, John R. Davies, was bred a lawyer, and practised law in the counties of Amelia, Dinwiddie, Prince George, &c. He was a man of good talents, and succeeded well in his profession; but he had some singularities of character, which rendered him unpopular. As to religion, there is reason to fear that he was sceptical, as he never attended public worship, and professed never to have read any of his father's writings. An old lady of the Episcopal church, in Amelia, informed the writer, that he frequented her house, and was sociable, which he was not with many persons. As she had heard his father preach, had derived profit from his ministry, and was fond of his printed sermons, she took the liberty of asking Mr. Davies whether he had ever read these writings. He answered that he had not. At another time she told him that she had one request to make, with which he must not refuse compliance. He promised that he would be ready to perform any thing within his power to oblige her. Her request was that he would seriously peruse the poem which his father wrote on the occasion of his birth. "Madam," said he, "you have imposed on me a hard service." Whether he ever complied with the request is not known. About the year 1799 the writer was in Sussex county, and in the neighbourhood where this gentleman had a plantation, on which he had recently taken up his residence. Those of the vicinity, who professed any religion, were Methodists; their meetings however he never attended, always giving as a reason that he was a Presbyterian. But now a Presbyterian minister had come into the neighbourhood, and was invited to preach in a private house, almost within sight of Mr. Davies; he was informed of the fact, and was earnestly requested to

attend. He declined on one pretext or another; but on being importuned to walk over and hear one of his own ministers, he said, "If my own father was to be the preacher, I would not go." And again, "If Paul was to preach there, I would not attend."

The writer has seen and conversed with three of the elders of Hanover church while Mr. D. was the pastor. Mr. Samuel Morris, who was the reader of the society of dissenters formed before any dissenting minister visited the place;* Dr. Shore, of Newcastle; and Capt. Wm. Craighead, of Lunenburg. The two former were natives of Virginia; the latter was a native of the state of Delaware. He was also well acquainted with Mr. James Hunt, the great grandfather of the Rev. Thos. P. Hunt, who was an older man than any of those above-mentioned, and lived to the unusual age of ninety-two years. This man was one of those who had received serious impressions from books, before any evangelical minister had visited Hanover. His narrative corresponded with that of Samuel Morris, published by Mr. Davies, in his letter to Dr. Bellamy. The same narrative the writer has heard from the mouth of Mr. Morris himself, when far advanced in years, when he visited him in Campbell county, where he ended his days.

The writer having been called to perform a missionary tour, in a part of the country where Mr. D. had bestowed his labours, in his extensive excursions in preaching the gospel; has had the opportunity of learning many facts relative to his success which never could have been known to the preacher himself, as his visits were transient. It was related, among other things, that when, a few years after Mr. Davies' departure, the Baptists spread over Virginia like a torrent, and their converts proceeded to give a public account of their religious awakening and experience, nothing was more common than for a person to begin, by saying, "At such a time and place I heard the Rev. Mr. Davies preach, and had my mind deeply impressed," &c. In these missionary tours, in which he extended his labours to the borders of North Carolina, he generally preached in the woods. And as the people were filled with prejudices against the "New Lights," as the Presbyterians were called, he found it necessary to send forward a messenger to procure a lodging; for there were then in that region no taverns which afforded comfortable enter-

* See Dr. Rice's Virginia Magazine, for 1819, page 117.

tainment. On one occasion, his lodging at the house of a Virginia planter led to the conversion of the man and his wife; and this family became a germ from which an important congregation grew up, which still flourishes. This man possessed much decision of character and great perseverance, which, joined with eminent piety, made him one of the most useful laymen that has ever risen in that part of the church. His wife, who lived to be above ninety years of age, was acknowledged by all to be, indeed, "a mother in Israel." The descendants of this pair are now very numerous and respectable, and most of them useful members of the Presbyterian church.

Another fact of which the writer has indubitable information is, that Mr. Davies, in making his way to visit a little knot of Presbyterians who had settled on the lower edge of Lunenburg, near the North Carolina line, was benighted and lost his way. His companion, guided by a distant light, found a gentleman's house, and obtained permission for Mr. Davies to spend the night. Observing that there were many black servants about the house, he requested the privilege of having them collected, that he might address them on the subject of religion. By means of these religious exercises, this gentleman and his wife became converts, and joined the Presbyterian church.

All persons who ever heard Mr. Davies preach agree in the opinion, that his sermons were the most impressive they ever heard. An old Presbyterian elder of much knowledge and experience, who lived west of the Blue Ridge, told the writer, that when a young man he heard him preach his sermon on "The One Thing needful," on the text, "Martha, Martha," &c., and that the solemnity of his manner in pronouncing the text produced a greater effect on his mind than any sermon he had ever heard.

The religious impressions on the minds of the people under such preaching were frequently attended not only with a copious flow of tears, but with faintings, and trembling. Some person, therefore, under the signature of Artemas, undertook to lampoon Mr. Davies, whom he designated as the "Geneva doctor." The writer of the satire, after giving a distorted account of evangelical doctrines, proceeded to describe, in ludicrous language, some of the bodily effects which accompanied the preaching. Mr. Davies immediately answered "the fool according to his folly," in a piece entitled, "A Pill for Artemas," which evinced the power of his sar-

casin. This piece, the writer has formerly seen, but it is now, probably, out of print.

A few Presbyterians in Lancaster county on the Chesapeake earnestly entreated Mr. Davies to visit them; he did so, and there formed a little church, which afterwards grew to be large and flourishing under the pastoral labours of James Waddel, D. D. By means of his preaching in this place several persons of the first class of society were converted. The enemy here raised up opposition, and some person composed a kind of play intended to ridicule him and his coadjutor, the Rev. John Todd.

With these brief, but we trust not uninteresting notices, we conclude, for the present, our statements concerning this eminently useful minister of Christ.

ART. IV.—*Views in Theology*, by Lyman Beecher, D. D., *President of Lane Theological Seminary*. Published by request of the Synod of Cincinnati. Cincinnati: Truman and Smith. New York: Leavitt, Lord & Co. 1836. pp. 240. 12mo.

IN resuming the examination of Dr. Beecher's *Views*, with the object of discussing his theory of moral agency, we feel that we are undertaking a task of considerable difficulty. It is by no means easy to cull from the mass of heterogeneous and irrelevant matter which he has brought together, a consistent account of his peculiar opinions. When we think we have caught his meaning upon one page, the next is sure to unsettle us. At one time he seems to be contending with the Antinomian fatalist,—at another, with the old-fashioned Calvinist,—and not seldom, as if unable to find other antagonists worthy of his prowess, he is reduced to the necessity of fighting with himself. It might be an amusing, and certainly would be an easy exercise to answer one part of his book by quotations from another. He gives ample evidence of the correctness of the late Dr. Porter's opinion, that Dr. Beecher is no metaphysician. At every step he manifests a most singular incompetency for discussions of this nature. He seldom defines the words or phrases which he employs,—and when he does, it is generally with such want of precision, that he might better have left them undefined. Where we

feel the need of a clear and definite statement of the point in debate, we are treated often to an unmeaning jingle of words; and where we have a right to expect an argument, we have a metaphor unexpectedly played off upon us. Instead of giving us, in a lucid train of consecutive reasoning, a defence of the opinions in debate, he deals out page after page of glowing declamation in proof of positions which no one has ever denied. There may be much good rhetoric in all this, but it is sadly wanting in logic. It might make a deep impression if delivered, *ore rotundo*, before a popular audience, but it will make no converts among those who are accustomed to study the subject of which it treats.

The theory of the will, beyond all other subjects within the range of mental and moral science, demands precision in the use of language. The terms employed, being of necessity those of the fire-side, and the forum, possess many different shades of meaning, and they cannot well serve the purposes of scientific discussion, unless they are first precisely defined, and then used in the single sense attached to them. Without the most scrupulous and vigilant care, any attempt to elucidate this subject can only end in multiplying words without knowledge. Dr. Beecher might have learned an important lesson upon this matter, from an author, of whom he would hardly have spoken as he has done, if he had been familiar with his writings, and from whom we quote therefore the following sentence for his benefit. "Seeing then that truth consisteth in the right ordering of names in our affirmations, a man that seeketh precise truth hath need to remember what every name he uses stands for, and to place it accordingly; or else he will find himself entangled in words, as a bird in lime-twigs."* There are very few authors, who have written extensively upon the abstruse subject of the will, who will not be found occasionally open to censure upon this score, so extremely difficult is it to guard entirely against the snare set for them in the ambiguity of language. But there is a vagueness in the terms and statements of Dr. Beecher, and a looseness in his method of reasoning as well as his phraseology, which are altogether peculiar to himself. This would have been the more surprising to us on account of the seeming consciousness of strength with which he comes forward to grapple with the difficulties of the subject, had we not long since learned to consider a manifestation of

* Hobbes' Treatise on Human Nature.

such confidence no proof of extraordinary fitness for the undertaking. "Settle," he says, "the philosophy of free agency—what are the powers of a free agent,—how they are put together, and how they operate in personal, accountable action,—and controversy among all the friends of Christ will cease. It has often been said that it never can be settled. I believe no such thing. The perplexities of the schoolmen are passing away," &c. It has been said by one who delved much more than we have done, among the tomes of the middle ages, that it was "impossible for any mortal living to tell what a schoolman ever meant by his words;"* but there can hardly be any thing in Duns Scotus or Thomas Aquinas more perplexing than would be the attempt to educe an intelligible meaning from many of Dr. Beecher's sentences. Let the following formal definition be taken for a sample. "By natural inability, I understand *that which* an agent, though ever so willing, cannot do, from defect of capacity." According to this definition the natural inability of a loose and careless thinker would be a compact, well-digested piece of reasoning. The inability is not an attribute of the agent,—it is the thing which he cannot do. And were this mistake rectified, the definition would still be incomplete. It limits natural inability to the want of power which is consequent upon "defect of capacity." But it is obvious that a man, though his eyes should be ever so good, yet if he were deprived of light, would labour under a natural inability of seeing. So far as the applicability of the term natural is concerned, it is a matter of indifference whether the inability result from a defect in the faculties of the agent, or in any of the conditions required by nature for the appropriate exercise of his faculties.

Other instances of a like kind are not wanting. There is a vagueness, remarkable even in Dr. Beecher, attending his use of the terms, cause and effect. The following passage

* We doubt very much the wisdom or justice of sneering by wholesale at the schoolmen. The logical subtleties to which they devoted themselves, though perplexing, yet on this very account sharpened in a high degree their intellect, and quickened their powers of discrimination and argument; and it was the opinion of Leibnitz, frequently avowed, at a time when such an avowal was dangerous to one's reputation and almost to his personal safety, "that there was much gold in the impure mass of scholastic philosophy." This great man often confesses his own obligations to the scholastic writers, and his high estimate of the value of many of their works. It would be a useful undertaking, would some competent scholar, who could gain access to their productions, examine them carefully and gather from them what is worth preserving. We have little doubt that much sterling ore might be dug out from this mine.

furnishes an example. "The supposition of accountability for choice, coerced by a natural necessity, is contrary to the nature of things as God has constituted them. The relation of cause and effect pervades the universe. The natural world is full of it. It is the basis of all science, and of all intellectual operation, with respect to mind. Can the intellect be annihilated, and thinking go on? No more can the power of choice be annihilated, and free agency remain." The power of choice, or, in other words, the faculty usually denominated the will, is certainly requisite to free agency. This we suppose no one has ever denied, since no definition of free agency can be given which does not virtually imply the existence of a will in the agent. But it is certainly a very strange use of the words to call the will, a cause, and free agency, its effect; and the analogical argument founded on this assumed relation is most lame and impotent. Dr. Beecher however is so partial to this analogy that he introduces it again under a subsequent head of argument. "The supposition," he says, "of continued responsibility, after all the powers of causation are gone, is contrary to the common sense, and intuitive perception of all mankind. On the subject of moral obligation all men can see and do see that there can be no effect without a cause. That nothing cannot produce something is an intuitive perception, and you cannot help it. This is the basis of that illustrious demonstration by which we prove the being of a God." Though this passage occurs within a page of the one last quoted, it will be observed that the application of the analogy of material causes and effects has been changed within this brief compass. In the first, the effect was free agency,—here it is responsibility or moral obligation. There is still another passage in which he says, "Material causes, while upheld by heaven, are adequate to their proper effects; and the mind of man, though fallen, is, while upheld, a cause sufficient, in respect to the possibility of obedience, to create infinite obligation." Respect for Dr. Beecher restrains us from employing the only becoming and adequate mode of exposing such argumentation as this. It is impossible to enter upon a serious refutation of the analogy assumed in these extracts; or to undertake, with a grave face, to prove that the will, or the mind of man, does not stand in the relation of a cause to free agency, responsibility, the possibility of obedience, or infinite obligation. These latter terms characterize abstract properties or relations which are not the object of power, and would not therefore

be termed *effects* by any one who was at all attentive "to the right ordering of names." Such reasoning might be tolerated in a public oration before a promiscuous audience,—it might be overlooked in a popular sermon,—but it must leave its disparaging mark upon one who employs it in a set exposition of the subject of free agency, cleared of the perplexities of fog and mist in which the schoolmen have involved it. No one who reads the extracts we have given, or still less if he reads the treatise from which they are taken, will wonder that Dr. Beecher should have felt it necessary to inform Dr. Porter, and through him the public at large, that his method of philosophizing was the Baconian.*

There is another case of the perversion of terms in Dr. Beecher's work more serious than those we have quoted, because it has betrayed him into some erroneous opinions. The phrases natural ability and moral ability have been for many years currently employed in discussions upon the subject of the will and free agency. Their meaning has been well defined by long usage, and Dr. Beecher professes to use them in their common acceptation. We have given his own definition of natural inability. He subsequently gives, with approbation, as coincident with his own, the definitions of President Edwards. "We are said to be naturally unable to do a thing which we cannot do if we will, because what is commonly called nature does not allow of it. Moral inability is the want of inclination, or a contrary inclination." The correlate phrases, natural and moral ability, will of course denote, the one, the ability which results from the possession of physical powers and opportunities; the other, that which

* See Dr. Beecher's published letter to Dr. Porter. In this letter he gives this truly original definition of Philosophy. "Philosophy is *the nature* which God has given to things, to mind and to matter; with the laws of their operation." He subsequently adds, "If I understand my own mode of philosophizing, it is the Baconian;—facts and the Bible are the extent of my philosophy." The latter part of this sentence is somewhat obscure. He can hardly mean that his philosophy embraces only the knowledge of facts and of the Bible, without regard to the disposition of his knowledge in systematic order. We suppose he intended to inform us that he applied to facts and to the Bible, the principles of the Baconian philosophy. We have once before, in a single instance, met with the notion of improving theological science, by applying to the Bible the principles and methods of the inductive philosophy. About as fitly might one talk of getting a purer system of truth from the Bible, by applying to it the new method of boring for water. It is to be wished that Bacon were more read or less talked about. His name is getting to be such a perfect stalking horse for pretenders to ride upon, that it is now almost a suspicious circumstance to be caught making any use of it.

arises from inclination or disposition. But Dr. Beecher applies these terms to the will itself, as well as to the agent. He speaks of the "natural inability of the will," "the natural power of choice," "the natural power of the will," &c. Had he paused a moment upon these phrases, he must have felt that they were destitute of meaning. Their absurdity is at once made apparent by substituting the word will in the definition which Dr. Beecher himself gives. It would run thus, 'By the natural inability (of the will), I understand that which the will, though ever so willing, cannot do, from defect of capacity,' that is, in this case, from defect of will. As it is important to get light upon these phrases, if any can be had, we will try whether the definition which he has adopted from Edwards can help us to see what is meant by the natural inability of the will. 'The will is said to be naturally unable to do a thing which it cannot do if it will, because what is commonly called nature does not allow of it.' Now as the question is only about acts of the will, and it is very plain that if a thing is willed, it is willed, the only hindrance which nature can interpose here must be by the destruction of the will itself. To assert then that a man labours under a natural inability of will, must mean that he is altogether destitute of this faculty. It is, in like manner, apparent that the moral inability of the will, must mean the want of will in the will, or rather that it has no intelligible meaning whatever.

It would be difficult too to tell what can be meant by the following remark. "The will is under no such necessity as destroys its own power of choice." We do not recollect that Dr. Beecher has defined the sense in which he uses the word will. He seems, however, usually to employ it in its common acceptation, as denoting, according to Locke, "the power or ability to prefer or choose," or, in the language of Edwards, "that power or principle of mind by which it is capable of choosing." What then can be intended by "the will's own power of choice," that is, by the power of choice possessed by the mind's power of choice? When we assert that an agent, in order to be accountable, must possess the power of choice, the assertion is both intelligible and true. It means that the agent in question must possess the faculty of will. But that "the will is under no such necessity as destroys its power of choice" can convey no meaning beyond what is involved in the identical proposition that the will is no longer the will after it has been destroyed. These in-

stances will show how easy it is, in the discussion of this subject, to slide from the clear to the obscure, from the significant to the unmeaning; and the knowledge of this danger to which he is exposed should admonish every one who undertakes the discussion, to employ all possible precaution and vigilance. Better far the endless niceties of the scholastic distinctions, than this vague, slipshod use of terms.*

Other passages might be produced which are open to censure of a somewhat lighter kind, as manifesting an undue predominance of the imagination over the reason—passages in which the objectionable phrases cannot, in strictness of speech, be pronounced absurd, but nevertheless are so vague or hyperbolical as to be exceedingly out of place in a treatise of this kind. We quote the following specimen. "There must exist the power of intellect, perception, comparison, judgment, conscience, will, affections, taste, memory, the discursive power of thought, the semi-omnipotence of volition, and those exercises of soul which constitute personal excellence, and inspire affection." We have here, among the attributes of a moral agent, the power of intellect, and then again, the discursive power of thought; the will is not enough,—he must have in addition, the semi-omnipotence of volition; affections are needed, and then besides these, the exercises of soul which constitute personal excellence. One set of these phrases might surely have been spared. But Dr. Beecher is seldom satisfied with the simple, quiet statement of a truth. The boisterous exaggerations of oratory delight him far more. 'The semi-omnipotence of volition,' one would think could hardly be beaten. But the following sentence may at least contest the palm with it. "The will of man is stronger than any thing in the universe, except the Almighty God." We thought Dr. Taylor had gone quite far enough in characterizing the will as a "giant rebel," but he is fairly outdone by Dr. Beecher. No one has ever given an intelligible account of any active power that man can exert, save to move the muscles of his body,

* We refer Dr. Beecher to the author whose method of philosophizing he thinks he has adopted, for the following weighty sentences. "Itaque mala et inepta verborum impositio, miris modis intellectum obsidit." "Sed verba plane vim faciunt intellectui, et omnia turbant." *Nov. Organ.* Aph. 43. He will find too this instructive caution in the same author's Proficiency and Advancement of Learning. "Here therefore is the first distemper of learning, when men study words and not matter.—It seems to me that Pygmalion's frenzy is a good emblem of this fault; for words are but the images of matter; and except they have life of reason and invention, to fall in love with them, is all one as to fall in love with a picture."

or to direct the attention of his mind, and that only within certain limits. This beggarly power is strangely glorified when clothed in the princely habiliments of semi-omnipotence, and strength inferior only to the Almighty God.

The method of argument pursued by Dr. Beecher, as might have been expected from the looseness of his phraseology, is incoherent, diffuse, and often self-contradictory. One of his heads of argument, in defence of his theory of moral agency, is the following. "That man possesses, since the fall, the powers of agency requisite to obligation, on the ground of possibility of obedience, is a matter of notoriety." It would be easy to point out a defect of precision in this sentence, but it is not for that purpose we have quoted it. It asserts that the truth of his own opinions on the subject of man's moral agency is a matter of notoriety. Then surely he might have spared himself the trouble of filling the hundred pages which follow. For evidence of its loose and declamatory style of argument, we must refer our readers to the book itself. They cannot open it amiss. We might almost say the same of its inconsistencies. We select at random an instance or two, illustrating the latter feature. The author repeatedly denies that motives are, properly speaking, causes of volition,—they are the ground, occasion, or reason, but not the cause. This is urged most strenuously. But in discussing the question whether the word of God is employed as the instrument in regeneration as well as in conversion, he has the following argument. "But why should the efficiency of God defraud the word of its alleged instrumentality, or the instrumentality of the word exclude the power of God? Is the union of both impossible? It cannot be impossible, because, unquestionably, in the government of the natural world, God's almightiness is associated with the instrumentality of natural causes, and may be just as possibly, if God pleases, in the moral world, associated with the instrumentality of moral causes." We do not intend to dispute the truth of the opinion advocated in this passage; we wish simply to call attention to the argument employed. Why is the joint efficiency of motives and of the power of God possible, in the production of a given effect upon the mind? Because in the natural world the power of God acts in conjunction with natural causes. Here the author assumes that a motive is a cause, or at least so near akin to one, that an argument may be founded on the similarity in their mode of operation,—a notion that he has been most vigorously combating all along through the previous

pages. Another example in the same kind will suffice for the present. In his defence of the natural ability of man, we find the following observations. "Accountability for personal transgression does require some ability to refuse the evil and choose the good. There must be the faculties and powers of a free agent, bearing the relation of possibility to right action. Faculties that can do nothing, and powers that have no relation of a cause to its effect, in possible action, are nonentities." Again, he asks, "Do the requisitions of law continue, when all the necessary antecedents to obedience are destroyed? Has God required effects without a cause?" There is much more to the same effect. The ability to choose right is continually represented as a cause, of which the effect is variously stated to be the possibility of a right choice, or right choice itself. This power is magnified and exalted. It is made the basis of God's moral government, the essential element of man's accountableness. Let the reader peruse again the extracts we have just given, and then look at the following sop which Dr. Beecher throws to the Cerberus of orthodoxy, when he comes to discuss the subject of original sin. "The thing to be accounted for is the phenomenon of an entire series of universal actual sin; and to ascribe the universal and entire obliquity of the human will to the simple *ability of choosing wrong*, is to ascribe the moral obliquity of a lost world to *nothing*." It is certainly impossible for a man, who has only the ordinary powers of vision, to see how the ability to choose wrong can be a mere nothing, while the ability to choose right is every thing. If one of these species of ability be not a sufficient cause, ground, or reason, determining the mind to a particular kind of action, then the other cannot be; and not having the relation of a cause to its effect, it is, according to the previous account of the matter, a nonentity. Such are the mistakes and contradictions into which the rhetorician falls when he undertakes to deal with the niceties of logical reasoning. As an orator, Dr. Beecher has few equals. He excels greatly in popular appeals from the pulpit, the platform, and the press. He has uncommon powers of imagination, and great facility in gathering from all quarters luminous illustrations and bold imagery, to give to the truth a visible and substantial form. His stirring notes have often reached and aroused us, and, on fitting occasions, there is no one whose white plume we would more willingly see leading the van. But he mistakes his calling, and therefore forfeits our confidence

in him as a guide, when he attempts to unravel the difficulties of that department of theology which is intersected by metaphysical science. The same qualities which raise him to pre-eminent excellence in his appropriate sphere, operate rather as a disqualification here. The orator is not called upon to use his words in a steady and determinate sense, approaching the fixed precision of mathematical terms, nor is it necessary that all his arguments be such as would bear the test of severe scrutiny. An analogy will often be as good as an argument, and a well-timed metaphor better than either. The rigorous exactness which scientific investigation demands, the cold prudence with which it rejects every thing that is not strictly allied to the subject in hand, and the severe restraint which it imposes upon the imagination in its grasping after such sensible forms as may materialize the truth, are not likely to be learned in the school of oratory.

The extracts which we have as yet brought forward from Dr. Beecher's *Views* have been adduced mainly with the view of illustrating the difficulties which must be encountered in the attempt to discover what are the opinions which he really intends to avow and defend. We have laboriously endeavoured to understand his drift; we are conscious of an honest purpose; and if the common cry of misapprehension shall be raised, we think Dr. Beecher's obscurity ought at least to divide the blame with our dulness.

To a cursory reader it might seem that Dr. Beecher means to inculcate nothing more than the common doctrine of man's natural ability. To all that he says which is strictly applicable as a defence of this doctrine we have nothing to object. There is a clear and important distinction between the inability which results from the defect of natural faculties, and that which arises from the want of inclination. According to the intuitive judgment of all men an inability of the former kind absolves from all accountableness and guilt. No man can be under an obligation to perform any action which, though he will to do it, is yet impossible of execution. There cannot be any difference of opinion on this point, where the terms which enter into the discussion are properly understood. It will accordingly be found that in nearly all cases, where the natural ability of man for the performance of his duty, is denied, there is a misapprehension of what is really meant by this form of statement; or else the objector intends merely to deny the suitableness of the language to express the thing signified. It cannot be disputed that man

possesses all the faculties which are necessary to constitute him a free moral agent. But it may be disputed, and with considerable show of reason, whether the mere possession of these faculties can be said, in strictness of speech, to confer upon him the ability to change the moral state of his heart, and perform the spiritual duties required of him by his Maker. The sole question here is respecting the fitness of the term ability in this connection. This word, in its ordinary use, always bears a reference to actual results. A machine is able to do only what it actually will do, if it be set in motion, and in forming our estimate of its power we are guided by our observation of its effects when in operation, or by our knowledge of what has been produced heretofore by such combinations as enter into its structure. Man it is true is not a machine, nor is he compelled like inanimate matter to exert at every instant all the power which he possesses. But while it would not be safe, on this account, to infer that an individual had, in any particular instance, put forth his whole ability, we should follow only our usual rule of judgment in declaring that man is unable to do that which no one of the human race, however favourably situated, ever has performed, and which it is admitted no one ever will perform. If another power, in addition to man's natural ability, is always concerned in his regeneration and conversion, we may safely infer that this further power is necessary to the production of the effect. And it is an obvious impropriety to call that an ability to do a given thing, which yet requires an additional power to be combined with it to render it efficient in the production of its result.* While we fully adopt, therefore,

* It is singular to observe how absurdities and errors that have been reasoned or laughed out of existence in one age are revived in another. Much of the fine satire of Pascal has as keen an edge for existing follies, as it had for those against which it was originally aimed. We quote the following detached passages, and would recommend the reader to turn to his Provincial Letters, and read all that he has written on the subject of efficacious grace.

"My good friend the Jansenist seemed pleased with my remarks and thought he had already gained me. He said nothing to me however, but turning to the Father, 'Pray,' said he, 'in what respects do you agree with the Jesuits?' He replied, 'In this, that we both acknowledge that sufficient grace is given to all men.' 'But,' returned he, 'there are two things in the term sufficient grace; the sound, which is mere air, and the sense, which is real and significant. So that when you avow an agreement with the Jesuits in the *word*, but oppose them in the *sense*, it is obvious that you disagree with them in the essential matter, though you accord in the term. Is this acting with openness and sincerity?' 'But,' said the good man, 'what cause of complaint have you, since we deceive no one by this mode of speaking? for in our schools we publicly declare that we understand the expression in a sense quite opposite to the Jesuits.'

the opinions of President Edwards upon this subject, we cannot but consider his phraseology as eminently unhappy. However guarded and explained, it is still calculated to mislead. We need not go farther for proof of its unhappy tendency than to the writings of Dr. Beecher. In his Sermon on Dependence and Free Agency he says, "the moment the ability of obedience ceases, the commission of sin becomes impossible." It will be observed that the ability which is here said to be essential to the commission of sin, is not

'I complain,' said my friend, 'that you do not declare to all the world, that by *sufficient grace*, you mean a grace which is not *sufficient*. Having changed the signification of the usual terms in religion, you are obliged in conscience to declare, that when you admit of sufficient grace in all men, you really intend that they have *not* sufficient grace.'

"Christians inquire of divines, what is the real condition of human nature since the fall? St. Augustin and his disciples reply, that it does not possess sufficient grace, unless it pleases God to bestow it. The Jesuits come forward and assert that all do absolutely possess it. Consult the Dominicans upon this contradictory representation, and what is the consequence? They coalesce with the Jesuits. By this artifice their numbers appear so considerable. They divide from those who deny sufficient grace, and declare that all men have it; and who would imagine otherwise than that they sanction the Jesuits? When, lo! they proceed to intimate that the *sufficient* grace is useless, without the *efficacious*, which is not bestowed upon all men!

"Shall I present you with a picture of the church amidst these different sentiments? I consider it like a man who, leaving his native country to travel abroad is met by robbers who wound him so severely that they leave him half dead. He sends for three physicians resident in the neighbourhood. The first, after probing his wounds, pronounces them to be mortal, assuring him that God alone can restore him; the second, wishing to flatter him, declares he has sufficient strength to reach home, and insulting the first for opposing his opinion, threatens to be the ruin of him. The unfortunate patient, in this doubtful condition, as soon as he perceives the approach of the third, stretches out his hands to welcome him who is to decide the dispute. This physician, upon examining his wounds, and ascertaining the opinions already given, coincides with the second, and these coalesce against the first to turn him out with contempt; and they now form the strongest party. The patient infers from this proceeding, that the third physician agrees with the second, and upon putting the question, he assures him most positively that his strength is sufficient for the proposed journey. The wounded man, however, expatiating upon his weakness, asks upon what he founds his opinion? 'Why, you have still got legs, and legs are the means which, according to the constitution of nature, are sufficient for the purpose of walking.' 'Very true,' replies the wounded traveller; 'but have I all the strength which is requisite for making use of them: for really they seem useless to me in my present languishing condition?' 'Certainly they are,' returns the physician, 'and you never will be able to walk unless God vouchsafes some extraordinary assistance to sustain and guide you.' 'What then,' says the infirm man, 'have not I sufficient strength in myself to be fully able to walk?' 'O no, far, very far from it.' 'Then you have a different opinion from your friend respecting my real condition.' 'I candidly admit, I have.'

"What do you suppose the wounded man would say to this? He com-

qualified by the epithet natural. The declaration is as broad as it could be made; and it seems to us impossible to pen a sentence which would more palpably conflict with the plain language of the Scriptures upon this subject, or more directly tend to absolve the sinner from the terrors of an evil conscience. Every sinner knows that his ability to obey, using these words according to their ordinary meaning, is lessened by every sin that he commits. The more profligate he becomes, the less able is he to rise from the depths into which he has sunk. How comforting to him to hear that as his ability is thus diminishing, his sins are becoming less criminal, and that when he has become so depraved that he can no more recover himself than the Ethiopian can change his skin, then he can no longer commit sin! Dr. Beecher would of course explain by saying that he meant only natural ability. But the sentence as it now stands is at least ambiguous, and in one of its senses, and that one in perfect accordance with the ordinary use of language, it is untrue and dangerous. It is no small objection to the use of the phrase, natural ability, that such a man as Dr. Beecher should have been led by it to preach in a style so well adapted to lead his hearers into serious error. In the same Sermon we find the following still more alarming sentence. "And most blessed and glorious, I am confident, will be the result when her ministry every where shall rightly understand and teach, and their hearers shall universally admit the *full ability* of every sinner to comply with the terms of salvation." Could Edwards have foreseen that such a declaration as this would have grown out of the phraseology which he cast around this subject, he would surely have paused and sought some less beguiling words. But he could not have anticipated that from his effort to overthrow Arminianism there would arise the very error he was combating, or something worse. Had

plaints of their strange proceeding, and of the ambiguous language of this third physician. He censures him for coalescing with the second, when he was in fact of a contrary opinion, though they agreed in appearance and for driving away the first with whom he really coincided; and then, after trying his strength, and finding by experience the truth of his weakness, he dismisses them both; and recalling the first puts himself under his care, follows his advice, and prays to God for the strength which he confesses he needs. His petitions are heard, and he ultimately returns home in peace.' "

Has not the time nearly or quite arrived in our church, when sober argument having accomplished all that it can do, the pen of satire becomes a legitimate and effective weapon! Is there not some Pascal among us, who will come forth to castigate the follies of the day?

it been Dr. Beecher's intention to announce the opinion commonly held by Pelagians respecting man's ability, could he have taught it except in words of equivalent import with those in the passage above quoted? Would not the "full ability of every sinner to comply with the terms of salvation," be naturally understood to mean all ability of whatever kind that is necessary to the end in view? And if the sinner has within himself all the ability that is requisite, with what propriety can it be said that the influence of the Spirit is necessary? We quote another passage to the same effect from Dr. Beecher's Sermon on the Faith once delivered to the saints. "Men are free agents, possessed of such faculties, and placed in such circumstances, as render it *practicable* for them to do whatever God requires." It will be seen that the same doctrine of plenary ability is here taught, though in a somewhat stronger form. Without attempting to define the precise difference between the two words, practicable and possible, it will be admitted that the former conveys a lower idea of the difficulty to be overcome than the latter. No aid is ever deemed necessary to enable a man to accomplish a practicable enterprise. And if it is practicable for man to do all that God requires, then is he cast upon his own resources, independent of any help from without. Will Dr. Beecher reply that the influences of the Spirit are necessary not to make him able, but to render him willing? We reply that if they are in any sense, or for any reason, necessary, it is a gross perversion of language to say that the work, for the accomplishment of which they are necessary, is practicable without them. And besides this, the sinner's willingness constitutes the chief element in the practicableness of his duty. These extracts from Dr. Beecher's sermons show that he has given sufficient reason for ranking him with the modern improvers of the Edwardean theory of natural and moral ability. The characteristic mark of these improvers is that they reject, as Dr. Beecher does, the terms natural and moral, and assert without qualification that man possesses all the ability which is requisite for discharging the duties required of him. We have never heard from any of them stronger statements on this point than those we have quoted from Dr. Beecher; and if he contends that he meant to teach only the natural ability of the sinner, we take the liberty of exhorting him to be, in future, less reckless in his use of words.

If further proof is wanted that the doctrine taught by Dr.

Beecher in these extracts from his sermons is not the natural ability of the New England theologians, it may easily be furnished from the writings of Edwards. Dr. Beecher teaches that the sinner must possess "full ability" to do all his duty, so that if there be any thing which he has not sufficient power to perform, he cannot be under any obligation to do it. Full ability, commensurate with requirement, he represents as the only equitable foundation of God's moral government. How wide this is from the notions of Edwards on natural ability, may be inferred from the following passage, which is found in his work on Original Sin, in the course of his argument against the Pelagian opinions of Dr. Taylor, of Norwich. "It will follow on our author's principles, not only with respect to infants, but even adult persons, that redemption is needless, and Christ is dead in vain. Not only is there no need of Christ's redemption in order to deliverance from any consequences of Adam's sin, but also in order to perfect freedom from personal sin and all its evil consequences. For God has made other sufficient provision for that, viz. *a sufficient power and ability in all mankind to do all their duty, and wholly to avoid sin.* Yea, he insists upon it, that when 'men have not sufficient *power* to do their duty, they have *no* duty to do. We may safely and assuredly conclude (says he) that mankind in all parts of the world, have sufficient power to do the duty which God requires of them; and that he requires of them no more than they have sufficient powers to do.' And in another place, 'God has given powers equal to the duty which he expects.' These things fully imply, that men have, in their own natural ability, sufficient means to avoid sin, and to be perfectly free from it. And if the means are *sufficient*, then is there no need of *more*, and therefore there is no need of Christ's dying in order to it."*

The principles of the celebrated champion of Pelagianism, which are here controverted, are precisely those of Dr. Beecher. We can conceive of no jugglery upon his words which can possibly separate between them. And so far are these doctrines from being coincident with the views of Edwards, that he rejects them with abhorrence, as tending to make the death of Christ of none effect. And yet these are the doctrines for which the sanction of his venerable name is now invoked!

A careful examination of Dr. Beecher's Views will make

* Edwards' Works, vol. ii. p. 515.

it evident that he still teaches a different doctrine from what is commonly understood by man's natural ability. While his professed object is to defend this doctrine, he slips in some important additions of his own. At the very outset of his discussion, in stating the question at issue, he places himself in direct opposition to Edwards. "The point at issue," he says, "is, *in what manner* the certainty of the continuous wrong action of the mind comes to pass? Does it come to pass coerced or uncoerced by necessity? Does fallen man choose, under the influence of such a constitution of body and mind and motive, that every volition bears the relation of an effect to a natural and necessary cause, rendering any other choice than the one which comes to pass impossible, under existing circumstances?" Again he says, "The question of free-will is not whether man *chooses*—this is notorious, none deny it—but whether his choice is free, as opposed to a fatal necessity." He contends throughout, that in order to ascertain whether man is a free agent, we must inquire into the causes of his volitions, and see whether they are necessary in their operation; and that to render him accountable it is not sufficient that his actions are voluntary—his will also must be free. Let us compare this notion of freedom with that given by Edwards. "But one thing more I would observe concerning what is vulgarly called *Liberty*; namely, that power and opportunity to do and conduct as he will, is all that is meant by it; without taking into the meaning of the word any thing of the *cause* of that choice: or at all considering how the person came to have such a volition; whether it was caused by some external motive or internal habitual bias; whether it was determined by some internal antecedent volition, or whether it happened without a cause; whether it was necessarily connected with something foregoing, or not connected. Let the person come by his choice any how, yet, if he is able, and there is nothing in the way to hinder his pursuing and executing his will, the man is perfectly free, according to the primary and common notion of freedom."* "Liberty is the power, opportunity, or advantage that any one has of doing as he pleases, or conducting himself in any respect according to his pleasure, *without considering how his pleasure comes to be as it is.*"† The ground of blameworthiness too, as stated by Edwards, is essentially different from that given by Dr. Beecher. The latter requires, in

* Freedom of the Will, p. 39.

† Ibid, p. 291.

addition to voluntariness, that the agent should possess the power of controlling his own choice. But Edwards says, "The idea which the common people through all ages and nations have of faultiness, I suppose to be plainly this; a person being or doing wrong, with his own will and pleasure,"—he adds, "and this is the sum total of the matter."

A few more extracts from Dr. Beecher will show that he advocates, sometimes at least, a theory very different from that of Edwards and of Calvinistic writers in general, respecting natural ability. "Choice," he says, "in its very nature, implies the possibility of a different or contrary election to that which is made. There is always an alternative to that which the mind decides on, with the conscious power of choosing either." He states the question in debate respecting man's freedom to be, "whether it (his choice) is the act of an agent who might have abstained from the choice he made, and made one which he did not." He speaks very often of the necessity that man should possess what he calls the power of choice, with the power of contrary choice, in order to constitute him a responsible agent. "But if any man does not possess the power of choice, with power to the contrary, he sees and feels that he is not to blame; and you cannot, with more infallible certainty make men believe and fix them in the belief that they are not responsible, than to teach them that they have not the power of alternative election." Speaking of a man committing some sin, he asks, "When he has done it, does he not know, does he not feel, that he could have chosen the other way?" He affirms that man's "obligation to choose good and refuse the evil, originates in his constitutional power of choice, with power of contrary choice." He contends that the supposition, "that man after all is not able to modify and diversify his choice indefinitely, &c., destroys the credibility of the Bible as an inspired book;" since the Bible assumes "every where that man is free to choose with power of contrary choice." He speaks repeatedly of the necessity of determining whether "choice is free;" whether man "in his mode of voluntary action, is coerced or free," &c. in order to settle the question of his free agency and responsibility.

It is not a little surprising that in the book which contains these passages, Dr. Beecher should quote from Edwards, thus showing that he had read at least some part of his *Treatise on the Will*, and yet claim agreement with him on the subject of free agency. Respecting the power of the will to

choose differently from what it actually does, we quote the following passage from Edwards. After the definition of liberty which we have already quoted, he adds, "And I scruple not to say, it is beyond all their wits to invent a higher notion or form a higher imagination of liberty: let them talk of sovereignty of the will, self-determining power, self-motion, self-direction, arbitrary decision, liberty ad utrumvis, *power of choosing differently in given cases*, &c. as long as they will. It is apparent that these men in their strenuous dispute about these things, aim at they know not what, fighting for something that they have no conception of, substituting a number of confused unmeaning words instead of things and instead of thoughts. They may be challenged clearly to explain what they would have, but they never can answer the challenge." And in relation to the liberty of the will which Dr. Beecher maintains to be vitally essential to free agency, Edwards has the following remarks. "In strict propriety of speech, neither liberty, nor its contrary, can properly be ascribed to any being or thing but that which has such a faculty, power or property, as is called will. For that which is possessed of no will, cannot have any power or opportunity of doing according to its will, nor be necessitated to act contrary to its will, nor be restrained from acting agreeably to it. And therefore to talk of liberty or the contrary as belonging to *the very will itself*, is not to speak good sense." The question whether the will itself is coerced or free, which Dr. Beecher maintains to be the only question in debate, Edwards refuses to entertain, pronouncing it to be not good sense. The power of choosing differently in given cases, which Dr. Beecher holds to be essential to moral agency, is, according to Edwards, a thing of which we can form no conception, a confused, unmeaning jumble of words. The inquiry which Dr. Beecher contends that we must institute into the causes of choice, in order to ascertain whether it be free or not, before we can attribute blameworthiness, is rejected by Edwards and by all Calvinistic writers, for the reason already given, that the question whether the will is free, is nonsense, and also because when the other conditions necessary to constitute a moral act are present, it is sufficient that the agent be voluntary to render him accountable. Whatever agreement there may be between Dr. Beecher, and "the ablest writers on free agency" in the final results of their reasoning, it is apparent that there is rather a startling difference in some of their first principles.

We have shown with whom Dr. Beecher, in the extracts which we have given, does not agree. We will now show with whom he does agree. Dr. Reid gives the following definition of liberty. "By the liberty of a moral agent, I understand a power over the determinations of his own will. If in any action he had power to will what he did, or not to will it, in that action he is free. But if, in every voluntary action, the determination of his will be the necessary consequence of something involuntary in the state of his mind, or of something in his external circumstances, he is not free; he has not what I call the liberty of a moral agent, but is subject to necessity."* This is the definition of liberty which has been substantially adopted by all subsequent Arminian and Pelagian writers upon the will; and granting them their definition, we know not how to resist their conclusion. And we can see no difference between the idea of liberty which is here taught, and that for which Dr. Beecher so strenuously contends. He maintains explicitly that it is not enough that man chooses, and is not hindered from acting according to his preference, to constitute him a free agent; he must possess also a power over the determinations of his will, so that in any given case he might have chosen differently. We might quote abundantly from other writers than Reid to prove that Dr. Beecher's notion of liberty is precisely that which is taught by Arminians and Pelagians in general; but we will refer, in addition, only to the writings of the New Haven divines. This same idea of liberty, runs through all Dr. Taylor's writings in the *Christian Spectator*. It is succinctly expressed in the following sentence. "They (theologians) have supposed it to be impossible for God to foreknow the actions of a *truly free* agent, that is, of one who, whatever may be his choice in a given case, was entirely able to make the contrary choice."† It has always heretofore been supposed by the most competent judges that the notion of moral liberty, which includes in it this power over the determinations of the will, was inconsistent with the Calvinistic scheme. If Dr. Beecher has discovered their consistency, he ought, in justice to his own reputation, to withdraw the acknowledgement, which was doubtless prompted by his modesty, that "he had no new discoveries to announce." He has, in truth, made one of the most wonderful discoveries of the age. We

* Reid's Works, vol. 3, p. 326.

† *Christian Spectator*, vol. 3, p. 469.

are inclined to think, however, that it ought to be ranked as an invention rather than a discovery. And as in the case of many other inventions, though the ingenious author seems to place great confidence in it, we are disposed to see how it will work before we adopt it. In the mean time we admit and feel, that Dr. Beecher's own case furnishes a stronger argument than we had thought it possible to produce in favour of some extraordinary kind of liberty possessed by man; since he has shown by his own example that the Pelagian philosophy of the will can be held in unison with the doctrines of Calvinism.*

From the specimens which we have given of Dr. Beecher's looseness and inaccuracy in reasoning, it will not be expected that he has traced out very clearly the connection between the different parts of his system so as to show their mutual coherency. On the contrary, such sentences and phrases as we have quoted are often found in close connection with others entirely different in their meaning, and yet given as if they were of equivalent import. The natural ability of choice, the natural ability of the will in respect to the power of choice, and the natural ability of man, are used interchangeably, without any apparent suspicion on the part of the author that he is not describing the same thing by each of these phrases. The question of free agency, which he generally states to be the question whether man's will is free in such a sense that he always has power to make a contrary choice to the one actually made, is sometimes represented as involving only the inquiry whether man has liberty to act according to his will. By thus interchanging phrases of different import, and shifting the question at the proper turn, he is enabled to array upon his side a formidable list of authorities from the days of the fathers down to the present generation. Any theory of moral agency might be thus confirmed by first assuming that it is the only true or possible theory, and then quoting in its support every author who has taught that man is a moral agent.

We proceed to examine, somewhat more in detail, the peculiarities of Dr. Beecher's theory. Under the strange, and to us unmeaning head, of "fatality of choice," we have the

* A German author has recently obtained two prizes, one for an essay in defence of the medical theory of homœopathy, the other for an essay against the same theory. This exploit, however, is by no means equal to that which Dr. Beecher aims to accomplish. The German did not aspire to obtain a favourable verdict upon both his essays from the same body of men.

following paragraph. "The question of free-will is not whether man chooses,—this is notorious, none deny it; but whether his choice is free as opposed to a fatal necessity,—as opposed to the laws of instinct and natural causation; whether it is the act of a mind so qualified for choice as to decide between alternatives, uncoerced by the energy of a natural cause to its effect; whether it is the act of an agent who might have abstained from the choice he made, and made one which he did not. To speak of choice being *free*, which is produced by the laws of a natural necessity, and which cannot but be *when* and *what* it is, more than the effects of natural causes can govern the time and manner and qualities of their being, is a perversion of language." We quote the following additional passages in connection with this. "That choice is in accordance with the state of body and mind and character and external circumstances may be admitted, or that it is as the greatest apparent good, may be admitted; but that it is so necessarily, to the exclusion of all ability of any kind to be other than it is, cannot be admitted without abandoning the field of God's government of accountable creatures, and going to the very centre of fatalism." "If obedience to commands, exhortations and entreaties is prevented by a constitutional necessity, a natural impossibility of choosing right; and the disobedient choice is also the unavoidable, coerced result of a constitutional necessity, over which the will has no power, but of which it is the unavoidable effect; then choice is as much the effect of a natural cause, as any other natural effect." These extracts present the question in debate in the form which is usually given to it by Dr. Beecher, except when some authority is to be adduced. The inquiry raised is whether choice is free. He must of course mean by choice, in this connection, the power of choice, or the will. We have already given the decision of Edwards respecting this question, that it is "not good sense," since liberty must be the attribute of an agent, and not of a faculty. Both Locke and Hobbes had previously made a similar remark. It would be difficult for Dr. Beecher to give any intelligible definition of liberty which would not show the absurdity of his form of stating the question. Hobbes defines a free agent to be "he that can do if he will, and forbear if he will." And this is substantially the definition which has been given by Leibnitz, by Collins, and by Edwards, and all Calvinistic writers. We derive our notion of freedom from the dependency of our actions upon our volitions. If when we will a

particular act, the act follows, we are free. This is the primary, original notion of freedom. Liberty then can be only affirmed with propriety of agents that are possessed of a will, and in relation to such actions as are consequent upon volition. We do indeed, in common language, attribute liberty to inanimate objects, as when we say of a stone, that it descends *freely*, but this is only in accommodation, and from an analogy suggested by another idea involved in the liberty of an agent, that he is subject to no impediment *extrinsic to himself*. If a man is bound hand and foot, or held by a superior muscular force to his own, we say he is not free to move; but if he is lame, or confined to his couch by disease, he does not want liberty, but power or strength to move. It is in analogy with this idea, that we say of inanimate objects that they act freely, meaning thereby that there is no external impediment to hinder them from acting according to their intrinsic qualities. We think it will be found, upon examination, that in every supposable case in which we can properly affirm that an agent is free, there is involved the idea that the impediment denied is without himself. If this be correct, then we may give this definition of a free agent, one who is not hindered by any extrinsic impediment from acting according to his own will. How then can we raise the question whether the will itself be free? In order to this, we must suppose each volition to be the effect of a previous volition. But we never will to will. "Proprie loquendo volumus agere, non vero volumus velle; alioqui dicere etiam possemus, velle nos habere voluntatem volendi, quod in infinitum abiret."* And besides this, whatever hindrances can be supposed to force or impede the will must be within itself, and if it labours under any difficulty therefore, it must be from a defect of power, not of freedom.

In entire consistency with this confusion at the outset, we find him in a subsequent sentence speaking of the choice itself, not having power to be other than what it is, any more than effects in the physical world can control their causes! And yet again he speaks of the "disobedient choice being the unavoidable result of a constitutional necessity over which the will has no power, but of which it is the unavoidable effect." Here choice, and the faculty of will, are each made the effect of necessity, or else in two dependent members of the same sentence, the word will in the one denotes the

* Leibnitzii Opera, Tom. I. p. 136.

faculty known by that name, while in the other the pronoun which refers to it, denotes not the will, but a volition or act of the will.

There are still farther difficulties attending the interpretation of these passages. Dr. Beecher denies that choice (the will) is subject to necessity. When we look farther to see what this means, we find it sometimes described as a fatal, unavoidable and irresistible necessity. And quite as often, it is said that the will is not free, if the cause which influences its volitions be a natural or constitutional cause. We would naturally be led to conclude that, in Dr. Beecher's opinion, a natural or constitutional cause established a fatal necessity. But let his readers beware how they attempt to interpret Dr. Beecher by comparing him with himself. He himself elsewhere teaches that the cause which determines man's will to a particular kind of action, is both natural and constitutional. He says, "I hold and teach that such a change in the *constitution* of man was produced by the fall, as creates a universal and prevalent propensity to actual sin—preventing in all men the existence of holiness, and securing the existence of actual total depravity." Speaking elsewhere of this same cause, he calls it "a prevalent bias of nature." And again, he says, "This impotency of will to good, according to the Bible, and our Confession, and the received doctrines of the church, includes the *constitutional* bias to actual sin, produced in all men by the fall, anterior to intelligent, voluntary action." We here have the determining cause of volition in fallen man, styled a bias of nature, and a constitutional bias. The will then being operated upon by a natural and constitutional cause is subject to a fatal necessity—it is not free,—and no responsibility attaches to any of its acts. This contradiction is only to be avoided by the plea, that the terms constitutional and natural, are used in different senses in the two cases. Doubtless they are, but it is to be regretted that they should be used to convey such opposite meanings, without any notice of a change of signification, or any attempt in either case, to define the sense in which they are employed. This is the more to be regretted, because when Dr. Beecher asserts that if choice be the product of a necessity *of nature*, man cannot be an accountable agent—if instead of bringing argument after argument to prove it, he had simply defined what he meant by nature, he would have saved himself all further trouble upon this point. He cannot mean that it is not in accordance with the nature

of things in general, or of the will in particular, that it should be moved by the causes which act upon it. Nor will he deny that there is any less certainty, the state of mind of the agent, his susceptibilities, and all the circumstances under which he acts being known, that a particular volition will follow, than that any physical cause will be succeeded by its appropriate effect. Nature is often used to denote the settled order of things which we observe in the world around us. An event is said to be natural, or to be according to the course of nature, when it is seen to be regularly connected with its cause, and in harmony with the manner of succession which we observe in other things. And it is called unnatural when it seems, through our ignorance, to fall without the ordinary fixed course of things, or to vary greatly from the established order of similar events. But the laws which govern the will are as invariable as those which govern matter, and whatever distinction exists between them must be sought elsewhere than in respect to the regularity of their operation. But there is a sense of the word nature in which Dr. Beecher's declaration contains a truth, though certainly a very harmless one, to any conflicting theory of morals. This word is frequently employed to signify the assemblage of material causes which are continually working their effects around us. Numberless changes are every moment occurring, to which the will of man contributes no influence, and the causes which produce them are characterized by the general term nature. But our own volitions are also causes of motion, and often interfere to modify or interrupt the course of events around us. Nature and choice come thus to be considered as diverse and even opposite to each other. A proposition may be constructed, founded upon this notion, of some kind of opposition between nature and choice, which shall be true, but the misfortune is it will be too true,—it can be nothing else than a truism. But a natural cause may be distinguished from a moral cause, if we denote by the first a cause which produces its effect upon matter, and by the other a cause which acts upon the mind. This, we admit, is a usual and legitimate use of the epithet natural. Here we have an opposition between nature and choice, or rather between nature and the cause of choice, which is founded upon the difference between the objects upon which they act; the effect of the one is some change in matter, of the other, an act of the mind. There must of course be a difference in nature between these two classes of causes to

adapt them to the production of their different effects. The mind cannot be directly acted upon by such causes as are comprehended in our notion of nature; it is moved by motives presented to the understanding, or by its own habitual dispositions. We should esteem it therefore a work of supererogation, to deny vociferously that a man can be responsible for a choice, which is the result of a natural cause. No correct definition of a natural, as distinguished from a moral cause, can be given, which would not exclude choice from the sphere of its operation. Dr. Beecher is the only writer we have ever met with who seemed to suppose that the will could be moved by water power or propelled by steam. He gives a very characteristic illustration of what he calls "the fatality of agency," in which he supposes volitions to be produced by "the motion of a great water-wheel and the various bands which keep the motion and the praise and the blasphemy agoing." This illustration he introduces, not for the purpose of showing the absurdity of the thing supposed, but to prove that no "accountability would attach to these *voluntary* praises and blasphemies produced by the laws of water power." Now we are quite as ready to grant, that a man is not responsible for any volition that is sucked or forced out of him by a pump, or squeezed out by a screw, as we would be on the other hand to contend, that if one of the stones that bounded up at the call of Orpheus' music, had struck and killed a man in its frantic joy, it ought to have been tried and condemned for murder. Either of these propositions we imagine would unite all suffrages, for one of them is just as true as the other. We trust this will be deemed a sufficient answer to the much that Dr. Beecher has said respecting choice being the "effect of natural causes, as really and entirely as the falling of rain, or the electric spark, or the involuntary shock that attends it."

It is evident that if we would get at Dr. Beecher's meaning we must seek it elsewhere than among these first principles of his reasoning. We will be more likely to find it a little farther on in his system. The stream which is muddy at its origin, sometimes becomes more clear as it proceeds. Dr. Beecher has obviously reasoned backward from certain ulterior truths which he wished to maintain in search of the first principles which were adapted to uphold them. One of these starting points is the position, that in every particular case a moral agent might have abstained from the choice which he made, and made one which he did not; and he

seems to think that this is established when he has proved that man is not accountable for those of his volitions that are worked out of him by water power. Thus that man "cannot but sin when he does sin, more than rivers of muddy water can purify themselves," and that he "is not able to modify and diversify his choice indefinitely," are used as synonymous expressions. The soul being "exempt from the laws of a natural necessity," is assumed as equivalent with the existence "of a possibility in every case of a different or contrary choice." And in one of the passages which we have previously quoted there are found the following inquiries put, as if they were but repetitions of the same idea; "whether it (choice) is the act of a mind so qualified for choice as to decide between alternatives, uncoerced by the energy of a natural cause to its effect;" and, "whether it is the act of an agent who might have abstained from the choice he made, and made one which he did not." There is here an assumption tacitly made, without any shadow of proof, respecting natural causes, which really involves the whole question in dispute. It is adroitly taken for granted, that any effect which is produced by other than a natural cause, might have been different from what it is. It is impossible not to admire the convenience of this mode of reasoning. It saves a world of trouble. Having proved, what it would be very foolish in any one to deny, that no man is responsible for such of his volitions as are produced "by the motion of water-wheels," there is nothing more to be done but to take possession of the ground, that a man is not accountable for his acts, unless he possesses the power of willing differently from what he does in every particular case.

We have admitted the truth of the first of these statements;* we are not yet prepared however to adopt the second. Before discussing this question it will be expedient to define the terms will and volition. These words are used with considerable latitude of meaning. Under the division of our faculties, made by the earlier writers, into the powers of the understanding and those of the will, this latter term included all our inclinations, desires and passions. And the word is still often used in this large sense. According to Mr. Bel-

* The term truth is not strictly applicable to such propositions as the one here referred to. Of such an assertion as this, "a man is not bound to cultivate any of the virtues, which are square or red," we could not in strict propriety say it was either true or false, but we might very safely let it pass without dispute.

sham, "every volition is a modification of the passion of desire," and Dr. Priestley asks, "is not every *wish* a volition?" This is the popular sense of the word, as when the apothecary in Romeo and Juliet says, "My poverty but not my will consents;" and nothing is more common than to hear people speak of doing a thing against their wills, in which nevertheless they acted voluntarily. The acts of the will are thus confounded with the desires and affections; and the faculty of will is not to be distinguished from our susceptibility of emotion. But when we consider what passes in our minds, we find that while some of our desires remain immanent, there are others of them that are followed by action. When the idea of some action of our own, which we conceive to be in our power, is contemplated by the mind, associated with some object or end which we desire to attain, there results a determination to act, and this is followed by the action determined upon. It is this determination which is followed by some act of the body or mind that philosophers have very generally agreed to call *volition*, and the power that produces it, the faculty of *will*. Locke defines volition to be, "An act of the mind knowingly exerting that dominion it takes itself to have over any part of the man by employing it in, or withholding it from any particular action." No definition can be given however of a simple act of the mind that will convey any idea of it to those who do not reflect upon what passes within them. To obtain a clear notion of what is meant by a volition, or an act of the will, we must refer to our own consciousness of what takes place when we resolve to do any particular thing,—the state of mind immediately preceding the action is a volition, and the faculty or power, in virtue of which we are enabled to form such a determination to act, is the will.

The cause of any particular volition, or that which moves the mind to determine to act in any instance, is called a motive. It seems to have been the opinion of Locke that the immediate motive of every volition is some *uneasiness*. He supposes the external object to awaken desire, that this desire, while ungratified, produces uneasiness, and that to get rid of this uneasiness the will determines upon the appropriate action. It may be doubted whether this is altogether a correct account of the matter. But if there be in all cases, immediately preceding the determination to act, a state of mind that is properly described by uneasiness, it is not to this that the term motive is usually applied. It is generally

employed to denote either the external object or action, or the state of the agent's mind in relation to it. We associate action as a motive with object, for it is an important fact towards the solution of some of the phenomena of the will, that in its volitions the mind is often not so much conversant with the objects presented, as with its own action in relation to these objects. There are many cases in which action, simply considered, is the end at which the mind aims. It gives rise to much confusion and error, if, in speaking of the motives of volition, we leave out of consideration the state of mind of the agent. The same object which is a powerful motive to action at one time, is viewed with indifference at another, in consequence of the different state of the mind to which it is presented. The motive is not properly the external object, but the affection of the mind in relation to that object.

Let us now resume the inquiry whether, in any given case, a man might have willed contrary to what he did? And here it may be observed that the mode of putting the question virtually makes a change in the conditions under which the supposed choice took place. The only sense in which it is true that the man *might* have willed differently, is, that he might, if he had been inclined to do so. But his being inclined to will as he did, was the determining cause of his volition. The word *might* therefore implies a change in the antecedents of the particular choice in question, and is on this account inconsistent with the hypothesis that all the circumstances remain the same. If it is urged that he might have willed differently, because he might have changed the state of his mind, we reply, that to do this would require, of course, an act of the will, and that act must have a previous inclination for its motive, and so on without end. We are thus driven to hunt along an infinite chain for the first link.

Consciousness is appealed to by Dr. Beecher for proof that we always have power to will differently from what we do. We agree with him that "consciousness is the end of controversy," but it is necessary to be very careful in taking its testimony. What then is the witness of consciousness in this matter? For ourselves, in every process of volition, we are conscious only of the presence of certain views and considerations, some inclining us to will in one way and some in another, and also of a power which we possess to will *as we please*. We are not conscious of any power to

will contrary to our prevailing inclination. Our consciousness concurs with other considerations in proving that a man might, in any case, have made a different or contrary choice, if he had been inclined so to do, and it proves nothing more than this.

It is now very plain what kind of power Dr. Beecher attributes to the will. His position is, that all the circumstances, under which any choice is made, remaining the same, the man had power nevertheless to will the contrary. His hypothesis supposes that the views and inclinations of the mind remain unchanged, and that the man can will in direct opposition to them. This is the most disastrous power that can well be conceived of, and if any man possesses it, he ought to make it his daily prayer to be delivered from it. No man, while cursed with such a self-determining power as this, could be safe for a moment. With his whole soul bent in one direction, he might be borne, and that too by his own will, in another. With the most anxious desire to escape from danger, he might be carried immediately into it. He could form no plans for his own conduct, nor would others be able to anticipate in the least degree what they might expect from him.

But perhaps Dr. Beecher intended to exclude from the unchanged circumstances of the agent, his own state of mind. He may mean that the agent has power to will differently, because he has power to change his inclination. This involves the absurdity, already pointed out, of requiring an infinite series of antecedent volitions; or else it assumes that the will can act to modify the inclination of the mind, without any motive to determine it, and we are thus led to the common notion held by Arminians of the self-determining power of the will.

In contending then that in every given case a man might have made a different choice, Dr. Beecher contends for one of the following things. In the first place, that under the same conditions, that is, with an inclination to will in a particular direction, he had power to will the contrary. Now if man possesses any such power as this, it may on some occasions be exercised. A power that cannot be put in action is no power at all. On some occasion then, when a man desires with all his heart to do a particular thing, there may spring up a volition to do something directly contrary, towards which he has no desire, and which he even hates with perfect

hatred.* It would be very singular if such a power as this, which, if it existed, would deprive all its acts of a moral character, and render man incapable of being governed by a moral law, should yet be necessary in order to render him accountable. If this is not Dr. Beecher's meaning, then he must mean, in the second place, that in every case of volition, the man might have abstained from the choice he made, because he had the power to alter the inclination which led to the choice. And in this case we have a resurrection of the theory of the self-determining power of the will, which we thought every Calvinist at least had considered twice dead and buried.

But how then, it is asked, can man be responsible for any volition, if he has not the power of willing differently? "Is not ability the ground and measure of obligation?" If it be, then to be sure man must possess the power, however incomprehensible or absurd it may seem, since there can be no question that he is bound to will right. But we deny the truth of this maxim in the sense in which it is held by Dr. Beecher; and since this is one of the fixed centres around which many forms of error revolve, we will endeavour to point out its unsoundness. We have already admitted that a man cannot be bound to perform any act, which, though he be willing to do it, is impracticable. If he is deprived of his limbs, or if they have been paralyzed by disease, he cannot be under any obligation to walk. He cannot be bound to fly, or, in short, to do any thing which would be out of his power, provided he was willing and desirous to do it. In all such actions as are properly consequent upon volition, it is true that ability is the ground and measure of obligation. Dr. Beecher's error consists in extending the maxim to a case which lies beyond the premises within which it was generalized, and in this application of it we utterly deny its truth. We can find nothing in the Bible, or in the general judgment of mankind, to prove that a man is not responsible for his volitions, unless he possesses in each case the power to will contrary to his desires, or the power to change in an instant, by an act of the will, his inclinations and affections. The first of these powers he could not possess and exercise without ceasing to be a moral agent; and the second, it is notorious that he does not possess. There is no fact in the

* If so light a remark may be tolerated here, we would say that the only illustration with which we are acquainted of such a power as the one in question, is afforded by some of our new-school brethren, who, with a great desire apparently to be orthodox, are yet continually willing the contrary.

operations of the mind better established, than that the affections cannot be immediately acted upon by the will. No man ever loved any object or ceased to love it in obedience to a volition. If any one doubts this, we have no way of proving it but by bidding him to make the trial. If he possesses this power he can surely exercise it, and a few experiments upon the subject will satisfy him whether he has it or not. The only power which man possesses of destroying existing affections, or creating new ones, is by directing the attention of his mind to such considerations as may be adapted to exert the required influence upon it. This is a matter of universal experience. But at the instant of making any particular choice, he has no motive to induce him thus to direct the attention of his mind to adverse considerations. To suppose this, is to suppose that he has a desire to change his existing desire, or that he has towards the same object, at the same moment, two contrary desires, equally strong, since either of them is capable of producing a corresponding choice. If this be required to render man accountable, it is very certain that there is no accountability in our world. The only plausibility which the maxim "that ability is the ground and measure of obligation" possesses, when applied to volitions and affections, is derived from its being intuitively true when referred to a different class of acts, and from the proper discrimination not being made between the two cases. Dr. Beecher appeals to the common sentiments and conduct of men to prove that "the lunatic ought not to be treated as a subject of law," "that the poor idiot is not responsible for its acts," and that a woman, whom he knew, whose mind had lost the power of association, ought not to be required to deliver a Fourth of July Oration, and then, because she failed, "be taken to the whipping post and lacerated for that which she wanted the natural ability to do." It is from instances like these, in which he must, of course, carry universal conviction with him, that he arrives at the general truth that ability is the measure of obligation. The general conclusion thus obtained, is immediately applied to prove that no man can be responsible for a volition, unless, at the time he made it, he had power to will to the contrary; nor for any inclination, unless, when cherishing it, he was able to divest himself of it by a single act of will,—both of them cases greatly dissimilar from those which furnished the general axiom, and incapable therefore of receiving any illustration from it. The common judgment of man's conscience in relation to these

cases, is that a man is accountable for every act of his will, because it is the act of his own will, and for every inclination, because it is his own inclination. The axiom that ability and obligation must be commensurate, in the extensive sense given to it by Dr. Beecher, is false and dangerous. He seems to have a special horror of fatalism, and we know no more likely way to make men fatalists than by teaching them to believe the truth of this maxim. It is not more certain that man is an accountable agent, than it is that he does not possess the power at any moment to divest himself of an evil inclination or affection by an act of his will. Teach him then that this power is essential to accountability, and the inference made, in a majority of cases, will be not that he really has a power which all his experience convinces him he does not possess, but that being destitute of it, he is not responsible for his evil temper. The insensibility to the difference between right and wrong which will thus be produced, is the distinctive mark of the fatalist.

Dr. Beecher refers to the Bible for proof of the truth of his opinions, but it is almost needless to add that he receives from it no aid, except in establishing what no one has denied, that man possesses the powers requisite to free agency. The substance of his reasoning under this head, is to show from the Bible that man is a free, accountable agent, and then virtually to assume that the Bible maintains his peculiar theory of free agency and accountableness. He does not succeed, however, in proving the common doctrine of man's natural ability, without committing some singular mistakes. The following passage will show how little reliance is to be placed upon Dr. Beecher as an interpreter of the Scriptures.

“The manner in which all excuses are treated in Scripture, which are founded on the plea of inability, confirms our exposition. There were impenitent sinners of old, who pleaded a natural inability of obedience. In the time of the prophet Jeremiah, there were those who alleged that God's decrees created the unavoidable necessity of sinning. They said they could not help it. But God, by his prophet, instead of conceding the doctrine, repelled it with indignation.

“Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?’ *Jer.* vii. 8, 9, 10.

“Does God approve of men’s reasoning, when they say, God has decreed it, and God executes his decrees, and a resistless fate moves us on to evil. Far from it. In what stronger language could the Lord speak to hardened and impudent men, who laid their sins at his door? Now the fall itself was some how comprehended in God’s decrees; and if it be true that the fall took away all man’s natural ability, wherein were those Jews wrong? Their excuse was that their sins were produced by the fatality of God’s decrees. They were delivered to do all these abominations. Their fathers had eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth were set on edge. By the sin of Adam they had lost all free agency, and therefore they were not to blame; all was just as God would have it; an inexorable fate drove them on, and how could they resist the Almighty? But if God did indeed require spiritual obedience from men who lay in a state of natural impotency, how is it that he frowned so indignantly, when they pleaded their impotence in bar of judgment?”

He subsequently refers to the same passage again in the following words.

“So the same opinions operated among the Jews, as we learn by the terrible interrogations of the prophet—‘Will ye lie, and steal, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and come into this house which is called by my name, and say we are delivered to do all these abominations? We have no power over ourselves. We do but obey the irresistible laws of our nature. We are delivered by the constitution God has given us to do all these things.’ The only difference between these ancient and modern licentious antinomians is, that the ancient denied accountability entirely; while the latter attach it to fatality, and bring in the grace of God to deliver from a natural impotency.”

The whole force of this passage turns upon the words “we are delivered,” and it is unfortunate that Dr. Beecher should have made so strong a use of it, and founded upon it so much rhetoric and logic, without ascertaining what the word thus translated meant. It never, in any instance of its use, has a signification at all approaching that which he assigns to it. It is the same word, and in the same tense, that is used in Isaiah xx. 6: “Behold such is our expectation whither we flee for help, *to be delivered* from the king of Assyria.” It never means, *to be bound fast* by a divine decree or by any thing else, but in opposition to this, *to be free, to be saved.*

In the passage quoted by Dr. Beecher, the sense evidently is, 'Will ye come and say, We are free to do these abominations, we shall have immunity in the perpetration of them, we shall escape the punishments threatened by the prophets.' A preterite tense, instead of the future, is used, says Michaelis, to denote the firm persuasion of safety. The grossness of Dr. Beecher's mistake is apparent. This comes of applying the principles of the Baconian philosophy, instead of the Hebrew Lexicon, to the interpretation of the Bible.

It is not necessary to follow Dr. Beecher regularly through the course of his argument and declamation. Most of his arguments go merely to prove that man is a free, accountable agent. We believe we have already replied to every consideration which he has brought forward in defence of his own theory of free agency. There is one of his topics however which deserves a passing comment, principally for the sake of showing how far it is safe to trust to Dr. Beecher's accuracy in matters of history. One of his heads of argument is this. "Choice, without the possibility of other or contrary choice, is the immemorial doctrine of fatalism." He is kind enough to add, "I say not that all who assert the natural inability of man are fatalists. I charge them not with holding or admitting the consequences of their theory—and I mean nothing unkind or invidious, in the proposition I have laid down, and *truth* and *argument* are not invidious." There will be observed here that adroit confounding together of distinct things to which we have several times alluded. In the proposition, he is declared to be a fatalist, who denies that, at the time of every volition, the agent might have made a different or contrary one, and in the next sentence this is changed into asserting the *natural inability* of man. The method of argument pursued in fixing the charge of fatalism on those who differ from him, may certainly lay claim to originality. His theme is, "That choice without the power of contrary choice is fatalism in all its diversified forms, is obvious to inspection, and a matter of historical record." For the proof of this position we might reasonably expect to find evidence produced, from a careful examination of the systems of fatalists, that they all held the precise opinion in question respecting the nature of choice. But instead of this, the author gives us a list of fatalists, for the most of whom he has manufactured a creed by the exercise of his own ingenuity, instead of searching their writings to see what they really believed and taught, and all of whom, with one or two

exceptions, according to his account of them, were *materialists*. We might prove, in this way, that to believe in the existence of matter, is to adopt fatalism, for it is obvious to inspection, and matter of historical record, that all fatalists have believed in it. We will now examine the value of Dr. Beecher's historical record. His list of fatalists comprises the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Gnostics, the Manicheans, Spinoza, Descartes, the French revolutionary atheists, Bolingbroke, Hume, Hobbes, Priestley, and Belsham. He states, at some length, and in an oracular manner, their different systems, as if he knew all about them, and were well qualified to instruct others. For the fatalism of the *Stoics* we refer the reader to the first sentence of the *Enchiridion* of Epictetus, where he will find as strong a statement as could well be given of the liberty of the will; and to Dugald Stewart, who is high authority in matters touching the history of philosophy, and who declares that the "Stoics, with their usual passion for exaggeration, carried their notions of the liberty of the will to an unphilosophical extreme."*

The fullest exposition which has come down to us of the system of the *Epicureans*, is to be found in the writings of Lucretius, and we refer Dr. Beecher to his *Rerum Natura*, lib. 2, v. 250—261, for proof that one of their avowed objects in maintaining their notion of the 'declination of atoms,' was to avoid the difficulties of fate. In this passage, Lucretius makes use of the free will of man, *libera voluntas*, to prove that each cause is not linked in with a previous cause from infinity, and that there is a principle which can break the decrees of fate, *quod fati foedera rumpat*. He expressly calls the will of man, a will set free from the fates, *fatis avolsa voluntas*, in virtue of which we go whithersoever our pleasure leads us. He declares it to be far from doubt, *dubio procul*, that each man's own will is a principle of motion and action separate and independent of fate. Cicero also, in his book, *de Fato*, alludes to what he calls the "*commentitias declinationes*" of the Epicureans, as having been introduced by them for the avowed purpose of freeing "the voluntary motions" of man from the control of fate. Of *Spinoza* we know nothing save from the writings of his opponents, though we comfort ourselves here, in our ignorance, with the remark which Voltaire somewhere makes, that there are not ten persons in Europe who have read Spinoza's works. If

* Stewart's Works, vol. vi. p. 241.

Dr. Beecher has read them, we are willing to receive his account of what they contain; but if he has drawn upon his own imagination for his system, as he has done with most of his other fatalists, we must still hold the matter in doubt. It would be impossible for us to convey, within the limits which we can devote to it, any thing like an adequate idea of the metaphysical system of *Hobbes*, though it will not be difficult to show that Dr. Beecher has done him injustice. *Hobbes* is distinguished beyond most authors for his sententious brevity. He is the most pithy and laconic of all philosophical writers. After he has once defined a term, or stated a proposition, he is seldom at the trouble of repeating them, taking it for granted that his readers will understand and remember every thing that he has once said. Hence, though his style is remarkably clear, his language, as Sir James Mackintosh says of it, never having but one meaning, and that one never requiring a second thought to find, he is nevertheless liable to be misapprehended by one who reads only detached portions of his writings. Thus he denies, in many passages, that the affections and passions of the heart are voluntary, but his meaning is elsewhere explained. "Appetite, fear, hope, and the rest of the passions, are not called *voluntary*, for they proceed not from, *but are the will*, and the will is not voluntary; for a man can no more say he will will, than he will will will, and so make an infinite repetition of the word will; which is absurd and insignificant."* If careful attention be paid to his own definitions of terms, it will be found that *Hobbes* maintains neither more nor less than the common doctrine of philosophical necessity. He gives the same definition of freedom with *Edwards*. "A man is free," he says, "when, in such things as he has strength and wit to do, he is not hindered to do what he has a will to."† He first pointed out that for which *Locke* generally receives credit, the impropriety of affirming freedom of the will itself. "From the use of the word Free-Will, no liberty can be inferred of the will, desire, or inclination, but the liberty of the man; which consisteth in this, that he finds no stop in doing what he has the will or inclination to do."‡ In the commencement of his letter to the Marquess of Newcastle, in reply to some strictures of *Bishop Bramhall*, he states the question thus. "His Lordship may think it all one to say, I was free to write, and, it was not necessary I

* *Human Nature*, p. 29.† *Commonwealth*, p. 188.‡ *Ibid*, p. 189.

should write; but I think otherwise, for he is free to do a thing that may do it if he will to do it; and may forbear if he have the will to forbear.—I acknowledge this liberty, that I can do if I will; but to say, I can will if I will, I take to be an absurd speech.—In fine, that freedom which men find in books, that which the poets chaunt in the theatres, and the shepherds on the mountains, that which the pastors teach in the pulpits, and the doctors in the universities, and that which the common people in the markets, and all mankind in the whole world do assent unto, is the same that I assent unto, namely, that a man hath freedom to do if he will, but whether they have freedom to will, is a question neither the bishop nor they ever thought of.” To the objection, that if liberty of will be taken away, “the nature and formal reason of sin is taken away,” he makes this reply: “I deny the consequence. The nature of sin consisteth in this, that the action done proceeds from our will, and be against the law. A judge, in judging whether that be sin or no which is done against the law, looks at no higher cause of the action than the will of the doer. Now when I say that the action was necessary, I do not say it was done against the will of the doer, but with his will, and *necessary*, because man’s will, that is, every volition or act of the will, had a *sufficient*, and therefore a *necessary* cause. An action may therefore be voluntary and a sin, and nevertheless be necessary.”* Another extract will illustrate still further his use of the word necessary. “If there be an agent, he can do something; and if he do it, there is nothing wanting of what is requisite to produce the action; and consequently the cause of the action is sufficient, and if sufficient, then also necessary, as has been proved before.”† The necessity for which he contends is declared to be perfectly consistent with human liberty; he denies that it removes the distinction between the nature of virtue and vice, praise and blame, reward and punishment; or that it renders useless admonitions and counsels, promises and threatenings. We do not believe that a single passage can be produced from all his writings, in which he has been led to slide into the notion of a practical necessity, or a necessity at all different from that which Edwards has since taught. But Dr. Beecher calls him a fatalist, and Dr. Beecher doubtless is a learned man! Then Edwards too was a fatalist.—We have not yet done with our catalogue of errors. *Boling-*

* *Of Liberty and Necessity*, p. 478.

† *Ibid*, p. 480.

broke, too, is included in the list of fatalists, and the peculiar form of fatalism which he held is particularly described. We are told that he supposed "motives, as the antecedents of volition, to be clothed with the coercive power of material causes to their effects, and thus destroyed the liberty of the will," &c. This rather passes any thing we have had yet. Bolingbroke was one of the most rampant of all advocates for the *self-determining power of the will*. He uniformly contends for this power, and often becomes angry and foul-mouthed in his abuse of those who deny it. He speaks of "The free-will of man which no one can deny *without lying*, or renouncing his instinctive knowledge."* He says again, "To acknowledge the fatum of ancient philosophers, to hold with the Mahometans the absolute predestination of all events, with Spinoza and Calvin the necessity of all our actions, or with Leibnitz his whimsy of a pre-established harmony, would be somewhat almost as mad as to take the true history of Lucian for such."† "I am not unacquainted," he says, "with the various refinements of ingenious men about the freedom of the human will. Some of them have assumed it to be a freedom from external compulsion only, and not internal necessity. Others have assumed it to be a *freedom from both*. This second opinion is so evidently true, that I cannot conceive it would have been liable to any contradiction, if philosophers had not done in this case what they do in many, if they had not rendered what is clear, obscure, by explanations, and what is certain, problematical, by engraftments."‡ In another passage of the same tract, after stating what the Creator has done for us, he adds, "What we shall do for ourselves he has left to the freedom of our own elections; for free-will seems so essential to rational beings, that I presume we cannot conceive any such to be without it." We should not be surprised after this to see Dr. Whitby and Dr. Taylor, the ancient and the modern, with sundry others of like sentiments, figuring in the next catalogue of fatalists which Dr. Beecher may have occasion to draw up. But the most surprising instance yet remains. *Descartes*, too, among the fatalists! We give his account of Descartes' philosophy. "The fatalism of Descartes was the atomic theory, the fortuitous concourse of atoms—intelligence in results without an intelligent being—design without a designer—and choice,

* Philosophical Works, Vol. V. p. 85.

† Ibid, Vol. VIII. p. 280.

‡ Ibid, p. 355.

the product of the happy concurrence of *material* accidents." We are here lost in amazement. We could not have believed it possible for any man to pen such a paragraph as this of the great father of the modern mental philosophy, the man who forms an era in the history of metaphysics, physics, and mathematics, and whose opinions we had thought were somewhat known to every body who reads at all.* Descartes a materialist, an atheist, and a fatalist! His atheism consists in assuming that, next to the existence of his own mind, the most certain and indisputable of all truths is the existence of God. His materialism is to be sought in his opinion, which Condorcet, D'Alembert, and many others, assert never had been before distinctly taught, that the mind, the thinking principle in man, is strictly and properly immaterial. And his fatalism can be found only in his many strenuous defences of man's "freedom of will." At the very outset of his *Principia Philosophiæ*, he calls upon his reader to reject every thing of the existence of which it is possible for him to doubt. "We can easily suppose, he says, that there is no God, no heaven, no bodies; and that we have neither hands nor feet, nor body; but we cannot thus suppose that we who think these things do not exist, for it is absurd to suppose that that which thinks, at the very time while thinking, does not exist." He thus proves the actual existence of a thinking principle, which is not characterized "by extension, by figure, by local motion, or by any property like those which we attribute to matter; which is therefore purely immaterial; and of which we have an earlier and more certain knowledge than of any material thing."† He then proceeds to establish the being and perfections of God, truths which he considers as necessarily involved in the idea which we are capable of forming of an eternal, self-existent, and perfect being. It is upon the veracity of God that he founds his whole faith in the evidence of his senses, and the conclusions of his reason. He then returns to prove by his senses the existence and properties of the material world, and to apply his reasoning powers to the investigation of truth. He repeatedly affirms

* Condorcet, Stewart, and most metaphysical writers, agree in styling Descartes "the father of the Modern Experimental Philosophy of the Mind."

† In the second of his Philosophical Meditations, he asks, "What am I? A thinking being—that is, a being, doubting, knowing, affirming, denying, consenting, refusing, susceptible of pleasure and pain. *Of all these things I might have had complete experience without any previous acquaintance with the qualities and laws of matter.*" This is a queer way of teaching that "choice is the happy concurrence of material accidents."

in the strongest manner, the liberty of the will. A single passage will sufficiently illustrate his opinions on this subject. "It is wrong," he says, "to imagine that we can do any thing which has not been fore-ordained by God. But we may readily embarrass ourselves with great difficulties if we attempt to reconcile this fore-ordination of God with the liberty of our will, (*arbitrii nostri libertate*). But we may extricate ourselves from these by remembering that our minds are finite; but that the power of God, by which he not only foresaw from eternity, but also willed and fore-ordained all things that are or can be, is infinite. And though we may so far attain the idea of infinite power as to perceive clearly and distinctly that it is an attribute of God; yet we cannot sufficiently comprehend it, to see in what manner it leaves the actions of men free. But we are so intimately conscious of the *liberty* and *indifferency* which we possess, that there is nothing which we can more obviously and perfectly comprehend. And it would be truly absurd, on account of a thing which we know from its very nature ought to be incomprehensible, to doubt respecting another thing which we perfectly comprehend, and of which we are intimately conscious."* Even the physical theory of this illustrious philosopher, was not, as Dr. Beecher asserts, "the atomic theory." Descartes supposed that the material universe was a machine originally constructed and put in motion by the Deity, and that the multiplicity of effects that have since taken place may all have proceeded from one single act of his power. It was to connect the present motions and changes in matter, with the original impulse imparted to it by the Creator, that he invented his hypothesis of "vortices," in direct and avowed opposition to "the atomic theory," and thereby involved himself in a protracted discussion with Gassendi, the great defender of the Epicurean system of physics. It is strange that Dr. Beecher should have so misunderstood his physical theory; and still more strange that he should have made it the ground of charging materialism, atheism, and fatalism upon the man, who was the first to establish clearly the distinction between mind and matter as separate and heterogeneous objects of human knowledge; who taught that we have no reason for trusting even our own senses, or our reason, save our confidence in the veracity

* *Princ. Phil.* §. xl.

of our Maker; and who maintained that no truth can be more certain and undeniable than the liberty of the human will.

We could easily show that there are other mistakes in Dr. Beecher's account of the fatalists, but we have sufficiently redeemed our promise. Our readers must be, by this time, satisfied, how far it is safe ever to trust to Dr. Beecher's accuracy in reporting upon the opinions of others. We may now freely admit "that *truth* and *argument* are not invidious," without thereby relieving Dr. Beecher from the charge. The next time that he wishes to hurl the calumnious epithet of fatalist against those who differ from him, let him at least see to it, that he chooses his ground better.*

Before closing this examination of Dr. Beecher's work, we wish to state distinctly, that it contains much of orthodoxy. The very errors which we have condemned, as we have already remarked, are often given as the equivalents of orthodox statements. And there are many such assertions as the following. "When this perverse decision is once made, the heart is fully set, and *incorrigible* to all motives and *immutable* in its way." "The Scriptures speak of the permanence and *immutability* of man's depravity." "It is a part of the terrific nature of sinful man, to baffle all motives, and be voluntarily but *unchangeably* wicked." We desire to be thankful that it belongs to Dr. Beecher, not to us, to show that that which is incorrigible may nevertheless be corrected, and though unchangeable, that it can be changed. In a single sentence we sometimes have the two brought together. "Nothing is better supported from Scripture than that man, by nature, is in fact *incapable* of recovery, without the power of God specially interposed, though not an impossibility such as the sinner *cannot* overcome." We fear our readers will think that a work, in which the same thing is thus affirmed and denied within the compass of a single sentence, has already received too extended a notice. We dismiss it, therefore, with the expression of our best wishes for the author, and our sincere desire that he may, in future, be more cautious and guarded, should he undertake to deal with the controverted topics of metaphysics and theology.

Since the foregoing article was commenced, we have received two publications from Dr. Beecher through the col-

* For a deserved reproof of Dr. Beecher, on this point, as well as for a detailed refutation of the errors of his book, we refer the reader to Dr. Harvey's work on Moral Agency, recently published.

umns of the Cincinnati Journal. In the first of these we are arraigned, in company with Dr. Wilson, Dr. Hoge, Mr. Nettleton, Dr. Harvey, and the editors of the Presbyterian, the Southern Christian Herald, and the Hartford Watchman, as parties to a conspiracy against him. Though he thinks these conspirators have all done him great wrong, yet he believes that "their sin and shame" may be forgiven, if they will suitably "bewail the evil they have done." The object of the conspiracy is "to write him down in reference to the present crisis in our church;" the proof of it is, that his book, and the consistency of his conduct, have undergone examination at the hands of several of the individuals named within a recent period, and that period so chosen as to preclude the possibility of a reply from him prior to the session of the late General Assembly. We have turned the subject in every possible way, and we are utterly at a loss to conceive what connection the review of Dr. Beecher's book had with the sessions of the General Assembly. He was not upon trial before that body—he was not a delegate to it—he had no other interest in it, that we can discern, than every other Presbyterian minister had. It is useless, however, to reason with the fears of the imagination. And yet we wish there was some way to lay the phantom of evil which Dr. Beecher has conjured up. The most miserable man we have ever known, was one who was persuaded that Buonaparte was employing the whole resources of the French empire for his capture, and that if this attempt was successful, there would then be nothing to hinder the subjugation of the rest of the world. The inconvenience and suffering, occasioned by such fears, are not less than if the apprehended danger were real. We do therefore solemnly assure Dr. Beecher that our article was written without concert or collusion with any one, without a hint or suggestion from any quarter; and that the proximity in the time of its appearance to the session of the General Assembly, was purely accidental. It never once entered our thoughts that a review of his book could have any influence on the proceedings of that body.

Dr. Beecher also finds reason, from the simple fact that his consistency has been impugned, and his book in some respects censured, both at East-Windsor and at Princeton, to suggest to the public whether there is not sufficient evidence of "a coalition of Theological Seminaries," for the sake of "intimidating" their pupils and others into their own theological peculiarities, and thus getting up "a second papal system."

We shall make no other comment upon this note of alarm than to quote the following sentence from his Views in Theology. "And never was there a moment when a little *panic of alarm*, or impatience of feeling, may turn, for good or for evil, the life-giving or destroying waters of such a flood down through distant generations."

Dr. Beecher's second communication to the public is occupied entirely with our former article, but it will not be necessary for us to notice it at any great length. Every reader of the review and the reply will at once see that he has not touched upon the difficulties of the case. The real question is turned aside, and a new issue presented. We will merely illustrate this by a reference to the manner in which he disposes of the extract which we produced from the Spirit of the Pilgrims. In this passage it will be remembered that, after stating the opinions which had been held by the Reformers, the Puritans, and Edwards, he states that a change had taken place, and that the New England divines had long since rejected "the views of the Reformers on the subject of original sin, as consisting in the imputation of Adam's sin, and a depraved nature transmitted by descent;" that in opposition to this they held "that depravity is wholly voluntary, and consists in the transgression of the law under such circumstances as constitutes accountability and desert of punishment." We then quoted another passage to show that Dr. Beecher himself held these views which he attributed to the New England divines. And how does he dispose of this case? Even thus. "To prove that I deny the doctrine of original sin, it is necessary to prove that the standard New England divines denied it, for the change is one which they made, and my concurrence is with them. If they deny original sin, I deny it, and if they do not, I do not." Then follows a string of quotations from New England writers, which we have not read, because they are nothing to the purpose; and moreover we do not need to be informed by Dr. Beecher that they taught the doctrine of original sin. We know they did. But what does this prove? Only what we also knew before, that Dr. Beecher grossly misrepresented them in the extract in question. We were aware that Dr. Woods and others had complained that he did not truly state the New England opinions, in this very controversy with the Christian Examiner, but we did not think it becoming, at the time, to take any notice of this misrepresentation, little imagining that he himself would lay hold of it as the

weapon of his defence. The only effect of his reply is to draw down upon himself the additional charge of having misrepresented the opinions of his brethren. There stand his own words, expressly denying, on behalf of the New England divines in general, and of himself in particular, the doctrine of original sin. To prove now that they did not deny it, is only to convict himself of having slandered them. His own denial still stands in connection with his explicit avowal of the same doctrine in his *Views in Theology*, and his declaration that he has never changed his opinions upon the subject.

Charles Hooper

ART. V.—*General Assembly of 1837.*

THE General Assembly of 1837 will probably form an epoch in the history of the American presbyterian church. We enter on the task of giving its history with very serious feelings. This is not an occasion either for exultation or crimination. The interests of the church and the honour of religion are too deeply involved in the proceedings we are about to narrate, to justify any one in approaching the subject with any other than a calm, humble, and impartial spirit. Such a spirit, we are well aware, it is very difficult, under existing circumstances, either to attain or preserve.*

The General Assembly of the presbyterian church in the United States met in the Central Presbyterian church, Philadelphia, on Thursday, May 18, 1837, at 11 o'clock, A.M., and was opened with a sermon by the Rev. Dr. Witherspoon, the moderator of the last Assembly, from 1 Cor. 1: 10, 11.

* It may be proper to repeat what we have said on former occasions, that it is not the object of these accounts of the proceedings of the Assembly, to give the minutes of that body, or to record all the motions and debates, but simply to select the topics of most importance, and to give the best view we can of the arguments on either side. We make no pretensions to indifference or neutrality. The arguments of those from whom we differ we try to give with perfect fairness, as far as possible, in the language of the reports given by their friends. But we do not undertake to argue the case for them. This we could not do honestly or satisfactorily. On the other hand, we endeavour to make the best argument we can in favour of the measures we approve, using all the speeches of the supporters of those measures, and putting down any thing which may happen to occur to ourselves. Our object is to let our readers know what questions were debated, and to give them the best means in our power to form an opinion of the correctness of the conclusions arrived at.

Immediately after the sermon, the Assembly took a recess until four o'clock in the afternoon.

In the afternoon the Assembly met, and the stated clerk having reported the roll, the members proceeded to the election of moderator. Dr. Green nominated David Elliot, D.D. of the presbytery of Ohio, and Mr. Cleaveland nominated Rev. Baxter Dickinson, of the presbytery of Cincinnati. The roll being called, it appeared that Dr. Elliot had received 137 votes, and Mr. Dickinson 106. The Assembly next proceeded to the election of clerks. The candidates for the office of temporary clerk were the Rev. Mr. Pratt and Rev. Mr. Cleaveland. Mr. Pratt received 133 votes, and Mr. Cleaveland 110. For the office of permanent clerk, Rev. Mr. Krebs received 141 votes, and the Rev. Mr. Duffield 100.

Memorial of the Convention.

The first subject of general interest brought before the Assembly was the memorial of a convention of presbyterian ministers and elders assembled in Philadelphia. This document was presented by Dr. Baxter, the president of the convention.* Its reception was strenuously resisted by Dr. Beman, who argued that, agreeably to precedent and rule, such documents could come regularly before the house only through the committee of bills and overtures. After some debate, it was finally decided that the memorial be received and immediately referred to the committee just named. The next morning the committee reported it to the house, whereupon Dr. Beman rose to oppose its being read. He objected, because it came from a convention, a body not known to that Assembly, an *ex parte* congregational council, &c. Dr. Beman stood alone in his opposition. The memorial was read and referred to Drs. Alexander, Green, Baxter, and Messrs. Plumer, Lowrie and Lenox.

On Monday morning Dr. Alexander, as chairman of the above named committee, reported in part as follows, viz.

“The committee to whom was referred the testimony and memorial of the convention of 1837, report that they have endeavoured to give to the subjects

* We should like to give this and other important papers entire, but are deterred from doing so by the following considerations. 1. The documents brought before this Assembly would of themselves nearly fill an ordinary number of this work. 2. Most of our readers will receive these documents in another form. 3. As the Protests, Answers, Letters, &c. presented to the Assembly relate to the subjects debated in the house, we should present our readers with the same matter in several different forms if we should give both a summary of the debates, and these various documents.

noticed in that paper, all the attention which time permitted, and which the contents of the document demanded. As the result of their deliberations, they submit, for the action of this body, a few resolutions, hoping to be indulged respecting other matters, until they shall be able, by further consultation, to mature something more, for the consideration of the General Assembly.

"It is proper here to observe that the general subjects of the memorial, viz. religious doctrine, church order and discipline, and reform on these subjects are lawful matters of memorial to the Assembly; and whatever may be thought of the details, none can read the document without feeling that it comes from men who are respectful, earnest, and solemn, and apprehensive of danger to the cause of truth.

"As one of the principal objects of the memorialists is to point out certain errors, more or less prevalent in our church, and to bear testimony against them, your committee are of opinion that as one great object of the institution of the church was to be a depository and guardian of the truth; and as by the constitution of the presbyterian church in the United States, it is made the duty of the General Assembly to testify against error, therefore,

"I. *Resolved*, That the testimony of the memorialists concerning doctrine be adopted as the testimony of this General Assembly (with a few verbal alterations), which is as follows, viz.

"1. That God would have prevented the existence of sin in our world, but was not able, without destroying the moral agency of man: or, that for aught that appears in the Bible to the contrary, sin is incidental to any wise moral system.

"2. That election to eternal life is founded on a foresight of faith and obedience.

"3. That we have no more to do with the first sin of Adam than with the sins of any other parent.

"4. That infants come into the world as free from moral defilement as was Adam when he was created.

"5. That infants sustain the same relation to the moral government of God in this world as brute animals, and that their sufferings and death are to be accounted for on the same principles as those of brutes, and not by any means to be considered as penal.

"6. That there is no other original sin than the fact that all the posterity of Adam, though by nature innocent, or possessed of no moral character, will always begin to sin when they begin to exercise moral agency; that original sin does not include a sinful bias of the human mind, and a just exposure to penal suffering; and that there is no evidence in Scripture, that infants, in order to salvation, do need redemption by the blood of Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost.

"7. That the doctrine of imputation, whether of the guilt of Adam's sin, or of the righteousness of Christ, has no foundation in the word of God, and is both unjust and absurd.

"8. That the sufferings and death of Christ were not truly vicarious and penal, but symbolical, governmental, and instructive only.

"9. That the impenitent sinner is by nature, and independently of the renewing influence or almighty energy of the Holy Spirit in full possession of all the ability necessary to a full compliance with all the commands of God.

"10. That Christ does not intercede for the elect, until after their regeneration.

"11. That saving faith is not an effect of the special operation of the Holy Spirit, but a mere rational belief of the truth, or assent to the word of God.

"12. That regeneration is the act of the sinner himself, and that it consists in a change of his governing purpose, which he himself must produce, and which is the result, not of any direct influence of the Holy Spirit on the heart, but

chiefly of a persuasive exhibition of the truth analogous to the influence which one man exerts over the mind of another; or that regeneration is not an instantaneous act, but a progressive work.

"13. That God has done all that *he can do* for the salvation of all men, and that man himself must do the rest.

"14. That God cannot exert such influence on the minds of men, as shall make it certain that they will choose and act in a particular manner without impairing their moral agency.

"15. That the righteousness of Christ is not the sole ground of the sinner's acceptance with God; and that in no sense does the righteousness of Christ become ours.

"16. That the reason why some differ from others in regard to their reception of the gospel is, that they make themselves to differ.

"Against all these errors, whenever, wherever, and by whomsoever taught, the Assembly would solemnly testify; and would warn all in connection with the presbyterian church against them. They would also enjoin it upon all the inferior judicatories to adopt all suitable measures to keep their members pure from opinions so dangerous.

"Especially does the Assembly earnestly enjoin on all the presbyteries to guard with great care the door of entrance to the sacred office. Nor can the Assembly regard, as consistent with ministerial ordination vows, an unwillingness to discipline according to the rules of the word of God and of our standards, any person already a teacher, who may give currency to the foregoing errors.

"II. In regard to the relation existing between the presbyterian and congregational churches, the committee recommend the adoption of the following resolutions, viz.

"1. That between these two branches of the American church, there ought, in the judgment of this Assembly, to be maintained sentiments of mutual respect and esteem, and for that purpose no reasonable efforts should be omitted to preserve a perfectly good understanding between these branches of the church of Christ.

"2. That it is expedient to continue the plan of friendly intercourse between this church and the congregational churches of New England, as it now exists.

"3. But as the 'plan of union' adopted for the new settlements in 1801, was originally an unconstitutional act on the part of the Assembly, these important standing rules having never been submitted to the presbyteries, and as they were totally destitute of authority as proceeding from the General Association of Connecticut, which is invested with no power to legislate in such cases, and especially to enact laws to regulate churches not within her limits; and as much confusion and irregularity has arisen from the unnatural and unconstitutional system of union, therefore it is

"Resolved, That the act of Assembly of 1801, entitled, 'A Plan of Union,' be and the same is hereby abrogated.—[See *Digest*, pp. 297—299.]

"4. That our delegates to the bodies representing the congregational churches, be instructed to explain to them the reasonableness and even necessity of the foregoing measure."

After the acceptance of this report, a motion was made to adopt that portion of it which related to doctrinal errors. Mr. Mines said he was not ready to adopt the report. He could conscientiously vote to condemn the errors specified, but thought that there were other errors, on the opposite extreme, which also demanded condemnation. He wished, therefore, to add the following specifications to the list.

1. That man has no ability of any kind to obey God's commands or to do his duty. 2. That ability is not necessary to constitute obligation. 3. That God may justly command what man has no ability to perform, and justly condemn him for the non-performance. 4. That all the powers of man to perform the duties required of him have been destroyed by the fall.* Mr. Jessup moved the postponement of this subject until Tuesday morning at nine o'clock. This motion led to a debate which occupied most of the morning. The postponement was finally acceded to by a vote of 129 to 126. In the afternoon that part of the report which related to the abrogation of the plan of union between presbyterian and congregational churches, adopted by the Assembly in 1801, was taken up. The first resolution was adopted. When the second was proposed, Mr. Breckinridge moved to insert the words "at present" after the word "expedient." After some debate, the motion was withdrawn. On the third resolution, which proposed the abrogation of the said plan of union, a discussion ensued, which occupied the attention of the house during the remainder of the afternoon and the whole of Tuesday. The resolution was opposed by Messrs. Foot, Crocker, Graves, Woodbury, Loss, Spaulding, Johnston, Cleaveland, M'Auley, Hooker, E. White, Peters. It was advocated by Messrs. Green, Alexander, Junkin, and Plumer. At the conclusion of Dr. Peters' speech the previous question was moved and seconded by a vote of 129 to 123; when the main question was put, and the resolution passed; ayes 143, noes 110.

* We cannot refrain from making a remark on the extreme delicacy of calling on deliberative bodies, and especially on the highest judicatories of a church to affirm or deny doctrinal propositions. It would be well to remember with what sedulous care and frequent debate and comparison of views the Westminster Assembly revised and determined on the language employed in our standards. Luther and the other Wittenberg divines, when called upon to furnish the diet with a brief statement of the points of agreement and difference between them and the Romanists, utterly refused on the ground that it was too difficult and serious a matter to be done in a few days, which was all the time which could then be commanded. We see, however, that in our Assembly no hesitation is felt in moving on the spot, that such and such doctrinal propositions be approved or condemned. These remarks are not made in any special reference to Mr. Mines, but relate to a matter of frequent occurrence. As to this particular case, however, it will be seen that though we have four propositions proposed to be condemned, they all amount to the same thing, and they are so worded, that they may be affirmed or denied by the same person with equal truth and safety.

Abrogation of the Plan of Union.

With regard to the constitutionality of the plan of union, there seems to have been a diversity of opinion among those who opposed its abrogation. Dr. M'Auley said, "He readily conceded that the plan was at least extra-constitutional. The wonder was that it should ever have been considered otherwise. But those who entered into the arrangement considered the necessity of the case as rising above the constitution." Mr. E. White said, "That the contract was constitutional in its form, he should not attempt to argue. So far from this, he freely admitted that it was an open violation of all the principles of presbyterianism, save that of doing good, in good faith with our neighbour." We find however the following argument in the protest of the minority to prove that the plan was not unconstitutional. "The utmost that can be said on this subject is, that it is an act neither specifically provided for nor prohibited in the constitution. It cannot therefore be affirmed to be *contrary* to the constitution.

"The constitution provides, that before any constitutional rules proposed by the General Assembly to be established, shall be obligatory on all the churches, the approval of them by a majority of presbyteries must be first obtained. (Form of Government, chap. xii. sec. 6.) The act of the Assembly adopting the plan of union, it is admitted, was not previously transmitted to the presbyteries for their approval. It does not therefore follow, however, that that act was unconstitutional, because the provisions of the union were, neither in fact, nor ever regarded by any of the presbyteries as "constitutional *rules*" to be obligatory on *all* the churches. They were the mere terms of an agreement or treaty between the General Assembly of the presbyterian church and the General Association of Connecticut, and, through that Association, with all the churches which have been formed according to the terms of that treaty.

"In the act of the Assembly adopting that *plan of union*, the General Assembly, being constitutionally "the bond of union, peace, correspondence and mutual confidence, among all our churches," (Form of Government, chap. xii. sec. 4,) merely exercised its legitimate functions, agreeably to the constitution, (Form of Government, chap. i. sec. 2,) in declaring "the terms of admission into the *communion*" of the presbyterian church, proper to be required on the frontier settlements. And in this light the entire presbyterian

church has so regarded this plan of union from its adoption up to the present time, when the abrogation of it is publicly declared, by the advocates of the measure, to be *necessary* for the acquisition and perpetuation of power to accomplish the ends avowed and sought by the minority of the last General Assembly, and prosecuted by means of a convention, called at their instance, and holding its sessions contemporaneously with those of the Assembly. For the following facts are undeniable, viz. 1st, that the plan of union now declared to be unconstitutional was formed TWENTY YEARS *before* the adoption of the present constitution of the presbyterian church; 2d, that this plan, at the time of the adoption of the constitution, was in full and efficient operation, and of acknowledged authority as common law in the church; 3d, that it had been recognized and respected, in numerous precedents in the doings of the General Assembly from year to year; and 4th, that for SIXTEEN YEARS *since* the adoption of this constitution, it has been regarded of equal authority with any act whatever to which the General Assembly is constitutionally competent.

“Had the plan of union and the act of the General Assembly adopting it, been regarded unconstitutional and null, as being either an assumption of power not granted, or a trespass on the rights of presbyteries, some remonstrance or objection to the imposition of constitutional rules for the government of all the churches, not legitimately enacted, would have been heard from some quarter before the lapse of one third of a century. Had the plan of union been thought illegal, or had it been designed or desired by the presbyteries in 1821, when the constitution was revised, amended and adopted by them a second time, to frustrate or resist the operation of this plan, unquestionably either the revised and amended constitution would have had embodied in it some provision against it, or some attempt at least, would have been made to that effect. The truth is, that the plan of union adopted by the General Assembly was felt to be morally binding, as a solemn agreement or treaty duly ratified by the power constitutionally competent to do so; and by no means the enactment of constitutional rules to be “obligatory on all the churches” for their government.

“It is to no purpose, in our opinion, to allege the unconstitutionality of the plan of union, by pleading that for a church to be regarded as a presbyterian church, it must according to our constitution be organized with ruling elders,

while that plan provides for the organization of churches in certain cases without such officers; because the plan of union designedly contemplates a process, which the Assembly was constitutionally competent to prescribe, and which the entire church had approved, by which churches on the frontier settlements may be organized partially at first on the presbyterian ground, and be gradually brought fully on to it; and because, if the provisions of the constitution prescribing the *full* form of organization proper for a presbyterian church, must in every case be minutely and completely observed, and any deviation from it should vitiate the organization, then must those numerous churches among us, in which there are no deacons, be for the same reason pronounced unconstitutional.

“The attempt to prove the unconstitutionality of the act of the Assembly adopting the plan of union, by attributing to the provisions of that plan the character of constitutional rules obligatory on *all* the churches, and by objecting that the presbyteries had not been previously consulted, strikes as directly and is as conclusive, against the plans adopted for the organization and government of the Theological Seminaries at Princeton and Alleghany; of the Board of Education and of Missions; and for the union and perpetuated existence of the presbyteries belonging to the General Synod of the Associate Reformed church, who were admitted into communion with the presbyterian by the terms of a plan of union agreed upon between that Synod and the General Assembly. For the provisions of these plans have never been transmitted to the presbyteries for their approval. If therefore the plan of union with the General Association is to be abrogated, because of alleged unconstitutionality on these grounds, so must be the rules and regulations, and the whole organization and government of the Theological Seminaries of the General Assembly, and also the act of the Assembly by which the presbyteries of the Associate Reformed Synod were united with the presbyterian church of these United States, by which the General Assembly became possessed of the valuable Theological Library known as the Mason Library, now in Princeton, and formerly belonging to the Associate Reformed Synod.”

2. The second position assumed by the minority was, that the abrogation of the plan of union would be a violation of compact, and therefore could not be effected consistently with good faith. The parties to this contract were either the

General Assembly and the General Association of Connecticut, or the Assembly and the churches formed under the plan of union. Most of the speakers on either side took the former view. The opponents of the resolution argued that, although the Association of Connecticut had no authority over the churches in question, it had still a constitutional existence, and was competent to become one party to a contract. The Assembly of 1835, though they desired to prevent future action under the plan, had not ventured to interfere with the sacredness of a contract which had entwined its benefits and blessings with the growth and prosperity of so many of our rising churches. There were rights belonging, under this agreement, both to the Association of Connecticut and to those churches in the then new settlements to whom the compact had special reference. It was not to be admitted that because the Association of Connecticut was a less fixed and visible and tangible body than our own, therefore we had a right to nullify our own contract with it. Whatever might be the defects of their system of government, or the excellencies of ours, no diversity of government could disannul a solemn covenant deliberately made. There can be no impropriety in calling the plan of union a contract, for it was, in the first place, a proposition from the General Assembly, which, according to their own terms, was to become binding if the General Association of Connecticut should assent to it; and the implication was that if the Association did not assent, it was not to be binding. It was a plan of union, but it involved an agreement on their part and on ours. It was therefore a covenant, an agreement between two parties for their mutual benefit; an agreement between the presbyterian church on the one side, and certain branches of the congregational church on the other. Certain rights were in the congregational churches, and they entered into an agreement for the benefit of their brethren in the new settlements, and if we wished to put an end to the agreement, the decorous course would be to appoint delegates who should lay before them the resolution we contemplated adopting, and confer with them on the subject. It might be admitted that because the Association of Connecticut had ceased to hold a connexion with the congregational churches in the west, the original connexion between them might be considered as lapsed. But had the binding obligation of the covenant therefore lapsed? The parent had ceased to be, but instead of the parent, had come the offspring. New congregational churches

had risen up and mingled themselves with us, and become ours. The original obligation was now transferred to the churches, presbyteries and synods which had been founded on the faith of it; for the plan had extended its benign influence far and wide. Along all our frontier numerous churches had been formed on the faith of that covenant who never dreamed that its obligation had ceased. All those presbyteries and synods had not only been organized, but called our ministers, received and welcomed our agents, contributed to our funds, both permanent and occasional, and were in fact one with us, forming an integral part of the presbyterian church. If this plan of union was unconstitutional, what was to be said of the constitutionality of this resolution? It proposed a measure which must necessarily affect large portions of our church; and if the Assembly had no right to form any constitutional rule without first sending down the proposition to the presbyteries, by what authority can it pass an act essentially altering the organization of large portions of our body, without first submitting it in like manner?

3. Even if there were evils connected with the plan, the resolution does not propose the proper method of redress. It is unrighteous to judge and condemn whole communities *en masse*. But the Assembly is called upon not to accuse merely, but at once to condemn whole presbyteries and synods in the west. We want to know facts, and not the reports spread by rumour with her trumpet tongue. If it were true that error was creeping in through this plan of union, let it be shown; and, if possible, let the plan be constitutionally abrogated. Even could it be shown that there was some defect in the compact as originally formed, did it follow that it would be morally right, and according to the genius of presbyterianism, for the Assembly to rise up and at once to destroy it? Surely, if the supreme judicatory of the church, by overlooking the obvious unconstitutionality of the arrangement, had suffered it to stand for thirty-six years, it was that judicatory that was responsible for the consequences, and not those infant churches, who, in confidence of our veracity, had placed themselves under the operation of the plan.

4. Besides, the Assembly ought to look at the source whence this measure emanates. It has been brought up by the memorial of a convention. And what was this convention? And what is their object in proposing a measure like this? A dissatisfied minority of the last Assembly had, through an organ of their own, proposed a meeting immedi-

ately on the rising of the Assembly, to consist of a party minority; and the meeting was accordingly held. The invitation had been given in face of the world, but their proceedings were secret. Immediately afterwards, however, whispers were every where circulated that the church was to be divided. Then came a circular, next a pamphlet, then this convention. It had been many days in session, and its discussions were known to the moderator and other gentlemen on this floor. The result of the whole has been the presentation of this memorial. The memorial complained of the doings of the Assembly of 1836, insisted on the impossibility of continuing any longer with two conflicting systems of church government, and prayed for relief in the premises; and among the measures proposed to remedy the evil, this was one. The evils of the church had been largely discussed in the convention, and it had there been stated that the prominent evil consisted of certain doctrinal errors, and that out of these had grown certain irregularities in discipline. Now supposing the Assembly should abrogate the plan of union, because these errors were held by the churches formed under it, and then all these churches should rise as one man, and say aye to the condemnation of the whole list, what would then become of the argument for this resolution? And what a beautiful ground would then be left of appealing to those churches for the justice of your act? It would then be necessary to expunge almost every thing the memorial contained. The irregularities complained of have not arisen from the plan of union, for they are found in portions of the church which have never been subjected to its operation. This very convention is an irregularity. Its members complain of certain evils, propose certain remedies, and then come into this house to receive their own complaints, and grant their own petitions. The source therefore whence this resolution proceeds, and the result at which it aims, are strong reasons for its rejection.

5. Could this plan be rightfully and constitutionally abrogated, it would still be highly inexpedient to set it aside. Every one must be struck with the aspect in which this plan presents itself to the minds of the brethren who came from the region where it prevailed, and where its practical results could be best judged of. They all spoke of the blessings it had shed throughout all that region. They all deprecated its abrogation as a calamity, and spoke of the trouble and confusion which must necessarily ensue. This was the view of

entire presbyteries and synods; while only a small minority of particular presbyteries, and in some cases a solitary discontented individual, brought up an unfavourable report. The plan was originally proposed by those who saw the necessity for such an arrangement. The fertile regions of the west were rapidly filling up with a population mostly from New England. These people, accustomed to congregationalism, and unwilling at once to abandon it, and yet too few and scattered conveniently to support the ordinances of the gospel by themselves, were persuaded to unite, for this purpose, with their presbyterian neighbours. The result has been that hundreds of churches have been thus formed and sustained, which, but for this plan, might never have been formed at all. Entire presbyteries and synods now exist where, previously to the adoption of the plan of union, there were scarcely any presbyterian churches or ministers. The same necessity exists at present for this arrangement which existed then, though not in the same region of country. You hear, however, the brethren from Michigan and Illinois assuring you that the union is still essential to the support of their churches. One brother says he knows of at least twelve churches which must be deprived of the ordinances of the gospel if this resolution be adopted. The effect of this plan has been to bring into our body a multitude of sound presbyterian churches; its abrogation will drive multitudes into confirmed congregationalism, and that too of the worst kind, and will effectually prevent the spread and establishment of our system in many regions to which it would otherwise have easy access. The passage of the resolution in question cannot fail to produce extensive and lasting mischief.

The speakers in favour of abrogating the plan of union urged, in the first place, that it was entirely unconstitutional, and therefore null and void from the beginning, as well on the ground that the parties by which it was adopted were incompetent to make such an arrangement, as on account of the provisions of the plan itself. In order, therefore, to understand this subject, we must attend to both these points—the nature of the plan, and the competency of the parties. As to the nature of the plan, it will be perceived, on a reference to the Assembly's Digest, p. 297, 298, that it provides—1. That a presbyterian may be the pastor of a congregational church, and a congregationalist the pastor of a presbyterian church. 2. That the internal discipline of the congregational churches may be conducted on congregational princi-

ples, except when the difficulty relates to the presbyterian pastor, when the case must be referred to his presbytery, provided the church consent, if they do not, it must be referred to a mutual council. 3. That when a presbyterian church has a congregationalist for its pastor, the internal discipline must be on the presbyterian plan; i. e. a congregationalist may preside in a presbyterian church session, and administer presbyterian government which he neither approves of nor submits to. In case of difficulty between such pastor and his church, the matter must be referred to his association, or to a mutual council. In case a congregation consists partly of presbyterians and partly of congregationalists, the plan provides—1. That they should be formed into one church. 2. That a standing committee should be chosen to administer discipline; that a congregationalist may appeal from the decisions of this committee to the male members of the church, and a presbyterian to the presbytery whose decision shall be final, unless the church consents to a further appeal to the synod, or to the General Assembly. 3. That if the said standing committee of any church, shall depute one of themselves to attend presbytery, he may have the same right to sit and act in presbytery, as a ruling elder of the presbyterian church. It is obvious on the slightest reflection that there are almost as many direct violations of the constitution and form of government of our church, as there are distinct provisions in this plan. The constitution from its very nature is designed for presbyterians and for them only. None others can rightfully come under its provisions, nor take part in its administration. The constitution supposes and requires that our congregations should be presbyterian congregations, and our pastors presbyterian pastors. But this plan makes provision for the introduction into our body of congregational churches and ministers, and allows them to continue congregationalists. It is, therefore, opposed not merely to this or that special provision of our constitution, but it is at variance with its whole nature and design. It requires no argument or illustration to prove that it is contrary to our constitution that congregationalists, remaining such, should be made members of our church, any more than it needs to be proved that the citizens of France cannot, while they continue such, be the citizens of England; or that Canada cannot be one of the states of our Union, while it remains a province of Great Britain. Some of the brethren on the other side, have indeed said that the utmost

that can be maintained on this subject is, that the constitution makes no provision for such a plan of union, but that it is not unconstitutional. Such assertions can only excite astonishment. If any one could be found to propose in the congress of the United States, that Canada, Jamaica, Cuba, Hispaniola and Mexico, retaining their present political organizations and relations, should be included in our Union, and allowed to send delegates to our state legislatures, or to our national council, and still continue independent of all the enactments of those bodies, we venture to affirm that no second man could be found to say that such a proposal was not unconstitutional; nor would any man think it worth his while to quote chapter and section of the constitution for the purpose of arguing down such a proposal. It is only in the most liberal and accommodating of all churches, that such propositions could be made, or such assertions listened to. As the object contemplated in the plan under consideration, viz. the union of two distinct ecclesiastical denominations in one body, is at variance with the very nature of our constitution, we feel it to be almost a waste of time, to prove that the details of the plan are in opposition to almost all the leading principles of our system. Our constitution directs that churches shall be organized with a pastor and bench of elders, but this plan directs them to be organized in a different way. The constitution directs that church members, when charged with offences, must be tried by the session with the right of appeal to the higher courts; this plan directs that in some cases they are to be tried by the male members of the church, in others by a standing committee, and denies the right of appeal to the higher judicatories except when permission is granted by those who are not presbyterians. The constitution directs that every minister, when accused, must be tried by his presbytery, i. e. by his peers, men who have adopted the same standards and are subject to the same form of government with himself; this plan denies him this privilege, and requires him to be tried, at the discretion of others, by those who have adopted a different standard of faith, different rules of evidence, and a different form of government. Our constitution directs that before a man can be installed as pastor of a presbyterian church, or preside in a church session, he must adopt our confession of faith and form of government; but this plan allows a congregationalist to be a presbyterian pastor and the moderator of a presbyterian session. The constitution prescribes certain qualifications for

all ecclesiastical rulers, whether in the session, presbytery, synod, or General Assembly, but this dispenses with these qualifications, and allows a congregationalist to be the moderator, and congregationalists to be the constituent members of the church session; it allows men who have never been ordained to sit and vote in presbytery, and by so doing to have an equal voice with others, in the constitution of our higher courts, even though it makes no express provision for such persons themselves appearing as members of synod or of the General Assembly. The plan therefore is subversive of almost every one of the leading principles of our ecclesiastical system, whether in reference to the organization of churches, the qualifications of rulers, or the constitution of our church courts. It is not merely something apart or aside from the constitution, it is in direct contravention of its most important provisions.

By whom then was this plan proposed and adopted? It is very obvious that, making as it does numerous fundamental changes in our system, it could be rightfully introduced by no power short of that which can make and unmake the constitution at pleasure. The fact, however, is that it was adopted by the General Assembly, a body which has no authority to alter or suspend one of the least of our constitutional provisions. It cannot extend the time of study required of candidates for the ministry; it cannot alter the ratio of representation; it cannot dispense in any one instance with the constitutional requisitions for office. But here is an Assembly setting aside the rules which prescribe the mode of organization of churches, sessions, and presbyteries; allowing what the constitution forbids, and forbidding what the constitution directs. Should the American congress by resolution declare the present senators of the United States a hereditary peerage, and confer a seat in the upper house on the bishops of the Episcopal church, it is presumed it would be regarded as something more than a mere extra-constitutional measure; and that the Supreme Court would consume very little time in deciding on the validity of any claims arising under such a resolution. Congress however has quite as much authority to alter the constitution of the United States, as the General Assembly had to adopt a plan of union abrogating our form of government, and conferring on congregationalists the rights and power of presbyterians in the presbyterian church.

But even supposing for a moment the Assembly to be

competent to make such an arrangement, with whom was it made? The plan of union has been declared to be a compact. If so, with whom was it formed? Most of the brethren on the other side regarded it as a compact between the General Assembly and the General Association of Connecticut; while others represented it as a contract between the Assembly and the churches in the new settlements. The former were undoubtedly correct. If it is a compact at all, the contracting parties were the Assembly and the Association. They formed an arrangement relating to the new churches, but not with them. This is plain from the face of the record. It is called "a plan of government for the churches in the new settlements," which was "adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in America, and by the General Association of the State of Connecticut." This plan was proposed by the Assembly to the Association, was to be binding if adopted by the latter, but not otherwise. Accordingly it is duly recorded that the plan was adopted by the said Association.* Now the question arises, what right had the Association of Connecticut to form a plan of government for the churches in the western part of New York? Had that body any manner of authority over those churches, any more than over the churches of South Britain? It is not pretended, here, nor elsewhere, that they had any such authority. They have no power even over the churches of Connecticut. All they could do, was to express their opinion, that, under the circumstances, the Assembly's plan was a good one. But is this a contract? Not at all. The Association had no constitutional right to make such a contract, and therefore for this reason, if for no other, the arrangement has no binding force, any longer than the Assembly chose to regard it. If the state of New Jersey should enter into a commercial treaty with Great Britain, prescribing a tariff of duties, it would be *ab initio* void, because the state has no authority to act in the business. The plan of union therefore cannot be regarded as a binding contract between the Assembly and the Association, because the latter had no authority in the case. We regard this however as a very subordinate point, because, whatever may have been the intention of the parties, or the form of the arrangement, the Association had really nothing to do with it, authoritatively, at the beginning; and it has nothing to do with it now. It is now and always has

* See Assembly's Digest, pp. 297—299.

been simply a domestic affair; a concern of our own. The only question therefore is, whether the Assembly of 1801 had any right to set aside all the fundamental principles of presbyterian church government, and, in direct violation of the constitution, to say that churches may be organized without ruling elders, sessions formed without one presbyterian member, presbyteries constituted partly of presbyterians and partly of congregationalists? This is a point which cannot be argued. It is too plain to admit of being proved. We think therefore the brethren would have acted far more wisely to say with Dr. M'Auley, that they "would not defend it on the ground of the constitution;" or with Mr. White, that "it was an open violation of all the principles of presbyterianism," than to assume the obviously untenable ground that the constitution, if it did not provide for such a plan, at least admitted of it. It always injures even a good cause to be sustained by arguments which hurt the understanding of every man to whom they are presented.

It has been said, however, that although the plan was not originally adopted by the presbyteries, yet, inasmuch as the constitution was submitted to their revision, since this arrangement was formed, and no objections were made to it, it thus was duly sanctioned. The constitution, however, was not made, as has been strangely asserted, after this plan was formed. It is now, in all its essential features, what it was before the revision of 1821. Not a single provision affected by this arrangement has been altered. This plan formed no part of the constitution or book of discipline submitted to the presbyteries for their reception or rejection. It was nothing more than a series of resolutions standing on the minutes of the General Assembly. Will it be pretended that the presbyteries were bound to look over the minutes of this body from its organization, and express their opinion of the constitutionality of every resolution, under the penalty of being forever after held to silence and acquiescence? The truth is that, at the time of the revision of the constitution, the plan of union had excited but little attention among the churches generally; and had this not been the case, the presbyteries could not regularly have expressed their judgment on the case, when called to decide on an instrument which made no allusion to it. Many of these brethren maintain that the Assembly has no right to have a Board of Missions, and insist that before such a board could be regularly established, the plan must be submitted to the presbyteries. Will

they then admit, that inasmuch as the Assembly had a Board of Missions before the revision of the constitution, the appointment of that board has received the sanction of the presbyteries? If so, why do they contend that it is now extra-constitutional?

It is argued, again, that even if the arrangement were unconstitutional in its inception, yet inasmuch as it is of the nature of a contract, it cannot, consistently with good faith, be set aside. We are not disposed to assert that there may not be cases in which an individual or a public body may form a compact which, from want of competency in the contracting parties, or from the subject matter of the agreement, may be void in law, and yet be morally obligatory. We deny, however, that the case under consideration is one of this kind. If a guardian, as the representative of his ward, makes a contract not only unfavourable but unreasonable and unjust in its own nature, ceding away rights and interests which that ward holds in trust for others, so far from its observance being morally obligatory, its abrogation becomes a moral duty. Such we maintain is the case in the present instance. The General Assembly of 1801, as the representative of the presbyteries, ceded away the fundamental principles of our system, gave up the guards and securities for order and truth which presbyterians deem essential. This they had no more right to do, than a guardian has a right to cede away the entailed estate of his ward. And the presbyteries, when they come clearly to understand the nature of the arrangement, and see not merely that it operates injuriously to their interests, but that it endangers the security of the sacred deposit of which they are the trustees, are as much bound to set it aside, as a ward would be to cancel an agreement of his guardian, which made him a party to a fraud or breach of trust. This is a very feeble and unfavourable illustration. When we hear of a contract, we naturally think of a valuable consideration which the one party receives from another, and the mind revolts at the idea even of a ward setting aside a covenant, though illegal, after he has enjoyed the benefit of it. The brethren on the other side have not been backward to avail themselves of this advantage. It is however a delusion. We deny that presbyterians ever received any valuable consideration in this case. It was at the beginning a concession, a yielding up, and not a receiving on our part. What advantage is it to presbyterians, who value their system, to allow churches to be organized with-

out elders, to permit congregationalists to constitute our sessions and presbyteries, to give to men the privilege of governing us, who refused to be governed by us? The advantage is all on one side. The repeal of the plan of union, therefore, is not analogous to the cancelling of an illegal sale after payment has been made. It is not even the recalling of a gift, so much as the refusal of a set of men to continue giving what they find they had no right to bestow, and what they are bound by every moral obligation to retain and preserve. It may be said, however, that inasmuch as multitudes of presbyterian churches have been formed under this plan, four synods now existing where forty years ago there were scarcely as many congregations, presbyterians have therein received great advantages. But we deny, in the first place, that this is an advantage. On the contrary, it is a great evil; not the formation of Christian churches, be it understood, but the formation of mongrel congregations, neither presbyterian nor congregational. We maintain that it would be far better for us and for all concerned, had the union never taken place; and if instead of the present anomalous plan, churches formed either on the one system or the other, had been regularly organized. In the second place, if these numerous churches with all their influence constitute the valuable consideration in the contract, are we not willing to give them up? Have we received any thing from this contract which we are not anxious to restore? It is a most unfair misrepresentation to hold us up as desirous to set aside a contract, and yet retain the valuable consideration. We deny that we ever received such consideration; and what our opponents regard as such, we are very ready to relinquish.

It is said, moreover, that certain rights have vested in these churches in consequence of the plan of union, which it would be a breach of faith to recall. A right, however, is a legal or equitable claim. What valid legal claim can arise under an unconstitutional act, void from its nature, *ab initio*? And what equitable claim can congregationalists have to govern presbyterians? We have very amiably submitted to be thus governed for a long series of years; but we cannot see that this submission confers the right of perpetual domination. The repeal of the union, therefore, takes away no legal or equitable right. It simply declares that presbyterian churches must be presbyterian churches, that presbyteries must be presbyteries, and that those who sit in our church courts must have the constitutional qualifications of mem-

bership, and be themselves subject to their own enactments. If such a measure can be made the subject of popular indignation, it must be by other means than fair representation.

2. The second leading argument in favour of the abrogation of the plan of union is its injustice and its injurious operation. To a certain extent this argument has been anticipated. The arrangement is essentially unjust and unreasonable inasmuch as it confers on congregationalists the privileges of membership in the presbyterian church, while they themselves continue independent of the laws which they enact and administer. This evil affects all our courts from the session to the General Assembly. Thus the moderator of a church session may be a congregational minister, who decides on the standing of presbyterians, and administers a system of discipline which he has never adopted. The presbyteries, which, according to the constitution, should be composed of ministers and ruling elders, may be, under this plan, and to a very great extent, in fact are, composed of congregationalists. The decisions of these bodies are binding on all the presbyterians within their bounds, but have no authority over the congregationalists, by whose votes they have been adopted. Again, our synods being delegated bodies, as far as the lay members are concerned, are also subject to the direct influence of congregational voters by whom the lay delegates are appointed. And, finally, the General Assembly being constituted by the representatives of the presbyteries, and presbyteries formed under the plan of union embracing congregationalists, the highest judicatory of the church is thus appointed, in part, by congregationalists. Thus through all our courts we have men deciding on our doctrines and on the standing of our members and ministers who have never adopted our standards; men are employed in making laws for us, to which they themselves refuse to submit. If this be not an absurdity, and an injustice, we know not what can be. As long as from the limited extent of the evil, it was a matter of insignificance, it was so treated. But since it has grown to be intolerable, we must cease to tolerate it. While there was only here and there a congregationalist in any of our judicatories, no one felt any concern about the matter; but now that a fourth or a third of our church courts are composed either of congregationalists or of their representatives, it is an imperative duty to put an end to the system.

There is another form of this same evil. According to the fundamental principles of our system, all our courts above the church session should be composed of equal portions of the clergy and the representatives of the people. But under the operation of this plan, we have presbyteries of twenty, thirty, or forty ministers, and only one, two, or three elders; synods containing from one to two hundred ministers, and from ten to twenty or thirty elders.* This, as far as a fair representation of the people is concerned, is a great injustice. This is not all. The presbyterian church is specially interested in the constitution of the General Assembly. As this is our supreme judicatory, any unfairness in the constitution of this body operates unjustly and oppressively on the whole church. Our book prescribes that the General Assembly shall be composed of one minister and one ruling elder for every twelve ministers and twelve churches.† But under the operation of this plan, a presbytery, with fifty ministers and two presbyterian churches, is as fully represented as though it had fifty churches; and a synod of two hundred ministers and ten or twenty churches, has as many members on this floor as though it had two hundred churches. That is, ten or twenty churches in some regions of the church, have as much authority in the Assembly as two hundred in other regions. In other words, there are hundreds of congregational churches, which are as fully represented in this house as the strictest presbyterian congregations in the land. Men who do not adopt our system have as much influence in its administration as those who do adopt it. They have as much authority to decide on the standing of our ministers, or the administration of our laws, determine on what presbyterians are to believe and teach, as though they themselves were presbyterians. Is this fair? Is it reasonable? Are

* The presbytery of Lorain, for example, contains twelve churches, of which only one is presbyterian. The presbytery of Trumbull has twelve ministers, and is said to contain but one presbyterian church. The synod of the Western Reserve has one hundred and eighteen ministers, and is said to have from twenty-five to thirty presbyterian churches. This statement was sustained on the floor of the Assembly by testimony of the members of the Western Reserve synod themselves.

† This is the principle of the book. The slight deviation occasioned by ministers without charges being represented is not taken into account, 1. Because this occurs more or less in all presbyteries, and therefore does not operate unfairly; and 2. Because such ministers being presbyterians have a right to be represented. 3. Because vacant churches are entitled to representation in the presbyteries, which are the constituents of the General Assembly.

we to be threatened with the indignation of freemen and the execration of posterity for putting an end to this system; for simply saying to our congregational brethren, You must stop making laws for us, unless you will submit to them yourselves; you must cease deciding what our standards allow or condemn, unless you choose to adopt them?

Again, the plan of union has been greatly abused, and in such a manner as to increase its injurious operation on the presbyterian church. It is obvious from the nature of the case, that it was originally designed as a temporary arrangement, and for the benefit of those feeble congregations consisting partly of presbyterians and partly of congregationalists. Those who formed the plan never contemplated any thing more than that a few frontier congregations should, for a short time, be allowed to organize themselves in this anomalous way. Instead however of this limited and temporary arrangement, we have an extended and permanent system fastened upon us. Instead of a few frontier churches, we have large synods; and instead of a temporary irregularity, we have a lasting alteration in the constitution of our churches and judicatories. It was never the design of the authors of this plan to introduce congregationalism as a regular constituent part of our ecclesiastical system. Their object was to bring congregationalists over to presbyterianism. If after a reasonable time the congregationalists could not be brought to adopt our system, the plain course of duty was to say so, and openly to abandon it. The plan therefore has been perverted by its being made permanent instead of temporary, and by making an arrangement designed for feeble frontier churches, the basis of large and flourishing synods.

It is a still greater abuse to extend the plan, as has been done, in a multitude of cases to which it was never intended to apply. Churches entirely congregational, and who sustain their ministers without any aid from presbyterians, have become nominally connected with our presbyteries, by simply allowing their pastors to be members of presbytery, and sending a male member of the church to sit as a ruling elder. Why was this? Why should churches which have no more to do with us, than the churches of New England, be numbered as presbyterian churches, and take part in the government of the church? This surely was never contemplated when the plan was adopted; yet the result has been to give a great increase of influence in our ecclesiastical courts to the congregational party. That the facts are as just stated, is no-

torious. They have been publicly, and all but officially, acknowledged. In the printed address of the Association of Western New York to the congregational churches of New England, it is stated as generally known that there "are a large number of churches, composed almost exclusively of descendants of the Pilgrims, originally constituted by missionaries from Connecticut and Massachusetts as congregational churches, and still retaining that form of government, *which, in the general census of the church, have been classed as presbyterians*, and in fact have been subject to their control." In speaking of the churches in the district of country west of the Genesee river, these gentlemen say, "The plan of union being adapted to a state of things, when congregationalists and presbyterians were intermingled in one congregation, and there being in fact *in these churches no presbyterians*, and none who understood its peculiar discipline, the churches were not, in fact, strictly speaking, admitted on that plan. In nine cases out of ten there were no standing committees, and the only difference between their then situation and their previous one, was the fact that one of the brethren occasionally went up as a delegate to presbytery, who was regularly returned on their minutes as an elder." When dissensions arose in our body, they tell us, that "many, with the view of strengthening what they believed to be the liberal party in the presbyterian church, became presbyterians."* As this Circular Letter was designed to conciliate favour for the plan of separate organization of the congregational churches, and was thought to be incorrect in some of its statements, the Rev. Timothy Stillman, stated clerk of the presbytery of Buffalo, published "Strictures" upon it under his own name.† From these Strictures we learn the following facts. Up to the year 1817 the presbytery of Geneva embraced all the presbyterian churches and ministers in western New York. In that year that presbytery was divided by the synod of Geneva into four. One of these four, viz. the presbytery of Niagara, had jurisdiction over those churches and ministers situated west of the Genesee river, who had been previously connected with the presbytery of Geneva. The first time those breth-

* See this Circular at length in the New York Evangelist, Nov. 21, 1835.

† See New York Evangelist, March 19, 1836. The author of these "Strictures" very properly claims special authority for his own statements, because he lives "on the ground represented in that Circular," and because he has in his "hands all the presbyterian records."

ren (constituting the presbytery of Niagara) came together as an ecclesiastical body was Feb. 20, 1817. At this meeting they adopted the following rule, "that churches coming under their care, 'should give evidence of having adopted the confession of faith of the presbyterian church in the United States.' But at the first stated meeting, held on the 18th of July following, this rule was amended, and the following adopted in its place, viz. 'Any church coming under the care of presbytery, shall give evidence of their soundness in the faith, by exhibiting their confession of faith and form of covenant. Churches formed within the bounds of presbytery on the congregational plan of internal government may retain that form if they wish.' " In July 1818 the Rev. Mr. Spencer made his appearance in presbytery "with clean papers from the Oneida association, and, without any reservers, asked to be received as a member of presbytery, and his request was granted, and at this time there were at least six congregational churches connected with the presbytery, some of which he himself had formed." Thus it appears that this presbytery of three members, at its very first stated meeting, rescinded the rule to require the adoption of our confession of faith, and within a little more than a year, had at least six congregational churches connected with it.

After quoting the statement from the Circular which we have already cited, viz. that in nine cases out of ten these churches had no standing committees, &c. &c., Mr. Stillman, instead of contradicting it, gives the following extraordinary explanation. "If these churches, after requesting to be received on the accommodation plan, would not have standing committees, because it savoured too much of presbyterianism, it was surely their own fault. Presbytery complied with their part of the plan, *and as was a uniform rule in such cases*, they winked at this want of compliance on the part of the negligent churches, *by considering the whole church the standing committee*!" In reference to the assertion that the delegates from these churches are regularly entered on the minutes as elders, the writer says, "I acknowledge that in the records of the presbytery, delegates of congregational churches are sometimes put down as elders, but it is also true that elders have been recorded as delegates. I will now furnish the true reason for this. The clerk does not know which churches are congregational and which presbyterian in half the instances. I doubt whether there is a minister of presbytery who can take our roll of forty-eight churches, and

designate with certainty the form of government in one half of them; and the reason is simply this, we treat them all alike, we know no difference, and therefore we make no distinction.”* It is therefore formally admitted and published to the world, that the presbyteries make no distinction between churches purely presbyterian, and those formed on the plan of union, and those purely congregational; they “treat them all alike.” By this gross abuse multitudes of churches which have no more connexion with us, even on the plan of union, than the churches of New England, are “in the general census of the church classed as presbyterian,” and represented as such in our ecclesiastical judicatories.

A third abuse which deserves to be mentioned relates to these committee-men, as they are commonly called. We have seen that by a wonderful latitude of construction, and by a peculiar kind of winking, churches which have no committee are taken and deemed to have a very large one. But besides this, agreeably to the accommodation plan, these churches are allowed to delegate a member of their standing committee to attend presbytery; but no provision was made for such member’s appearing in synod or the General Assembly. There was an evident propriety in this arrangement. The presbytery has jurisdiction over a limited district; its acts affects directly only its own churches, and these being partly congregational and partly presbyterian, there was some propriety in congregationalists having a voice in their decisions. But when they appeared in synod or the General Assembly they stretched, without the semblance of a plea from the plan of union, their authority over purely presbyterian bodies and over the whole church. We have consequently often seen the anomaly of congregationalists sitting in the highest judicatory of our church, and administering presbyterianism. Nay more, by a culpable negligence, they have appeared with regular commissions, certifying them to be ruling elders. This perhaps is not to be wondered at, as the presbyteries to which they belong regard congregationalists and presbyterians as completely on a par, and entitled to

* As to the charge contained in the Circular that many entered our church to strengthen the liberal party, the writer says that it is not true; that “they were acting for the glory of God and the best interests of religion at home, without the slightest reference to the conflicting interests of selfishness in the presbyterian church as a body.” This may be true. We are not concerned about motives. It is enough that the fact is admitted that congregationalists were received without hesitation, and treated as presbyterians.

equal rights in the presbyterian church. Still it is a great abuse and a great evil. An elder, according to our system, is entitled to respect and confidence, not merely on account of the sanction given to his character by his election by the people, but on account of his pledge of attachment to our doctrines and order given at his ordination. It is therefore not merely an irregularity, but a deception, however innocently done, to certify that a man is an elder in our sense of the term, who never has been ordained. And it is no less a deception, that such persons should be entered on the minutes of presbyteries as elders. It is certainly an argument against the plan of union that it has given rise to such abuses and irregularities.

The grand evil, however, attending the plan is, that it breaks down the hedge around our portion of the garden of the Lord, and allows it to be trodden down and wasted. Our system of government, our confession of faith, our whole constitution, are not to be revered for their own sake, nor are they to be treated as of no importance. We value them as means to an end. We believe that truth is necessary to holiness, and that discipline is necessary to the preservation of truth. We have therefore covenanted together to admit no man into the office of teacher or ruler in our church, who does not adopt our system of doctrine, and pledge himself to adhere to our discipline. It is a gross violation of contract, therefore, for any presbytery to admit as minister or elder any man who does not sincerely adopt our standards. We are reproached with proposing a breach of faith in urging the abrogation of the plan of union. But let these brethren look at home. What has their whole conduct under this plan been, but one extended and protracted breach of contract? What constitutional or moral right have they to violate their engagements with their brethren not to dispense with the prescribed qualifications for office? Is there no violation of a constitutional and moral obligation, in admitting, without hesitation, shoals of men, whom, by the constitution and their promise, they are bound not to admit? They may say the plan allows of such admission. We admit, to a certain extent, the force of the excuse. It only turns, however, the burden of condemnation from their own shoulders over upon the plan itself. That plan is a wholesale violation of contract. It purports to authorise presbyteries to dispense indefinitely with the performance of their engagements with their fellow presbyteries. The plan is, from its nature,

wrong, and from the source whence it emanated, void. It ought therefore to be at once condemned, and declared of no authority. While we admit, cheerfully, the extenuation afforded by the adoption of the plan of accommodation, and by the tacit acquiescence of the presbyteries, to the irregularity in question, it is but an extenuation. The plan being unconstitutional, and proposing to set aside provisions which we are all pledged to support, ought long since to have been abandoned by all parties. And if these brethren will review their own course in applying its provisions to cases to which it was never intended to apply, and in pressing them far beyond their original intent, they will find abundant reason at least for silence on the subject of breach of faith.

We are accustomed to consider our constitutional provisions which prescribe the qualifications of church officers, and the mode of constituting sessions, presbyteries and synods, as something more than a dead letter. If they have no efficiency, they are of no value, and are undeserving of our respect. These provisions have been prostrated by the plan of union. And what has been the result? Does experience show that they may as well be disregarded as not; that they are perfectly inefficient as a protection from error and disorder; that the portion of the church in which they have been thrown down is in as desirable a condition as though they had been kept up? To answer these questions, there is no necessity to appeal to uncertain rumours. We shall appeal to notorious facts. There are two great parties in our church; the one in favour of a strict adherence to our doctrinal standards, the other in favour of a liberal construction and latitude of interpretation. Where is the local habitation of the latter party? The region in which the plan of union has operated. Deduct the ministers of that region from the liberal party, and the residue may almost be counted on the fingers. It is equally notorious that this party have departed more or less from the confession of faith. They profess to differ from old school men, whom they have never ventured to assert seriously were not faithful to the confession. This is, by implication, a clear admission of their own departure from it. We say, therefore, that in respect to laxity in doctrine, the disregard of the constitutional rules induced by the plan of union, has produced its natural effect. The new school, or liberal party, which, as a body, has come into our church under that plan, is notoriously the lax party as to

doctrine. Again, look over the record of the votes of the Assembly, and see from what quarter the advocates of error, the opposers of discipline for opinions, have come. From the scene of the operation of this plan. Again, where have Finneyism, Burchardism, and the nameless disorders and irregularities which have disgraced the church, been most prevalent and destructive? In this same district. Look at the statistical reports and official documents of the presbyteries and synods of that portion of the church; and see to what extent these disorders have unsettled pastors, and disturbed the peace of the church. According to the statistical reports of last year, in the three synods of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee, there are three hundred and eighty-four ministers (exclusive of the presbytery of Chenango), among whom, if we have counted correctly, there are only ninety-two pastors, and there are ninety-four ministers without charge, exclusive of presidents, professors, agents, and missionaries. In four presbyteries of the Western Reserve (the fifth furnishes no report) there are thirteen pastors out of eighty-one ministers. In a recent number of the *Ohio Observer*, edited, we believe, by the stated clerk of that synod, it is said, "Two years ago it seemed that the pastoral relation, and every other established scriptural usage of the church, would soon be broken up and be no longer known only in history." He rejoices that a change appears to have taken place, and states that four installations had occurred in the bounds of the presbytery of Portage within eight months.* The synod of Geneva, which is believed to have suffered less from these sources than any other in that region, in their pastoral letter, published in December last, "express their apprehension that the pastoral office is falling into disuse, and a stated ministry sinking into contempt with the people, by the frequent removals of ministers; even if any thing shall remain which can justly be denominated a ministry."† It would be easy to collect from official documents numerous examples of similar admissions and complaints. We are well aware that other circumstances have, in other portions of the church, produced,

* Quoted in the *Alton Observer*, June 15, 1837. The editor of the A. O. expresses his hope that a similar change may soon be effected in Illinois. This being a newer state, it is not so much to be wondered at that we find whole presbyteries there, Schuyler for example, without a single pastor.

† See Report of Mr. Plumer's speech before the Assembly in the New York Evangelist, June 17, 1837.

to some extent, similar results. We rejoice to know also that there is, in the district of which we have been speaking, much to commend and to be thankful for. The country is fertile and inviting, the population intelligent, enterprising, and homogeneous. It is not pretended that the plan of union has rendered these advantages of no avail. Our argument is that the churches there are, by their own admissions, in a far worse state, as to doctrine and order, than might reasonably have been expected had that plan, which breaks down the guards of our system, not been adopted and abused. This argument is not to be answered therefore by showing that in thinly settled portions of the church, where presbyterians form but a small portion of the scattered population, congregations are feeble, and regularly settled pastors few. It is sufficient to prove the evil effects of the accommodation system, that the sphere of its operation is the great theatre of looseness in doctrine and disorder in practice.

Can any impartial man doubt, in view of all these considerations, that it is the imperative duty of this Assembly to abrogate this plan, and declare it null and void? A plan which sets aside almost every important principle of our system as to organization of churches, the constitution of judicatories, and the administration of discipline; which emanated from bodies neither of whom had any right to originate or enact it; which has never received the sanction of the only competent tribunals; which introduces another church, retaining its organization and independence, as a competent part of our church, and gives it the right to administer a constitution to which its members refuse subjection; which subverts the principles of all free governments by introducing into our highest judicatory 'men who are not the delegates or representatives of those whom they govern; a plan which has been grossly perverted by being continued long after the circumstances it was designed to meet had ceased to exist, and by being extended to cases to which it was never intended to apply; which, by dispensing with the constitutional requisitions for church officers, and by setting aside other safeguards which our fathers erected, and which we have pledged ourselves to sustain, has proved a wide inlet for error and disorder. We believe all these things to be true, and we therefore believe it to be our solemn duty to declare the said plan to be fully and finally abrogated, as unconstitutional in its origin, and unjust and injurious in its operation.

Citation of Judicatories.

On Thursday, May 25, Mr. Plumer, from the committee on the memorial, made a final report, recommending that the Assembly take up and decide upon the items in the memorial relating to church order and discipline. This report was accepted. In pursuance of this plan, he subsequently moved the adoption of the following resolutions, viz.

1. That the proper steps be now taken to cite to the bar of the next Assembly such inferior judicatories as are charged by common fame with irregularities.

2. That a special committee be appointed to ascertain what inferior judicatories are thus charged by common fame; to prepare charges and specifications against them; and to digest a suitable plan of procedure in the matter, and that said committee be requested to report as soon as practicable.

3. That as citation, on the foregoing plan, is the commencement of process involving the right of membership in the Assembly, therefore,

Resolved, That agreeably to a principle laid down, chap. v. sect. 9, of the Form of Government, the members of the said judicatories be excluded from a seat in the next General Assembly until their case shall be decided.

The adoption of these resolutions was opposed by Messrs. Jessup, White, Beman, Dickinson, Peters, and M'Auley; and advocated by Messrs. Plumer, Breckinridge, and Baxter. After a debate occupying most of the time on Thursday afternoon and Friday morning and afternoon, the question was taken and decided in the affirmative, *ycaes* 128, *nays* 122.

The resolutions were opposed on various grounds. 1. It was denied that the Assembly possessed original jurisdiction such as it is now proposed to exercise. The fifth paragraph of Sect. 1, in the chapter on Review and Control, is the strong hold of those who contend that the resolutions are constitutional. But what is the case contemplated in that article? It is, that there has already been some irregularity, in the proceedings of the lower judicatory, either apparent in the records, or proclaimed by common fame. This undoubtedly refers to a case of judicial action, or erroneous or defective record, or a case adjudicated in such a manner that the trumpet of common fame proclaims it wrong, and such that it can plainly be proved to be wrong before the superior judicatory. In the circumstances specified in the constitution, it would be right for you to cite a synod to appear before you and an-

swer and show what they have done in relation to the matter in question, in a case that has been before them. And after hearing their answer, you are to send the case back to them, with directions to do what the constitution and justice require. The words are "After which," that is, after the citation and answer, not after a trial, for the rule says nothing about a trial; but supposes that the case is sent back for trial to the judicatory which is cited. We cannot try and punish here. Suppose we were to cite the synod of Virginia, for heresy, in maintaining, in the face of all the former decisions of the General Assembly, that slavery is consistent with the Scriptures and the institutions of the presbyterian church. Well, our committee we will suppose have cited that synod. Then they must send down all the budget of charges they have collected, to tell the synod they must stay these irregular proceedings, on penalty of exclusion from the church. Every one knows that this cannot be the correct interpretation of the rule. Otherwise, it will make you a court of original jurisdiction, with power to cut off ministers, directly contrary to every provision of the book.

2. But admitting that, under certain circumstances, you have the authority to cite a synod, how do you get the right to cite a presbytery? The rule says, "the next superior judicatory," which limits it to the one immediately above: This provision is in the chapter on Review and Control, and it can give authority only by the express meaning of the words. The session is under review and control of the presbytery, the presbytery of the synod, and the synod of the General Assembly; because they only have the legal right to inspect their records. The General Assembly is, therefore, constitutionally restricted to action on the synods. Unless you can show, by some new ecclesiastical multiplication table, that the General Assembly is next above a presbytery or session or individual member, you have no right to issue a citation to them, and it would be an act of usurpation in you to do it. The General Assembly has indeed power to *reprove*. But can we not reprove without citation and conviction? We can reprove immorality in the south and in the north, on mere report, without alleging that any individual is guilty, and so without conviction. The power to cite presbyteries and church sessions is not the same with warning and reproof; and is in terms given to another body, to the next superior judicatory. If you cite a presbytery to appear here, they will file their plea in bar, that you have no

authority, and they will not answer. We have no right thus to take away the constitutional rights of synods, or to strike out, by a mere vote of the Assembly, an important word from the constitution. If we can interfere with presbyteries, by the same argument we may interfere with the sessions.

3. A third objection is the mode of proceeding. If these charges were against individuals, we should know how to proceed. But that this great court of errors should leave its proper judicial business, to hunt up criminals, is most extraordinary. You appoint a committee to find out offences, and then to find out the offenders. Are this committee to be clothed with the plenary powers of a presbyterian inquisition, to cite and try whom they please, and on what ground they please? Are they to report to you every rumour which the blast of the trumpet of Common Fame may blow over the land in any direction? Or by what rule are they to discriminate? We wish to know, and the churches ought to know, whether this committee are to be clothed with preliminary judicial powers. If so, in what do they differ from the prerogatives of an inquisition, except that the civil arm withholds its power? Or what better is a Protestant than a Roman Catholic inquisition? Our judicatories are in fact to be tried by this committee, without opportunity of defence; to be first adjudged delinquent, and then deprived of their seats; while it is perfectly understood by the commissioners from certain other judicatories, concerning whose irregularities common fame is at least equally loud, that if they will support this measure, no reports shall be entertained concerning them by the committee, and no words of reproof administered by the Assembly.

The whole mode of procedure is moreover unnecessary. Our constitution has made ample provision for the correction of all errors and disorders. Our system is very complete. Cast your eye down to the source of power in our church, the body of the people, and see an organized succession of church courts, guarding the interests of truth, and securing order and purity up to the General Assembly. Then look the other way, and see a system of control and supervision, going down in regular gradations, from the General Assembly to the synods, from synods to presbyteries, from presbyteries to individual ministers and church sessions, and from sessions to every individual member of the presbyterian church. What can be more complete than this system? Why do we want nullification here? What interest is not guarded?

What exigency is not provided for? There never was a government that had a provision for every case, like our government. For a case like the present, where an occasional majority, a mere factitious majority, are determined to perpetuate the power of the church in their own hands, and conscious that unless they do it now, Providence will never give them another opportunity, we grant the constitution has not provided.

The proposition to exclude from the next General Assembly the commissioners of all those judicatories which your committee may think proper to cite, is still more obviously an outrage upon the constitution. Chap. v, sect. 9, to which the resolution refers, gives no warrant for such a proceeding. That whole chapter relates to a specific subject, to process against a minister. Is the process, which you are about to issue, against any member of the next Assembly? No man is a member of the Assembly, until he is commissioned as such by his presbytery. And when a man comes here with his commission from a presbytery, he comes with authority paramount to all the authority which one General Assembly can have over another. Your committee of commissions are bound by them, and not by the votes of former Assemblies. In chap. iv. the provision authorizing a church session to suspend a member under process from communion, tallies exactly with that respecting the trial of a minister. Here is, in each case, an express authority for laying persons charged under a disability during trial. Where is the authority for laying a judicatory under disability? What has this General Assembly to do in the case at any rate? We have not to try them. When the next General Assembly come up, if they find themselves in such a position that it would be a disgrace to religion to allow the membership of such and such persons, they might possibly pass a vote of exclusion. But what have *we* to do with the regulations of the next General Assembly? This is not a perpetual body like a synod or presbytery. The members of the next Assembly will come up with their commissions from the presbyteries, and how can your committee of commissions exclude them from their seats? Besides, why should we punish presbyteries? This suspension of the right of representation is a real punishment. Why punish the presbyteries when only the synod is cited? Or are we to have a new measure wedge so beveled as to split only on one side, and so as to save such presbyteries in the synods cited as are of a fair, orthodox

complexion, and let them remain in good standing? If that is the plan, we should like to see the warrant for it in the book. To illustrate the character of this high-handed and overbearing measure—a measure hitherto unparalleled in the history of legislative, or judicial proceedings—suppose that one of these United States should come into collision with the national government, on some point, what would be said if the government should propose, as a first step, to cite a sovereign state to appear at the bar of congress, and then appoint a committee to act as the scavengers of common fame, and bring into congress an ass-load of such matters as common fame deals in, for trial; and to crown the whole, propose, during the pendency of the process, to deprive the representatives of that state from their seat in the next congress? Why, the next congress would puff at such a resolution, just as the next General Assembly will puff your vote to deprive its commissioners of their seats. They will look at the commissions of the presbyteries, and will run over the puny and ineffectual legislation of this Assembly, just as a rail road car, impelled by a powerful locomotive, runs over a rye straw that may lie across its track.

The advocates of the resolutions argued substantially thus. The main question relates of course to the power of the Assembly. Has it the right to act in the manner proposed, viz. to summon injurious judicatories to its bar, and to institute and issue process against them? We maintain that it has both in virtue of specific provisions of the constitution, and of the general nature of our system. As to the first point it is very plain. It has been said, on the other side, that the Assembly is a mere court of errors, and possesses no original jurisdiction. This, however, is not the fact. It is a court of general review and control. It can direct its eye over the whole church, and wherever it sees evils to be corrected, it can correct them. The mode in which it is to be informed of such evils, and the mode of correction are definitely prescribed. The ordinary means of conveying such information are the complaints, appeals and references of lower judicatories, or of their members, or the review of records. But there may be cases which none of these reach; and express provision is made to meet such cases. "Inferior judicatories," says the Book of Discipline, c. 7. sec. i. 5. "may sometimes entirely neglect to perform their duty; by which neglect, heretical opinions or corrupt practices may be allowed to gain ground; or offenders of a very gross cha-

racter may be suffered to escape; or some circumstances in their proceedings, of very great irregularity, may not be distinctly recorded by them. In any of which cases their records will by no means exhibit to the superior judicatory a full view of their proceedings. If therefore the superior judicatory be well advised by *common fame*, that such irregularities or neglects have occurred on the part of the inferior judicatory, it is incumbent on them to take cognizance of the same; and to examine, deliberate and judge in the whole matter, as completely as if it had been recorded, and thus brought up by the review of the records." Here is not merely the authority, but the command to do precisely what these resolutions propose. When common fame, says the rule, informs the superior judicatory of the existence of error or disorder, it is incumbent on that judicatory to take cognizance thereof, and to examine, deliberate, and judge in the whole matter. Common fame has informed this Assembly of the existence of irregularities of a very serious nature. Not vague, uncertain rumour, but definite statements, which, we are morally sure, are correct. We know that there are many synods embracing churches not regularly organized, ministers and elders who never have adopted our confession of faith. We know that these and other evils have been long continued and widely extended, and we propose to act in relation to them precisely as the book of discipline directs. The first step, says the rule, to be taken is "to cite the judicatory alleged to have offended to appear at a specified time and place." Well, sir, is not this precisely what we propose to do? It is objected, however, that this whole rule refers to a case of judicial action in the court below, a special case improperly adjudicated, the knowledge of which is brought to the superior court, which is then authorized to examine into it and order it to be rectified. There is, however, no such limitation; and it would be preposterous that there should be. The rule specifies any "neglect or irregularity," which covers the whole ground, and does not confine the power of the superior court to specific cases of improper or irregular decisions. If it were known that Socinianism was allowed to be openly professed by the members of some of our presbyteries, may such presbyteries escape all interference or control by simply doing nothing, by neglecting all notice of such departures from the truth and all record on their minutes? Would not the superior court, under the rule which directs, that when, from

the neglect of a judicatory to perform its duty, heretical opinions or corrupt practises are allowed to gain ground, it is incumbent on the superior judicatory to take cognizance of the same, and to examine, and judge in the whole matter, have a right to cite such negligent judicatory and examine into the case? This is the precise case for which the rule was made. But again it is asked, "What can you do, if you do cite? you can only remit the charges and tell the inferior judicatory they must correct their irregularities. You cannot try and punish here." Suppose this to be true, what has it to do with the question? The objection has reference to the mode of issuing the case, and not to the right, or to the mode of commencing the process. The resolution on the very face of it, professes to be the first step in the process. When the judicatories cited appear at your bar, the first question to be decided will be, are the charges sustained? and the second, how is the cause to be disposed of? It will be time enough then to decide, whether the Assembly shall "deliberate and judge in the whole matter," or send the case down to the implicated judicatories with an injunction to correct the evils complained of. The objection, to say the least of it, is premature. It would be absurd however that a court should have the power to decide, and then be obliged to leave the execution of their decision to the option of the court below. The superior judicatory has undoubtedly the right to see that its decisions are carried into effect. This however is not now the point. The simple question is about citation. The perfect regularity of the course proposed is so plain that it is in various ways admitted by the brethren on the other side, as far as synods are concerned; the grand objection is that the right of citation is confined to the judicatory next above, and consequently that the General Assembly has no authority to cite a presbytery. To this objection it would be a sufficient answer to say that the resolutions make no mention of presbyteries. They simply recommend the appointment of a committee to ascertain whether there are sufficient grounds to cite any inferior judicatories to your bar. If that committee should, in their report, go beyond synods, and recommend the citation of presbyteries, it would be time enough to object to the adoption of such recommendation, that the Assembly had no immediate jurisdiction over the presbyteries; that they could be reached only through the synods. But, if in the ascending series of our system of church courts, so highly praised by the eloquent gentleman

on the other side, a synod may be omitted in case of appeal, complaint, or reference, and the cause be brought directly from the presbytery to the Assembly, as is constantly allowed, can any good reason be assigned, why, in the descending series, a synod may not in like manner be passed over, and the Assembly act immediately on the presbytery? It is indeed proper and expedient, in the great majority of cases, that both in ascending and descending the cause should go regularly up or down through the several courts, but this is not always the case. There are occasions when it is just as necessary, for the sake of speedy justice, that the highest court should act on a remotely inferior one, as that an appeal should come directly from the latter to the former. The Book renders it *incumbent* on the next superior judicatory to take cognizance of the neglect of the court below, but this does not forbid the highest court from interfering when any special emergency renders it necessary or desirable. If, while the Assembly was actually in session, a presbytery should decide that they would depose any of their ministers who should preach the doctrine of the trinity, we suspect few men on this floor would think it necessary to wait for the synod to interfere, especially if they had reason to believe the synod would sustain the decision.

Besides, it has been generally understood that the brethren opposite entertained different opinions as to the power of the Assembly from those which they now express. It was supposed they believed that this body could stretch its long arm over a synod and reach a presbytery, and even make and unmake it at pleasure. It is not many years since they actually exercised this power, and in known opposition to the wishes of a synod, constituted a new presbytery within its bounds. They were understood then to teach that the Assembly was clothed with plenary powers; that as a synod included presbyteries it possessed their powers in a wider sphere, and that the General Assembly, including both synods and presbyteries, might do all that either could do, within the whole compass of the church. Can these brethren complain if we should assume this matter as a *res adjudicata*? Must they cry out the moment their own principles are commended to their acceptance? Do they suppose that the constitution means one thing when they are in the majority, and another when they are in the minority? One brother indeed, (Mr. E. White,) all but avows this principle: He says, "The act of the General

Assembly erecting a presbytery in this city was null and void, and, in my view, the synod of Philadelphia acted right in nullifying the procedure," though he voted to condemn the synod, and to enforce the act he pronounces null and void. Such candour, however, is unusual. Taking then the extreme supposition that the Assembly had not, by the constitution, the right to act directly upon presbyteries, yet as these brethren have legalized the opposite interpretation, they would have no reason to complain if we should now act upon it. We say this, however, merely on the supposition that the case of citation of a presbytery is parallel to that of creating such a body. This we do not admit, and therefore are not prepared to allow that even those who have hitherto condemned the erection of a presbytery by the General Assembly, are inconsistent in advocating the right of citation.* The constitution is not a donation of powers, it is a limitation of them. The General Assembly does not derive its powers from the constitution, but from the delegation of the presbyteries. It is the presbyteries in Assembly collected. It is therefore an unsound principle that the Assembly has no right to exercise any power not expressly granted. It has the right to do any thing in the discharge of its duties as a supreme judicatory and supervising body of the church, which the constitution does not forbid. The presbyteries have limited and circumscribed the inherent powers of this body. We have no right to pass those limits. We can do nothing the constitution forbids, but we can do a vast many things which it does not enjoin. This whole discussion, however, is premature. Should the proposed committee recommend the citation of presbyteries, we can then decide whether we have the right to cite them or not.

The principal objection, however, is directed against the resolution which proposes that the members of judicatories cited should be excluded from a seat in the next Assembly. The argument on which this resolution is supported may be very briefly stated. It is readily admitted that there is no express warrant for such a proceeding in the book of disci-

* We think it right to say that we have never agreed with many of our brethren in the opinion that the Assembly has not, under any circumstances, the right to form a presbytery, without the consent of the synod or synods to which its constituent members belong. We believe the erection of the third presbytery of Philadelphia was unconstitutional, not because of want of power in the Assembly, but on account of the mode in which they exercised their authority.

pline. The authority for it, however, is not the less clear and satisfactory. The constitution expressly recognizes the right of a superior judicatory to cite and try an inferior one. This is admitted. But the constitution makes no specific directions how the trial is to be conducted. Does it follow that it cannot be conducted at all? Does the constitution recognize a right, and impose a duty, and then, by mere silence, preclude the possibility of exercising the right, or discharging the duty? Certainly not. If the Assembly has the right of trying, it has the right of ordering the trial, and, in the absence of special limitations or directions, must be guided by the nature of our system, by precedent, and by the general principles of law and justice. The constitution of the United States confers on the senate the right of trying public officers when impeached, but it prescribes no mode of procedure. Must the proceedings therefore stop, or be arrested at every step by the demand of an express warrant to collect testimony, to take depositions, or to send for persons and papers? When the right to try is conferred, every thing else is left to be regulated by precedent, the general principles of law, and the necessities of the case. In like manner the constitution recognizes the right of congress to preserve its own authority; but where is the warrant for its committees of investigation, for its power of arrest, its right of expelling its own members? There is no more reasonable and universally recognized principle than that a grant of power implies a grant of all that is requisite for its legitimate exercise. When therefore our constitution recognizes the right of the Assembly to cite and try inferior judicatories, it recognizes the right to conduct such trial. It prescribes minutely the method to be adopted when an individual is on trial before a session or presbytery, but it gives scarcely any directions for the mode of proceeding when a judicatory is on trial. The only course therefore to be taken is to consult the nature of our system, and the general rules of justice and propriety. In our system we find the principle distinctly recognized that when a man is on trial before a judicatory, he ceases to have a right to a seat in that judicatory, until his cause is issued; and still further, that even when the decisions of an inferior court are under review in the superior one, the members of the former are excluded from their seats. These, especially the former, are not merely constitutional rules, but they are self-evidently just and reasonable. Now by parity of reasoning, when a synod is on trial before this house, its

members have no right to a seat in it. The resolution refers to chap. v. sect. 9, of the Book of Discipline, for no other purpose than to show that the constitution recognizes the correctness of the principle upon which the Assembly proposes to act. As to the objection that the judicatories in question are not on trial before this Assembly, and that the next Assembly may disregard our decision, we answer that these judicatories are placed on trial the moment they are cited; the citation is the commencement of a judicial process, and that the next Assembly will be as much bound to regard the preliminary decision of this house, as its final decision. When this house decides that there is sufficient ground to cite a particular synod, and to suspend its members from a right to a seat, its decision is as much obligatory, as when it decides in the issue of a case on the final deposition or excommunication of a person or persons regularly on trial. Its decisions may be puffed at; but it will be in violation of the provision of the constitution and of justice, that no judicial decision shall be reversed, except by regular process.

After the adoption of the resolutions above referred to, Messrs. Cuyler, Breckinridge, Baxter, M'Kennan and Baird were appointed a committee to carry them into effect. At a late period of the sessions of the Assembly, this committee reported that the action of the Assembly, subsequent to the time of their appointment, rendered it unnecessary to cite any inferior judicatory. They contented themselves, therefore, with recommending that the synods of Albany and New Jersey be admonished to take special order with regard to certain alleged departures from church order in some of their presbyteries; that the synods of Michigan and Cincinnati be similarly admonished respecting errors in doctrine; and the synod of Illinois in reference both to doctrinal errors and church order.

The manifest alienation of the different parties in the house seems to have produced a general desire at this time for an amicable separation. With a view to accomplish this object, Mr. Breckinridge moved for the appointment of a committee to be composed of an equal number from the majority and minority, to consider and report on a plan for an amicable division of the church. This motion was adopted, and Mr. Breckinridge, Dr. Alexander, Dr. Witherspoon, Dr. Cuyler and Mr. Ewing were appointed on the part of the majority; and Dr. M'Auley, Dr. Beman, Dr. Peters, Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Jessup on the part of the minority.

The report on the memorial was then taken up, and Dr. Cuyler moved the adoption of the following resolutions, viz.

“Whereas it has been declared by this General Assembly, that the plan of union adopted in 1801 is unconstitutional, and it has been abrogated; and whereas the constitution of the Presbyterian church in the United States supposes all the churches under its care to be organized according to its provisions: Therefore, although we entertain a very high respect and fraternal regard for the churches and brethren of the congregational order, and shall rejoice to maintain with them Christian communion and brotherly intercourse, and shall always desire and pray that every blessing may be multiplied unto them from the great Head of the church;

“*Resolved*, That no church which is not duly organized, according to the provisions of our constitution, shall henceforth form a constituent part of any of our presbyteries, or be represented in any of our judicatories, unless they shall conform to our constitution, when they shall be cheerfully received.

“*Resolved*, That the above resolution shall be fully carried into effect before the presbyteries shall respectively elect their commissioners to the next General Assembly.

“*Resolved*, That it be affectionately recommended to the churches which have been united with this body in pursuance of the plan of union, and retain a congregational organization, if they shall elect still to retain such organization, either to form themselves into associations, or connect themselves with associations already formed.

“*Resolved*, That it be enjoined on all the presbyteries under the care of the General Assembly, to inquire, at their first meeting after the rising of this Assembly, whether all the ministers and ruling elders belonging to them have respectively taken upon themselves the obligations contained in chapter xv. sect. 12, subsections 2, 3, or chapter xiii. sect. 4, subsections 2, 3, of the form of church government; and if they shall ascertain that they have not, the presbytery shall require them to do so. And if they refuse or fail to conform to the requisition, if a minister, he shall thenceforth cease to be a minister of presbytery; and if a ruling elder, he shall cease from the exercise of his office.

“*Resolved*, That it be enjoined on the synods and presbyteries, that they see to it that the last resolution be carried into effect without delay.

“*Resolved*, That no minister under the care of this Assembly shall hold the pastoral office in a church of another denomination. And if any minister shall act as the stated supply of such church, he shall not be eligible as a commissioner to the General Assembly, nor be entitled to vote for commissioners. Foreign missionaries shall be exempted from the operation of this rule, till they are dismissed and united with some ecclesiastical organization in the missionary field.

“*Resolved*, That it be enjoined on all the presbyteries to examine all ministers and licentiates uniting with them from other denominations, and to require of them, in the form of the book, a full assent to the questions which are directed to be asked of the former at his ordination, and of the latter at his licensure, relating to the confession of faith and church government.”

A desultory debate occurred on the first of these resolutions, which continued until the time of adjournment. On Monday morning Dr. Cuyler moved that the farther consideration of this subject be postponed, in order to await the result of the deliberations of the committee on an amicable division.

On Tuesday morning, May 30, Dr. Alexander, in behalf

of that committee, reported that they had not been able to agree, and that each party in the committee would make a separate report. It appeared that the committee agreed as to the propriety of a separation, as to the division of the funds, as to the names of the two bodies, as to the records of the church, as to its boards and institutions. They differed as to whether the division should be made at once by the Assembly, or whether the question should be sent down to the presbyteries; and also as to whether the present presbyterian church should be dissolved, and two new bodies formed, neither of which should be the successor of the one now existing; or whether the body retaining the name and institutions of the church, as at present organized, should be deemed in law and fact this present body continued. The minority state in their report "That the only point of any importance on which the committee differed, was that proposed to be submitted to the decision of the Assembly," viz. whether the division should be made by the present Assembly, or the question be referred to the presbyteries. After these reports had been presented, the committee was discharged, and eventually, on motion of Mr. Breckinridge, the whole subject was laid on the table by the following vote: yeas 139, nays 107.

Exclusion of the Synod of the Western Reserve.

Mr. Plumer then presented the following resolution: Resolved, That by the operation of the abrogation of the plan of union of 1801, the synod of the Western Reserve is, and is hereby declared to be, no longer a part of the Presbyterian church in the United States.

This resolution was opposed by Messrs. Jessup, M'Auley, Cleaveland and Peters. It was supported by Messrs. Baxter, Plumer, Junkin, Ewing and Anderson. The debate occupied the attention of the house the greater part of the time from Tuesday morning until the close of the session on Thursday morning, when the question was put, and decided in the affirmative: yeas 132, nays 105.*

The opponents of the resolution argued thus. 1. This

* In the preceding sketch of the debate on the abrogation of the plan of union, some of the arguments presented were borrowed from the speeches delivered on the exclusion of the Western Reserve synod, as the constitutionality of that plan was reargued when this latter subject was under discussion. In like manner, in preparing the outline of the debate on the resolution respecting the Western Reserve synod, we have borrowed largely from the speeches on the exclusion of the New York synods, particularly from that of Dr. Beman, who, in his speech of Saturday and Monday, went at a great length into the whole question.

measure is professedly based on the assumption of the unconstitutionality of the plan of union. We deny, however, that the plan is unconstitutional, because no provision of the constitution was violated.* We admit it was not purely presbyterial in its character. And that the plan itself professes. It was, what it professes to be, neither more nor less, a scheme to promote union and harmony and piety among a class of inhabitants who were gathered together from different quarters, and with different views of church government. But we are now thrown upon such an age of new light, as to be told that a plan to promote piety and harmony is beyond the powers of our presbyterian constitution. If this plan is unconstitutional, because it was not submitted to the presbyteries, then the acts to establish the Princeton Seminary, and your Boards of Missions and Education are also unconstitutional. There is not a particle of provision in your constitution for these acts, and they were never sent down to the presbyteries for approval. If there should come a change in the balance of power in this Assembly, and we believe it will come, you are preparing a fine weapon to be used by your opposers; one which these hawk-eyed Yankees, it is to be feared, will use in their turn when they have the power. They will take your hated trio, the Seminary and the two Boards, and lay them on the block, and by a single fall of your patent, cut off the three heads at a single blow. And, if they ever do it, they will plead the precedent you are now about to set, as a full apology for such a stretch of power. Again, if the plan of union is unconstitutional, because not sent down to the presbyteries, the adoption of the Scotch Seceder churches was unconstitutional, for that was not sent down, and that act is both *ipso facto* void, and all that has been done under it, is void *ab initio*, and they are not in the Presbyterian church.

2. If we even admit that the plan was and is unconstitutional, it would not follow that the abrogation act sweeps away every thing which rests upon that plan. The principle that all the rights vested under an unconstitutional law are invalidated, and fall as soon as the law is abrogated, is

* These gentlemen differ very much on this point; sometimes they say the plan is unconstitutional, and sometimes that it is not; sometimes that it was unconstitutional at first, but has since been ratified, while some admit that it is utterly subversive of every principle of presbyterianism. "I admit," says Mr. Skillman, (Qr. Stillman?) "that the contract, as at first adopted, was not according to the constitution."—N. Y. Ob. June 3.

monstrous: it would break all the ligaments of society, and destroy all the vested rights of property. If it should be applied to the present case, then all the licensures, ordinations, and titles to church property, under the plan of union, were thrown to the winds. Your vote can never make it true; wise men and Christians will see the injustice; and half the state of New York will be involved in it. To show the unsoundness of this principle, we appeal to the opinion of one of the most eminent jurists that ever lived. Chief Justice Marshall, in giving the opinion of the supreme court in the Yazoo-land case, assumed the position, that as the state of Georgia was a party to the contract conveying those lands, that state could not disannul its own contract for any reason whatever. We admit that the decision of the court in the case itself, as between those parties, did not turn on this point, respecting the constitutionality of the act, but on the charge of bribery in the legislature. But in giving the opinion of the court, the venerable judge has incidentally laid down a principle, which bears directly on the case before us. "For a party," he says, "to pronounce its own deed invalid, whatever cause may be assigned for the invalidity, must be considered a mere act of power, which must find its vindication in a course of reasoning not often heard in a court of justice." Cranch's Reports, vol. vi. p. 135. Are we wrong then in assuming that if the law of the state of Georgia, conveying these lands, *had been* unconstitutional, the legislature that made the law, and then repealed it, could not by this take advantage of its own wrong, and proceed to annihilate contracts made and rights vested under the rule which they themselves had made? Again, the judge says, "When a law is, in its nature, a contract, when absolute rights have vested under that contract, a repeal of the law cannot divest those rights." Let us suppose, for illustration, that congress should pass a law which is in fact unconstitutional, supposing it to be constitutional, and the thing goes on for thirty-six years, and under its operation various rights have vested, and various institutions, commercial, literary or political, have grown up, for instance, in the state of Pennsylvania. Now, at the end of thirty-six years, the law is pronounced unconstitutional, what would be the effect of such a decision? We venture to affirm that no court or congress of the nation would ever attempt to carry out the decision, in the manner we are doing, to crush, not merely the institutions formed, but the state of Pennsylvania in which they have existed.

Why, sir, what do you propose? By the very principle assumed, you have only power to annihilate the institutions formed under the plan of union. But you propose to annihilate a whole synod regularly and constitutionally formed. If this is justice, it is justice with a vengeance. Let us take another case. Suppose the state of Georgia had, thirty-six years ago, invited the missionaries to come and labour for the benefit of the Indians, assuring them of protection, and by an unconstitutional law, had granted certain rights and privileges to the missionaries and the Indians, on the strength of which houses and towns had been built; and then after the process of civilization had been going on for thirty-six years, there was a decision, not of Chief Justice Marshall of glorious legal memory, but of a majority in a vacillating legislature, that is chosen every year, and changes as often, that the law is unconstitutional. Could they then take advantage of their own wrong, and immediately send out the sheriff, without process or trial, to imprison the missionaries, break up their settlements, and hang the poor Indians, for no other crime than that of exercising the rights which had been granted to them by a former legislature?

3. We may, however, admit every thing that is claimed, 1. That the plan of union is unconstitutional; 2. That the abrogation act sweeps away every thing which rests upon it, and what follows? Why you cannot touch one synod or presbytery; you merely sweep away the churches which are of a mixed character. There are many good and honest men on the other side of the house, whose minds are so filled with rumours that they have hardly room to receive the truth, who are therefore prepared to say aye to this resolution, supposing they are going to cut off a synod formed on an unconstitutional basis. But this is not the fact. Our book says that a presbytery consists of all the ministers within a certain district, and a ruling elder from each church. The presbyteries out of which this synod was formed were regularly organized by the synod of Pittsburg, and by the General Assembly of 1825 the presbyteries were regularly formed into a synod, which has been recognized ever since. Now admitting there are churches among them formed on the plan of union, and that this plan is unconstitutional and void, how does this affect the standing of presbyterian ministers and churches, or the standing of the presbyteries or synod. A minister becomes, by his ordination, a member of presbytery, and a constituent part of the presbyterian church. How is his relation to the

church affected by your pronouncing the plan of union unconstitutional? His standing is not on that plan, and therefore he does not fall, even though the plan be annihilated. You allow your ministers to be editors, teachers, farmers and merchants, without disowning them; are they necessarily out of the church the moment they become the pastors of congregational or mixed churches? It must be remembered that many of these ministers were regularly ordained by other presbyteries, about whose regularity there is no question. And yet you propose to declare them to be no part of the presbyterian church, merely because there are some churches connected with the presbyteries to which they now belong, whose organization you choose to pronounce irregular.

4. Whatever name may be given to this proceeding, it is to all intents an act of discipline. Upwards of a hundred ministers and churches are to be condemned without a trial. If there are irregularities and disorders within the bounds of this synod which it refuses to correct, your proper course would be to cite them to your bar; to ascertain, by judicial process, the real state of the facts, and if they refuse to abate these evils, to deal with them as the case may demand. But this resolution cuts them off without the show of a legal process. It virtually excommunicates them without the form of a trial.

5. The consequences of the principle on which this measure is based reach much farther than many seem to imagine. You cannot consistently stop short after the excision of the synod of the Western Reserve. If that synod is no part of the church, because the plan of union is unconstitutional, then all those synods and presbyteries embracing churches formed on that plan must also be disowned. What then will become, not only of the synods of Western New York, but of Albany and New Jersey? Why, there were in the Albany synod, as late as the year 1808, and by the authority of the General Assembly too, things which you will acknowledge to be a great deal worse than the plan of union ever was. By the express command of the General Assembly, they were required to have, and did have, on the floor of the synod, as members, **A WHOLE CONGREGATIONAL ASSOCIATION.** And now what will you do? We go yet further. That same Albany synod has controlled the acts of this body, and has furnished no less than five or six moderators in the seat which you now occupy. On the arguments of these brethren the Presbyterian church is unsound to the core; this

congregational gangrene has seized upon the very vitals of the body, and you cannot cut it out without destroying your own life.

Again, what are to be the legal consequences of these proceedings? Were you sitting in a state which had a court of chancery, his honour the chancellor might lay an injunction on your proceedings; and if it were done, a few hours would terminate the brief authority by which you sit in that chair. There can be no doubt that these proceedings can be reviewed in the courts of justice. Probably it would be the delight of the Pennsylvania legislature to crush your charter, if in one thing you depart from the line of the law; and if once done, it will be long before you get another. Let the men who are legislating against unconstitutional measures beware themselves not to do any thing unconstitutional. We know who said, 'He that taketh the sword shall perish by the sword.' And if you take the sword of illegitimate power, you may yourself fall by the sword of the civil power.

There is one thought more which deserves serious consideration. The act you propose to do, will fix indelibly on the Presbyterian church the character of utter faithlessness to her own solemn compacts. The church in this country is fast treading in the footsteps of the world. What is now the state of our commercial credit at home and abroad? It is gone. As a nation we have broken faith with the natives who put themselves under the broad wing of our national eagle for protection. We have torn our solemn treaties to pièces, and given their fragments to the winds of heaven; and to wind up the disgraceful drama, we have imprisoned the missionaries of the cross, who went forth, by our own sanction, to enlighten and cultivate the Indian race. But what are you doing? You are outstripping every thing which politicians have ever done. Go on and complete what you have done, and you will render American faith, in treaties and in commerce, and Presbyterian faith in religion, as notorious in modern history as Punic faith was in ancient days.

In support of the resolution, it was urged, 1. That it was neither in intention nor fact an act of discipline. Such act supposes an offence, a trial, and a sentence. The resolution, however, charges no offence, it proposes no trial, it threatens no sentence. It purports merely to declare a fact, and assigns a reason for the declaration. It has neither the form nor the operation of a judicial process. Should the resolution be adopted, it will not affect the standing of the members

of this synod as Christians, as ministers or pastors. It will simply alter their relation to the Presbyterian church. We do not propose to excommunicate them as church members, or to depose them as ministers. We do not withdraw our confidence from them, or intend to cast any imputation on them. We simply declare that they are not constitutionally a part of our church. Whether this declaration is consistent with the truth, and whether we have the right to make it, are the points now to be argued. The attempt to excite prejudice against the measure as a condemnation without trial, as a new method of discipline, as a high-handed and oppressive act of power, is uncandid and unfair. Is it an act of oppression for a court to declare that an Englishman is not an American, or that an alien is not a citizen? The decision may be erroneous, or it may arise from impure motives; but the effort to decry the mere mode of proceeding as an extra-judicial trial, a form of punishing without a defence, and before conviction, would be preposterous.

The resolution declares that the Western Reserve synod is not a regular portion of our church, and it rests this declaration on the unconstitutionality of the plan of union. Of course it is here assumed, first, that this plan is unconstitutional; and, secondly, that the synod in question is in the church only in virtue of that plan. The former of these points, having been already decided by the house, is now to be taken for granted. And this may the more safely be done because it has been freely conceded by members on the opposite side, and because it is so obvious as scarcely to admit of being proved. It is in fact as plain as that a congregational church is not a presbyterian church. With regard to the second point, we admit that something more is necessary than merely to prove that the plan of union is unconstitutional. It must be shown, in the first place, that the churches within the bounds of this synod were formed on the basis of this plan; secondly, that the abrogation of the plan effects the separation of those churches from this body; and, thirdly, that the connection of the synod is of necessity also thereby dissolved. With regard to the first of these points it is, as a general fact, a matter of historical notoriety, and might be as safely assumed as that the United States were originally British colonies. It is extremely difficult, however, to get at the details, and ascertain what proportion of these churches are still congregational. This difficulty arises from the censurable custom of reporting all the churches connected with

the presbyteries included within this synod as presbyterian churches, no matter what their real character may be. We are saved a good deal of trouble, however, on this point, by the admission of the commissioners from these presbyteries, that of the hundred and thirty-nine churches belonging to the synod, only from twenty-five to thirty are presbyterially organized; all the rest being congregational or mixed.* This, surely, is enough to show, what indeed every body knows, that this synod is essentially a congregational body; that the great majority of its churches have no other connexion with this Assembly than that which is given them by the plan of union. The question then is, does the abrogation of that plan dissolve this connexion? It undoubtedly does, unless you take measures to prevent it, and declare the contrary. The system has been so long tolerated, that this house would be justified in a court of equity, and would doubtless be sustained by the presbyteries, if it should see fit to allow time for the churches formed under it to re-organize themselves and come into regular connexion with this Assembly. But if, on the whole, the house thinks that the connexion should cease immediately, they have nothing to do but to make the declaration contained in this resolution. The operation of the abrogation is to dissolve the connexion. This is the common sense view of the case which every man would take who had not got bewildered by looking at detached fragments of legal reports; and which any one, who has patience to read a little more than a fragment, must take with increased confidence. The General Assembly pass a resolution declaring that churches organized in a certain way may be connected with our body; afterwards they rescind that resolution—what is the consequence? Why certainly to withdraw the permission and dissolve the connexion. The connexion was formed by the first resolution, it lasts while the resolution continues, and ceases when it is repealed. This is common sense. “The plan of union,” says the N. Y. Evangelist, in announcing your previous decision, “is abrogated; and the churches which are built on that basis are now no longer a part of the Presbyterian church.” It is, however, objected that, where a law is of the nature of a contract, its repeal cannot invalidate the rights which have vested under it. We admit the principle freely, but we ask, what is a law? It is an

* See the statement given to the Assembly by Mr. Brown, elder from the presbytery of Lorain, as reported in the Presbyterian, June 10.

enactment made by a competent authority, in the exercise of its legitimate powers. An act passed by a body that had no right to pass it, is no law; it has no binding force; it is legally nothing and can give existence to nothing legal. Suppose congress should enact that the king of Great Britain should be the president of the United States, would that be a law? If the British acceded to the proposal, it would be of the nature of a contract; and if the argument of the gentleman opposite be worth any thing, it would be binding in despite of the constitution or wishes of the country. The fallacy lies here in begging the question; in assuming that an unconstitutional act of a legislature is a law. It seems, however, that Chief Justice Marshall has sanctioned the principle that an act, though unconstitutional, is valid, if rights have vested under it. We hold this to be *a priori* impossible. Of all eminent jurists, that distinguished judge infused most of common sense into his legal decisions, and made the law, as far as possible, what it purports to be, the authoritative expression of the sense of right which is common to all men. The passage quoted in proof of the assertion is from the decision in the Yazoo-land case. "The legislature of Georgia," says the judge, "was a party to this transaction; and for a party to pronounce its own deed invalid, whatever reason may be assigned for the invalidity, must be considered a mere act of power." This passage bears more directly upon another point, viz. the right of this body to pronounce upon the validity of its own act. But it was used also to prove that rights vested under an unconstitutional act are valid. It is asserted that even had the act of Georgia in question been unconstitutional, according to Chief Justice Marshall, the sales made under it could not be set aside. Before looking at the report from which this sentence is quoted, or ascertaining the connexion in which it occurs, it is easy to point out the fallacy of the argument founded upon it. The very first clause assumes that the legislature of Georgia was a party to the transaction—but the legislature is not a party to an unconstitutional law—such a law is not an act of the legislature, it is the unauthorized act of a number of individuals sitting in a legislative hall and going through certain forms. A legislature is the agent of their constituents; and it is a rule of law as well as of justice that the deed of an agent, acting under written instructions, is not binding on his principal, if it be done in direct violation of those instructions. Let us suppose that the legislature of Georgia, or rather the men composing it,

should, in secret conclave, sell their whole state, with all its inhabitants, to some African monarch ignorant enough to make such a bargain, would it be binding on all future legislatures to the end of time? So say our clerical jurists; but it is a shame to evoke Chief Justice Marshall to deliver such law as this. Common sense would say that the African king had been cheated, but not that the state of Georgia had been sold. If any one will take the trouble to turn to the Report the gentleman has quoted, he will find that the first point made in the case, which it details, was, Whether the state of Georgia was seized of the lands in question at the time of the sale? the second, Did the constitution of Georgia prohibit the legislature to dispose of the lands? The former of these questions the court decided in the affirmative, the latter in the negative; and it is ever afterwards assumed throughout the decision that Georgia owned the lands, and that the legislature had a right to sell. The third point was whether this legal act was vitiated by the alleged bribery of some of the members of the legislature? This point the court refused to go into, as not properly before them, and because, if the corruption did take place, it could only vitiate the contract between the original parties, and could not affect the rights of innocent *bona fide* purchasers. The fourth point was, Whether a subsequent act of the legislature, setting aside this legal and constitutional contract of their predecessors, was valid? which was decided in the negative. This case, therefore, proves the very reverse of what it was cited to prove. "If the title," says judge Marshall, "be plainly deduced from a legislative act, *which the legislature might constitutionally pass*, if the act be clothed with all the requisite forms of a law, a court, sitting as a court of law, cannot sustain a suit brought by one individual against another, founded on the allegation that the act is a nullity, in consequence of the impure motives which influenced certain members of the legislature which passed the act." It is here assumed that if the law had been unconstitutional, it would be a nullity, the very opposite doctrine to that which the report is cited to prove. It requires, however, no judge to tell us that a man cannot sell what he does not possess; that he cannot convey a title to another which is not in himself; or that an unconstitutional act of any body is a nullity. It would be easy to cull from the Digest of the Reports of the supreme court hundreds of cases in which this principle is asserted or assumed. Thus the court say, "If any act of congress or of a legislature of a

state violates the constitutional provisions it is unquestionably void.”* Again, “an act of congress repugnant to the constitution never can become the law of the land.” Those acts which are of the nature of a contract are no exception to this rule. The case in Kentucky relating to the old and new court is a case of this kind. Where an officer is not removable at the will of the appointing power, the appointment is not revocable and cannot be annulled, it has conferred legal rights which cannot be resumed.† The act of that state appointing certain judges was therefore of the nature of a contract; the moment however the law creating the court to which it belonged was declared unconstitutional, the contract was annulled, and the judges were out of office. The state of New York passed a law of the nature of a contract, conferring on Robert R. Livingston and Robert Fulton certain privileges. This law was pronounced unconstitutional,‡ and the contract was rendered void. The act of the state of New Hampshire altering the charter of Dartmouth college was of the same nature; yet when the law was pronounced unconstitutional, all the appointments and contracts made under it were swept away. There are, no doubt, often cases of great hardship under the operation of this principle; and therefore special provision is generally made for them, either by enactments of the legislature, or by the courts of equity. The principle itself, however, is one of the most obviously just and universally recognized in the whole compass of jurisprudence. It would indeed be a deplorable thing, if a legislative body, in defiance of the constitution, could, under the influence of passion or self-interest, bargain away the rights, liberties and property of their constituents, and, under the plea of the sacredness of the contract, entail the bargain on all their successors.

Even admitting then that the plan of union adopted in 1801 was of the nature of a contract, yet if the plan is unconstitutional it is void; it has existed hitherto only by sufferance, and may at any time be set aside. There is, however, an unfairness in this mode of presenting the case. The plan of union is not a contract in the ordinary sense of the word; nor have absolute rights vested under it according to the common use of those terms. “The provision of the constitution [of the United States respecting contracts] never has,” says judge Marshall, “been understood to embrace

* See Cox's Digest, p. 168.

† Ibid, p. 169.

‡ Ibid, p. 177.

other contracts than those which respect property, or some object of value, and which confer rights which may be asserted in a court of justice.”* The plan of union is little else than a declaration, on the part of the Assembly, that it will recognize churches organized in a certain way. The connexion thus formed was perfectly voluntary; one which either party might dissolve at pleasure. Should these churches meet and resolve to break off the connexion, presbyterians would make no difficulty about vested rights and the sacredness of a compact. But this is a point we need not urge, admitting the act to be of the nature of a contract, still, if unconstitutional, it is void, and imposes no obligation on future Assemblies. It is, therefore, only by the application of legal principles to a case to which they do not refer, that any plausibility can be given to the arguments by which this resolution has been so strenuously assailed. We are not about to pass an *ex post facto* law, nor to interfere with the vested rights of any set of men, but simply to declare that the voluntary connexion into which we entered by the plan of union with certain churches, is dissolved. These churches rest upon this plan; if the plan be removed, these churches are removed with it. What can be the meaning of the act of abrogation, if it is not to break off the anomalous and unconstitutional connexion, which it effected between us and the accommodation churches? If congress, twenty years ago, had formed a treaty, by which, in despite of the constitution, Canada and Mexico were allowed to send delegates to our national councils, would not the abrogation of that treaty put an end at once to the connexion? And would the complaint about vested rights excite any sympathy where the case was known and understood?

It has been asked what would be thought of a state, which, by an unconstitutional law, should invite missionaries to come and labour for the benefit of the Indians, assuring them of their protection, and granting them many privileges, and after houses and towns had been built, and the process of civilization been going on for years; should, on the plea of the invalidity of the law, without process or trial, proceed to imprison the missionaries, break up the settlement, and hang the Indians. It requires the utmost stretch of charity to believe that such an illustration is deemed pertinent even by its au-

* Wheaton's Reports, vol. iv. p. 629.

thor, or that it has any other design than to cast odium upon the members of this house. Let the case be fairly stated, and we are willing to submit it to the decision of the enlightened consciences of all good men. Suppose then that a state government had extended its protecting and fostering hand over the tribes on our borders, and granted them privileges inconsistent with the constitution, allowing them the right of representation, and an equal voice in making the laws of the state to which these tribes themselves were not amenable; and that in the course of years they had so increased as nearly to outnumber the legal inhabitants, would any good and honest man think it wrong for that state to say to these tribes, 'You are now sufficiently numerous and strong to subsist by yourselves; you have flourishing settlements and abundant resources; we have given you the privilege of sitting in our councils and of making laws for us long enough to teach you the nature of our system, which you deliberately reject; your institutions and habits are different from ours; your ideas of government are inconsistent with our system; the influence which you are exerting upon us we believe to be destructive; it is time we should part; we leave you all your settlements, all your resources; we desire to live at peace with you, and see you prosper, but we wish that you should cease to make our laws or administer them upon us, seeing you will not submit to them yourselves.' Is this a proposition to be compared to robbery and murder? Would the state which should use such language be worthy of universal abhorrence? Must its name be written "in letters of Egyptian midnight," for the execration of all ages? With what regard to candour or Christian feeling then can such obloquy be poured on the measure under consideration, or upon those who advocate it? We are neither robbers nor murderers. We take away no man's rights. We simply maintain our own indefeasible right to self-government, and refuse to be governed by men who will not submit to the system they administer.

The next question to be decided is, whether, admitting the unconstitutionality of the plan of union, and that the churches formed upon it are now no part of our church, does this authorize the declaration that the synod of the Western Reserve is no longer connected with this body? We answer this question in the affirmative. According to the constitution of our church, "As a presbytery is a convention of the bishops and elders within a certain district: so a synod is a convention of the bishops and elders within a larger district,

including at least three presbyteries.”* The question then is, are these presbyteries or this synod conventions of bishops and elders? This question has been already answered. They are not such conventions. They are composed of a few pastors and elders of Presbyterian churches, and a large number of the pastors and lay members of Congregational churches. There is less than one of the former class to four of the latter. It is obvious, therefore, that these are not constitutional bodies. They are not in the church in virtue of the constitution. They are connected with us simply in virtue of the plan of union, and consequently when this plan is removed this connexion ceases.

Again, on the supposition that after all these accommodation churches are disconnected with this body, the presbyteries and synod still retain their connexion, we should have presbyteries and a synod composed almost entirely of ministers. These are not regular Presbyterian bodies. If ten or twelve of our ministers were to go into New England, and engage in teaching, or connect themselves with Congregational churches, no synod could constitutionally form them into a presbytery. And if they had been thus formed, this body would not be bound to recognize them. Synods have indeed the right to make presbyteries, but they are restricted by the constitution in the exercise of this right to make them out of Presbyterian ministers and elders. It is said, however, that since there are regular churches and pastors within the limits embraced by these bodies, they are presbyteries and a synod within the meaning of the constitution. The fallacy of this argument is obvious. These materials are indeed included within the synod, but do not constitute it. A number of Presbyterian, Episcopal and Methodist ministers and churches could never constitutionally be formed into a synod in our church. If such an anomalous body were ever recognized as a synod, it must be by some special arrangement. The question would then come up, is this arrangement constitutional? And as soon as this question is authoritatively decided in the negative, the irregular synod would be disowned. As to the objection that a minister becomes, by his ordination by a regular presbytery, a member of our church, and that we have no right to declare that he is not a member, we answer, it is admitted he is a member as long as he continues connected with a regular presbytery. If

* Form of Government, chap. ix. sect. 1.

however he joins a Congregational Association, he is no longer a member of our church, and if he joins a body connected with us by some special tie, he ceases to be a member as soon as that tie is sundered.

Having now proved that the operation of the decision of this house on the plan of union is to sever our connexion with the churches formed upon it, and that the organization of the synod of the Western Reserve is also pronounced by that decision to be unconstitutional, the only question is whether this Assembly has a right to make the declaration contained in the resolution under debate? We do not see how this point can be doubted. If the fact is so; if that synod is not formed on a constitutional basis, it must be competent for this house to say so. We are both a legislative and judicial body. It is the province of a legislature to decide what the laws shall be, and of a court to decide what they are. We have both these prerogatives. We can not only repeal the acts of former Assemblies, but if those acts are brought up by appeal, reference, or resolution, we can examine and decide whether or not they are consistent with the constitution.

It will be remembered that the Assembly of 1835 formed a compact with the synod of Pittsburg in reference to the Western Foreign Missionary Society; which the Assembly of 1836 felt no scruples in declaring unconstitutional. The power of the Assembly to decide on the validity of its own acts was not then called in question. Chief Justice Marshall's opinion that a party to a contract cannot pronounce its own act invalid, had not yet been discovered. The question has come up before this Assembly, whether the act of 1801, adopting the plan of union, is constitutional? And it has been decided in the negative. This resolution brings up the question, whether the act of 1825, erecting the synod of the Western Reserve on the basis of that plan is constitutional? Whatever doubt there may be as to the decision, there can be none as to the power of this house to make it.

It is asked, what would be thought if congress should declare a sovereign state out of the union? There are two false assumptions implied in this question. The first is that the judicial and legislative power are united in congress as they are in this body, which notoriously is not the case. The second is, that the synod of the Western Reserve is regularly in the church, and that we are about to cut it off by a simple legislative act. This is not the fact. We are not about to cut off a regular synod for heresy, which we admit, in all

ordinary cases, would require a regular process. We are simply about to declare that the act of the Assembly of 1825, constituting certain presbyteries composed almost exclusively of Congregational churches, was unconstitutional and void. We are about to say that a convention of Presbyterian ministers and of Congregational laymen, is not a convention of Presbyterian bishops and ruling elders, and that no act of any General Assembly can make it so. When a state applies for admission into the Union, the question, whether it is organized in a manner consistently with the constitution of the United States, is always presented. Should this question be decided affirmatively by congress, and this decision be subsequently reversed by the competent tribunal, the effect would of course be to throw the state out of the Union, or rather to declare that it never was constitutionally a member. The only difference between such a case and the one before us is, that the legislative and judicial functions in our civil government are divided; whereas they are united in this house by the constitution under which we act.

The objection, therefore, which has been urged against the competency of this house, on the ground that a party to a compact cannot declare its own act invalid, admits of several satisfactory answers. In the first place, the acts forming the plan of union and erecting this synod are not properly of the nature of a contract. They are simple legislative acts which this house is authorized to repeal. In the second place, an unconstitutional act of a body, is not and cannot be binding on its successors. It is not properly the act of the body, as has already been shown. Consequently even if the acts referred to were of the nature of a contract, they would be as devoid of any authority as an act of this Assembly to sell the United States. And in the third place, in virtue of the constitution of our church we have judicial as well as legislative power, and it is our appropriate business to review all decisions of this or any of our judicatories when brought properly before us.

There is another principle on which this resolution may be justified. Every church or community has the right to prescribe its own terms of membership; and its judicatories must be authorized to decide whether these terms in any disputed case are complied with or not. It is on this principle that we sit in judgment on the qualifications of our own members, and vacate the seat of any commissioner whom we find not to be duly qualified. And on the same principle we

have a right to decide whether a presbytery or synod is constitutionally organized; in other words, whether it is a constituent part of the church. For an unconstitutional body has no more right to a standing in our church, than a state with a monarchial form of government has a right to a standing in our national Union. In making the declaration contained in this resolution, therefore, we are assuming no irregular or unreasonable power, we are passing no *ex post facto* law, we are depriving no body of men of their vested rights. The only real question for debate is, is the declaration true? Is the synod of the Western Reserve constitutionally organized? If it is not, it has no more right here than an Episcopal convention.

We come now to the question of expediency. It is urged against the measure proposed that it will produce the most disastrous results. It will invalidate the licensures, ordinations and judicial acts of all these presbyteries, and unsettle the title to church property in all that region of country. Even if all these consequences were to flow from the passage of this resolution, it would not alter the state of the case. If that synod is not a synod, it is not a synod, no matter what the consequences may be of admitting and declaring the truth. But these evils are all fears of the imagination. No man's licensure, ordination or church standing will be affected by this measure. This Assembly acknowledges the validity of the licensures, ordinations, and judicial acts of Congregational associations and councils, why then should it cease to acknowledge such acts of these irregular presbyteries? As to the church property, we do not believe a single farthing will pass out of the hands of its present holders. This General Assembly does not hold the property of these churches, nor do its owners hold it in virtue of their connexion with this Assembly. If in any particular case the title supposes or requires the holders to be Presbyterians, it proves that those who gave the property wished it to be so held; and it can be forfeited only by the present holders becoming Congregationalists. It is said too that this measure will operate hardly upon regular Presbyterian ministers and churches connected with the synod. It must be remembered, however, that this body can act, in this case, only on the synod, or the body as a whole. If there is any portion of its presbyteries or congregations who wish to be connected with this Assembly, they can become regularly organized and effect the union without delay.

On the other hand, the expediency of the measure is obvious from the following considerations. In the first place, these churches are in heart Congregational, why should they then be called Presbyterian? That they do really prefer Congregationalism, is plain from the fact that although it is twelve years since they were formed into a synod, you hear it stated by their own commissioners, that not one fourth of their number have adopted our form of government. Besides, it is generally known, that it required very great exertion, on the part of those who do not belong to the synod, to prevent a general secession of these churches, and the adoption of Congregationalism in full.* Is it not preposterous and unreasonable that men, who can with difficulty be kept from rejecting the mere shadow of Presbyterianism, should be still nominally connected with our church, for no other purpose than to exert an influence in our church courts to which they have no right? In the second place, there is abundant evidence that the greatest disorders prevail in these presbyteries in reference to our system. Mr. Breck, of the presbytery of Cleaveland, has stated on the floor, that he never saw any elders ordained; that he *believes* the ministers adopt the confession of faith. Mr. Torrance stated he saw two Congregational ministers received into that presbytery without the constitutional questions being put. Mr. Kingsbury, though having a certificate of ordination as a ruling elder, when asked if, at his ordination, he had adopted our confession of faith? declined answering the question. It must be remembered that this evidence is not adduced as the ground of decision in a judicial case, but as a motive for action in a legislative one. All that kind of evidence which

* The New York Evangelist of June 24, 1837, quotes from the Ohio Observer, a paper edited, it is said, by the stated clerk of the Western Reserve synod, an editorial article advising the synod "to declare itself an independent body, changing its name, perhaps, for the Western Reserve General Consociation, and modifying its rules as circumstances shall seem to require. This done, then let the presbyteries resolve themselves into consociations, still maintaining the principles of government on which they ever acted, and abiding by the same rules, with such alterations as may be thought necessary." The spirit of the whole article is such as becomes a Christian minister, and is, in this respect, a striking contrast with the humiliating tone and language of almost all the new-school papers in their notices of the proceedings of the General Assembly. We refer to the article in the Ohio Observer as additional evidence, that public sentiment in the Western Reserve is decidedly in favour of Congregationalism. The moment the motives, whatever they may be, for maintaining the name and form of Presbyterianism, derived from their connexion with the Assembly, cease to operate, they avow their preference for Congregationalism. It remains to be seen what effect foreign influence may have on their determinations.

produces moral certainty as to the state of things in that region of country, may very properly be adduced as an argument why we should dissolve our connexion with a body in which our system is openly disregarded. We presume there is not an individual on this floor, who is not perfectly satisfied that there are such frequent and serious departures from presbyterial order permitted within the bounds of this synod, as would justify its excision by judicial process. This surely is a strong argument for passing this resolution, which we believe expresses the exact truth, that they are not now and never have been a constitutional portion of our church; a resolution which, while it frees us from the evils and responsibilities of the connexion, inflicts no injury on them. It leaves them every thing but the right to administer over us a constitution to which the majority of them are entirely opposed. The departures from Presbyterianism in this region are not confined to matters of government; we have every evidence such a case admits of, that what we believe to be serious departures from our doctrinal standards, prevail throughout this synod. We know what is the theology of Oberlin Seminary; we know what opinions the commissioners from these presbyteries have, at various times, avowed on the floor of the Assembly; we know, and every one else knows, that new-school theology, be it good or bad, is the theology of this synod. We believe this theology, especially in its recent shape, is not only inconsistent with our standards, but in a high degree injurious to true religion. Shall we then, in violation of our constitution, and in disregard of our solemn obligations, continue to recognize as a member of this body, a synod, which we believe is not entitled to be so regarded, and which we are certain is lending all its influence to spread, through our whole denomination, a system of doctrines we believe to be erroneous and destructive?

We believe then this whole case to be exceedingly plain. The plan of union, on which the churches of this synod are in general formed, we believe to be unconstitutional, and that its abrogation severs the only tie by which they were connected with this body. We believe that the act by which this synod was organized is also unconstitutional and void, and that, from the nature of our system and the constitution of our church, it is the rightful prerogative of this house to pronounce these acts to be invalid, and that the necessary operation of this decision is to declare the churches of this synod not to be a constituent portion of the Presbyterian

church. We feel bound to make this declaration, because it is true, and because, while it deprives no man of his ministerial or Christian standing, and robs no one either of his property or rights, it relieves us from a source of error and disorder which is distracting the peace, and destroying the purity of the church. We do no man injustice by declaring that congregationalists are not presbyterians, and have no right to take part in the government of the Presbyterian church.

After the resolution declaring the Western Reserve synod not to be a constituent part of the Presbyterian church had been adopted, it was decided that the commissioners from the presbyteries included within that synod, were not entitled to sit and vote in the Assembly. Their names were consequently omitted when the roll was called.

American Home Missionary and Education Societies.

On Thursday afternoon, June 1, Mr. Breckinridge moved the adoption of the following resolution. While we desire that no body of Christian men of other denominations should be prevented from choosing their own plans of doing good—and while we claim no right to complain, should they exceed us in energy and zeal, we believe that facts too familiar to need repetition here, warrant us in affirming that the organization and operations of the so called American Home Missionary Society, and the American Education Society, and their branches of whatever name, are exceedingly injurious to the peace and purity of the Presbyterian church. We recommend, accordingly, that they should cease to operate within any of our churches.

This resolution was supported by Messrs. Breckinridge, Boyd, Green and Plumer on the following grounds. 1. That the Home Missionary Society had, in former years, solicited and obtained the recommendation of the Assembly. There may have been reasons for the recommendation then; but if subsequent developements have led to a change of opinion, the Assembly is bound in faithfulness to counteract their own sanction of what they can no longer approve. 2. That the influence and power of this society were too great to be lodged in any hands unless there was direct responsibility to the church. No one man should have a controlling influence in locating eight hundred ministers, or have in his hands the means of their subsistence. 3. That the management of these societies, especially the former, had, it was believed, been such as to give them a party bearing on all the questions in

dispute in the church. The uniformity with which the missionaries of the American Home Missionary Society voted in the Assembly for or against certain measures; the long continued and unvaried opposition of many of the friends and of the agents of that society to the Assembly's Board, especially their conduct in the last Assembly in endeavouring to destroy that Board; the printed and other letters of the general agent, having the same general object in view, were appealed to in evidence on this subject. 4. These institutions are adverse to the presbyterian principles of representation and control. 5. The good done by these societies may, within our own bounds, be as effectually accomplished by institutions more in harmony with our principles, without the incidental evils before referred to.

The resolution was opposed by Mr. Johnson and Dr. Peters. The argument on this side consisted principally, 1. Of an historical detail of the origin and operations of the American Home Missionary Society, which was the one principally brought into view; and especially in an account of the various attempts at compromise and union between the two Missionary Boards. 2. Answers were given to the specific arguments and objections presented on the other side. Thus it was contended, that the power of the society was not so great as was represented; that the auxiliaries had authority to appropriate their own funds, and to choose their own missionaries; that the missionaries were directed to report themselves to the presbyteries, and were always dismissed if any complaints came from those bodies against them. Party bias and party efforts or designs were disavowed. 3. It was urged that these societies had been long in operation, had done much good, and had secured the affection and confidence of the churches. 4. That the resolution, though not imperative, was still an interference with the free choice of the people as to the mode they should adopt in doing good. 5. The resolution is adapted to embarrass the four hundred ministers in our church, who depend in part on the aid of one of these societies for their support, and the scores of youth under the patronage of the other. 6. That it is adapted to injure two of the most important benevolent institutions. 7. That it is founded on a mistaken idea of the responsibility of these societies, which it was argued was more direct and efficient than that of the Boards of the Assembly.*

* We are not insensible to the importance of the subject presented by this resolution. We have three reasons, however, for not entering more at large

The resolution was carried: yeas 124, nays 86.

Disowning the Synods of Genesee, Utica and Geneva.

Saturday morning, June 3, Mr. Breckinridge offered the following resolutions.

“Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America :

“1. That in consequence of the abrogation, by this Assembly, of the plan of union of 1801, between it and the General Association of Connecticut, as utterly unconstitutional, and therefore null and void from the beginning, the synods of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee, which were formed and attached to this body under and in execution of said plan of union, be and are hereby declared to be, out of the ecclesiastical connexion of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America, and not in form or fact an integral portion of said church.

“2. That the solicitude of this Assembly on the whole subject, and its urgency for the immediate decision of it, are greatly increased, by reason of the gross disorders which are ascertained to have prevailed in those synods, (as well as that of the Western Reserve, against which a declarative resolution, similar to the first of these, has been passed during our present sessions;) it being made clear to us, that even the plan of union itself was never consistently carried into effect by those professing to act under it.

“3. That the General Assembly has no intention, by these resolutions, (or that passed in the case of the synod of the Western Reserve,) to affect in any way the ministerial standing of any member of either of said synods; nor to disturb the pastoral relation in any church; nor to interfere with the duties or relations of private Christians in their respective congregations; but only to declare and determine, according to the truth and necessity of the case, and by virtue of the full authority existing in it for that purpose,—the relation of all said synods, and all their constituent parts, to this body, and to the Presbyterian church in these United States.

4. That, inasmuch as there are reported to be several churches and ministers, if not one or two presbyteries, now in connexion with one or more of said synods, which are strictly presbyterian in doctrine and order: Be it therefore further resolved, that all such churches and ministers as wish to unite with us, are hereby directed to apply for admission into those presbyteries, belonging to our connexion, which are most convenient to their respective locations; and that any such presbyteries as aforesaid, being strictly presbyterian in doctrine and order, and now in connexion with either of said synods, as may desire to unite with us, are hereby directed to make application, with a full statement of their respective cases, to the next General Assembly,—which will take proper order thereon.”

The debate on these resolutions was conducted by Messrs. Breckinridge, Plumer and Ewing on the one side, by Dr. Beman and Mr. White upon the other. In the course of the discussion Mr. Jessup moved to postpone the resolutions

into it. 1. We have only an imperfect outline of the debates on this subject. 2. In recent numbers of this work, we have devoted a great deal of space to the discussion of the questions here brought under review. 3. The importance of the other measures of this Assembly has rendered it necessary to fill our allotted number of pages with other matter.

with a view to cite the above named synods to the bar of the Assembly. The debate, however, seems to have been continued on the main question, till Monday afternoon, when, the motion to postpone being superseded by the previous question, the vote was taken on the first resolution, yeas 115, nays 88, non liquet 1. The other resolutions were then adopted, yeas 113, nays 60.

As we have already stated, almost all the points introduced into the debate on these resolutions, were discussed when the resolution respecting the synod of the Western Reserve was under consideration. All therefore that remains for us to do, is to state those grounds of argument which have a special reference to the case of these three synods.

It was objected, in the first place, to the adoption of these resolutions, that they proceed entirely upon a false assumption. They assume that the majority of the churches within the bounds of these synods, were formed upon the basis of the plan of union. This is not the fact. The majority of these churches are strictly presbyterian in their structure, and with few exceptions, even the small number of churches originally congregational, were not organized under the stipulations of the plan of union, but came in under a different arrangement, and possess rights on this subject, separate from, and independent of, the plan of union of 1801, secured to them by the Assembly of 1808, by which the synod of Albany was authorized to take the Middle Association under its care; in virtue of which arrangement commissioners of the said Association were admitted to the floor of the General Assembly, up to the time when the Association was dissolved, and erected into two presbyteries, regularly formed out of its materials. 2. In the second place, admitting the existence of the irregularity complained of, these resolutions do not prescribe the proper means of redress. If there are charges of irregular organization and other disorders brought against any judicatories, our constitution directs that such judicatory shall be cited to appear at a specified time and place, and show what it has done or failed to do in the case in question, chap. vii. sect. 1. par. 6. This is the regular constitutional course, and it is contrary to reason and justice to proceed to act on these charges until they have been properly established. 3. These synods have had no notice of an intention to sever them from the Presbyterian church, and have consequently made no preparation for defence against the charges brought in the resolutions, or for the

refutation of the false assumptions which they contain. No adequate opportunity can be afforded for this purpose during debate on this floor, even supposing that the charges could be now regularly entertained. 4. The kind of evidence on which it is proposed to act in this case, is irregular and unsatisfactory. It consists in vague rumours, indefinite statements, unsupported assertions, or letters and documents containing statements which we believe to be unfounded, and which we should be able to refute, if suitable time and opportunity were afforded. 5. The effect of passing these resolutions will be both unkind and injurious. It will be a virtual excommunication of four or five hundred ministers, in good and regular standing in the Presbyterian church. It must tend to disturb the peace of our congregations, to injure the usefulness of ministers, and to bring an indelible disgrace on the church.

Dr. Beman delivered a long and able speech in opposition to this measure, the main parts of which are incorporated in the argument presented above against the resolution respecting the Western Reserve synod. That argument, therefore, must be considered as belonging to the debate on these resolutions.

The same remark must be made in reference to the argument on the other side. If the plan of union is unconstitutional, if the churches formed upon it are no longer connected with our church, and if the unconstitutionality affects the validity of the acts organizing the synods which embrace these churches, of course the main point in debate relating to these three synods is, whether they were formed and attached to this body under, and in execution of, the plan of union? That they were thus formed was argued, from the historical fact that the plan of union was originally designed for the region of western New York, where these synods lie. It has been repeatedly stated and freely admitted on both sides of this house, that the plan was suggested by the members of the synod of Albany, which at that time embraced the whole western part of the state, and that it was adopted for their accommodation. When the question of the abrogation of the plan of union was under discussion, it seemed to be universally admitted that it was the basis on which the churches, as a body, in that whole region of country were founded. Rev. Mr. Foote stated, "That those who first settled the country in western New York, were chiefly emigrants from New

England, who had been trained from their infancy in the principles and habits of congregationalism. When the plan of union was submitted to them, there was a way opened through which they could get into intercourse with the large and venerable Presbyterian church. Though there were many difficulties at first, in bringing them to assent to it, they were gradually brought under its operation, and had been so for many years." Mr. Loss said, "The interior of New York was first settled from New England. The clergymen were congregationalists, and all the churches were of the congregational order; but the case was at present far different. . . . They had first embraced the accommodation plan, and from that as a stepping stone they had passed within the pale of the Presbyterian church. . . . What was true of the presbytery of Oneida, was equally true of most other presbyteries in the interior of New York. But for the accommodation plan, that whole region would have been filled with congregational churches." Mr. Spaulding said, "When the presbytery of Chenango was formed there had not previously been a Presbyterian church within its bounds. There were now eight." Another gentleman said five, and Mr. Sessions, in his letter, says three. Dr. Peters said, that he would be willing to yield the point as to the connexion of the Association of Connecticut with the western churches, but contended that the force of the contract was still binding. "In place of the parent had come the offspring. New congregational churches had risen up and mingled themselves with us, and become ours. The original obligation was now transferred to the churches, and presbyteries and synods which had been founded on the faith of it; for the plan had extended its benign influence far and wide. Along our frontier, numerous churches had been formed on the faith of that covenant. . . . He felt bound to plead for the obligation of this covenant with our congregational brethren. That obligation had now been transferred to a body twice, yes, five times as large as the Association of Connecticut. All these presbyteries and synods *had not only been organized on this plan*, but had called our ministers," &c. &c.* After these repeated and strong admissions of the fact that the churches through western New York were generally organized on the plan of union, we are aston-

* See the reports of the debate on the plan of union, in N. Y. Observer of June 7, and 10.

ished to hear it said by some of these same brethren, not only that the majority of the churches are now strictly presbyterian, but that only a small number were originally congregational, and that even these, with few exceptions, did not come in on the plan of union.* When it was proposed to abolish that plan, they told us it was all-important, that almost all their churches, presbyteries and synods were organized upon it. The moment, however, we assume these facts as the basis of action, they tell us that, with few exceptions, their churches never had any thing to do with the plan of union, and that their presbyteries and synods were not organized upon it. It is evident that these brethren must use these expressions in a different sense on different occasions. We thought it was conceded as a notorious fact, that the great majority of these churches had, as these brethren stated, come into our church by the plan of union, that some were now regular in their organization, others still existed on the mixed plan, and some were purely congregational. We do not pretend to know the proportion which these several classes bear to each other. As Mr. Stillman tells us in his "Strictures" the members of the presbyteries to which these churches belong, do not themselves know. This, at least, he says, is the case with his own presbytery of forty-eight churches. How then can we know. We act on the general statement. If it is true, that "these presbyteries and synods were organized on the plan of union," then we say they were unconstitutionally organized. And by this we mean that an act of a synod erecting presbyterians and congregationalists into a presbytery is unconstitutional; and that an act of the General Assembly erecting such presbyteries into a synod is unconstitutional. And this house has an undoubted right to repeal such acts and declare them to be of no effect.

We are told, however, that a large part of these churches belonged originally to the Middle Association, which was first united to the synod of Albany, and then erected into two presbyteries. The brethren must see that this does not at all relieve the case. The objection to the plan of union is not to its name; it is to the thing itself; it is to the introduction of congregationalists, remaining such, into our church. It matters little whether this is done on a small scale, with

* See the Protest on Exclusion of the three synods.

separate congregations, or on a large scale, with whole Associations. The ground assumed is, that ecclesiastical bodies formed in this way, partly of presbyterians and partly of congregationalists, are unconstitutional, and ought not any longer to be connected with our church; that it is unreasonable and unjust, subversive of our principles, and destructive to the peace and purity of the church. The parties in conflict are essentially the presbyterian party on the one side, and the congregational party on the other. We admit that there are many ministers and churches belonging to this latter division, who have as good a right to the name of presbyterian and to a standing in the Presbyterian church as we have. But this Assembly must act in reference to ecclesiastical bodies, and not to individuals. And the resolutions under consideration make express provision for such cases. If they are more numerous than we have supposed, so much the better. We should be glad, if it should turn out that the majority of these ministers and churches are sincerely attached to our doctrines and discipline.

In support of the second resolution, which assigns as a reason for the speedy decision of this matter the prevalence of gross disorders within the bounds of these synods, extracts from various documents were read, such as the pastoral letter of the synod of Geneva, the letter of the Association of western New York, Mr. Finney's lectures, Dr. Beecher's letter to the editor of the *New York Observer*, &c. These documents were read not as evidence but as arguments. If it is true that extravagance and fanaticism have prevailed to a great extent in this region of country, it is certainly a strong reason for dissolving our connexion with these churches. It is no more intended by these statements to fix charges upon individuals, than it is the intention of the Assembly in its annual acknowledgment of the prevalence of the sins of sabbath breaking and intemperance, to fasten the imputation of these sins upon particular persons. The opposition on the part of the minority to the reading of these papers, we cannot but think unreasonable. Is it not universally the case, that when the state of things at the south is discussed, the laws and official documents and even newspaper accounts bearing on this subject are freely referred to? or when the condition of the north is under consideration, that the accounts of riots and mobs are freely cited? Such things may be fairly adduced as arguments, and are to be

answered as such, and not cried down as extra-judicial criminalations.*

After the adoption of the resolutions above mentioned, the following additions to the standing rules were moved and adopted, viz.

“Resolved, that the following be added to the rules of the General Assembly :

“1. That no commissioner from a newly-formed presbytery shall be permitted to take his seat, nor shall such commissioner be reported by the committee on commissions, until the presbytery shall have been duly reported by the synod and recognized as such by the Assembly.

“2. When it shall appear to the satisfaction of the General Assembly, that any new presbytery has been formed for the purpose of unduly increasing the representation, the General Assembly will, by a vote of the majority, refuse to receive the delegates of presbyteries so formed, and may direct the synod to which such presbytery belongs, to reunite it to the presbytery or presbyteries to which the members *were before attached.*”

This was not introduced as a party measure. It was designed to guard against a general and serious evil. In times of much excitement there is always a strong temptation to increase the representation by an undue multiplication of presbyteries. If this course were adopted by one party, it would be followed for self-defence by the other. And we should have the disgraceful spectacle of our judicatories running a race for the acquisition of influence by this process of dis-

* See, in reference to this subject, the candid and honourable statement of a member of the Assembly from western New York, in the *Hartford Watchman*, July 15. “My own views on all the subjects before the house were freely expressed. I declared more than once before the Assembly, that the errors against which the convention testified do exist, and that I was ready to vote for their condemnation. In my views of the existence of these errors, and of the duty of condemning them, I presume at least one half of the delegation from the interior of New York coincide. There were many precious men on that floor from this section of the country. They are haters of Arminianism in every form, and have opposed it in every variety of circumstances. And yet men were found voting together there, who never vote together on theological subjects at home, especially on contested points. The men who coincided with me were disposed to make a frank disclosure of the condition of this region, while those of different views were entirely against it. And so strong was this opposition, that I was absolutely stopped by their clamour for ‘order,’ when I began to declare it.—And though the moderator pronounced me to be in order, yet it was impossible to proceed, so strong was the determination to keep in the dark all the facts respecting Oberlin, Oneida Institute, Myrickism, and the Perfectionists. It was my opinion then, and it is unchanged, that if there had been a full disclosure of facts, these synods would now have been in full connexion with the Assembly. Could you have seen the efforts I made to bring the subject fairly before the body, you would have found full evidence of my abhorrence of Newlightism. And could you see the letters which I have received from the Newlights since my return, you would have no doubt that every Arminian wished that I had not been in the Assembly.”

memberment. It was therefore just and proper to forbid this method of proceeding on either side. As the advantage is understood to be greatly, as it now stands, on the side of the minority, it is certainly ungracious in them to complain of a rule which binds the hands of their opponents, and which prevents nothing that is fair and reasonable on their side.

Resolutions were introduced in relation to the third presbytery of Philadelphia, which, as modified by the mover, were adopted in the following form, viz.

“Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America,

“1. That the Third Presbytery of Philadelphia be, and it hereby is, dissolved.

“2. The territory embraced in this presbytery is re-annexed to those to which it respectively appertained before its creation. Its stated clerk is directed to deposit all their records, and other papers, in the hands of the stated clerk of the synod of Philadelphia, on or before the first day of the sessions of that synod, at its first meeting after this Assembly adjourns.

“3. The candidates and Foreign Missionaries of the *Third Presbytery of Philadelphia* are hereby attached to the Presbytery of Philadelphia.

“4. The ministers, churches, and licentiates in the presbytery hereby dissolved are directed to apply without delay to the presbyteries to which they most naturally belong, for admission into them. And upon application being so made, by any duly organized Presbyterian church, it shall be received.

“5. These resolutions shall be in force from and after the final adjournment of the present sessions of this General Assembly.”

Yeas 70, nays 60.

These resolutions were advocated on the ground of the unconstitutionality of the act of the Assembly by which this presbytery was constituted, and of the evils which had resulted, and were likely still farther to result from its existence in its present form. We have always regarded the formation of that presbytery as unconstitutional, though not for the same reasons as those most commonly assigned; and we are well aware that it has been a source of much trouble to the synod with which it is connected. We do not wonder therefore that a desire was felt to make such a disposition of the whole subject, as should put the matter finally to rest. We do not question the right of the Assembly to act in this case, and to dissolve the presbytery which they themselves had formed, but we cannot see the propriety of the manner in which it was done. It was said, that the Assembly has no authority to attach any minister to a presbytery without its consent. This, as a general rule, may be true. But in those cases in which the Assembly undertakes to assign limits to presbyteries, or to constitute or dissolve such bodies, they must determine who shall and who shall not belong to them. The

great difficulty arises from the anomalous position in which this act places the members of this presbytery. By the act of dissolution their presbytery ceases to exist. They are then members of no presbytery, and yet presbyterian ministers. They are indeed directed to apply for admission into the presbyteries to which they most naturally belong. Suppose, however, these bodies refuse to receive them. In what condition are they then? Are they in or out of the Presbyterian church? Is a minister turned out of the church by the refusal of a particular presbytery to receive him? This cannot be assumed as a constitutional mode of getting rid of a man. And if he is still a minister within the church, what is he to do? Is he to apply to some other presbytery to take him in? Or is he to remain unattached to any ecclesiastical body? It seems to us that the only proper method of disposing of this case, if it was taken up at all, was either to refer the whole matter to the synod, or at once to attach the members, as was done in the case of the foreign missionaries, to one or the other of the existing presbyteries.

The committee on the overture respecting Foreign Missions reported the constitution of a board, to be entitled, The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America. This report was adopted; yeas 108, nays 29. The members of this Board were subsequently elected; and directed to hold their first meeting in the First Presbyterian Church in Baltimore, on the third Wednesday of September next. The resolutions reported by the committee on the memorial respecting doctrinal errors were adopted; yeas 109, nays 6, *non liquet* 11. The Assembly having disposed of various other items of business, and adopted the drafts of a pastoral and circular letter, it was


Resolved, That this General Assembly be dissolved, and that a General Assembly, chosen in like manner, be required to meet in the Seventh Presbyterian Church, in the city of Philadelphia, on the third Thursday of May, 1838, at 11 o'clock, A.M."

In closing the account of the proceedings of this important General Assembly, there are one or two topics which call for a few remarks. The first is, the general character and deportment of the body. Every friend of religion must have been pained and humbled on reading the statements on this subject published in the papers in the interests of the minority. These accounts we believe, on the testimony of impartial witnesses, to be grossly unjust and exaggerated. That

there were occasional violations of decorum, by individuals on both sides of the house, and occasional manifestations of excitement, is no doubt true. But the published accounts are in various respects uncandid, and adapted to mislead. In the first place, they exaggerate the improprieties of particular persons, making them appear greater and more unprovoked than they really were. In the second place, they speak of the whole body as implicated in the misconduct of individuals. Even if all that is said were strictly true, could it be justly held up as an imputation on the whole General Assembly? It is notorious that the great majority of the house, on either side, took little part in the debates, and conducted themselves in every respect as became Christians and gentlemen. In the third place, these accounts are exceedingly partial. Every expression against which objection could be taken, coming from a member of the majority, is repeated and exaggerated, while the improprieties of members on the other side are passed over in silence. It is to the honour of the papers on the side of the majority, that they have abstained from this work of defamation. Not one word has been said in any paper, as far as we know, of the most extraordinary scene which occurred during the sessions of the Assembly. This silence has arisen on the one side from delicacy, and on the other from interest. As far as we can judge, from the testimony of those in whom we can confide, the general deportment of the members was unexceptionable; the improprieties on either side confined very much to individuals, and these were quite as frequent and as serious, to say the least, on the part of the minority, as on that of the majority. Yet this body is spoken of in the most opprobrious manner in the papers to which we have referred. The Boston Recorder says, "We could not, in good conscience towards God, nor in loving kindness to our readers, nor in justice to ourselves, give even an abstract of the proceedings of the body." The Alton Observer says, "With the close of its sessions closes the history of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in the United States of America. And alas! it may be said of that body, with perfect truth, that it died as the fool dieth. . . . The crisis of these heart-burnings has now arrived; the inflamed imposthume has suppurated, and the stench of its offensive matter has pervaded the whole land like a pestilential presence."* The New York Evangelist

* We perhaps owe an apology to our readers for copying such language.

publishes a letter, which it says comes from one of the leading ministers of Connecticut, who asks, "Was it not a presbyterian who publicly declared, a few years ago, that at every meeting of the General Assembly there was 'a jubilee in hell?' And what was the spirit which actuated the majority of the General Assembly at their late meeting? . . . Who can doubt, that one leading motive was the motive which actuated Satan when he fell from heaven—the love of superiority and power?" The Cincinnati Journal says, "All the forms of law, civil and ecclesiastical, have been set at naught. . . . The greatness of the enormity would render idle all the expressions of reproach." Even the presbytery of Cayuga allow themselves, in an official document, to use the following language, "Resolved, That all the ministers and churches belonging to and under the care of this presbytery be, and hereby are, cautioned to beware of the insidious and seductive stratagems and efforts of the adherents of the majority in the late Assembly, who are endeavouring by false pretences, misrepresentations, and 'pastoral letters' (so called), to induce them to dissolve their ecclesiastical connexion," &c. This language is used in reference to the official documents of the General Assembly, and to a pastoral letter prepared by Dr. Baxter, Dr. Alexander, and Dr. Leland. The most laboured effort at misrepresentation has been made to produce the impression that the desire to protect slavery was the ruling motive of the majority. That this should be done by the abolition papers is not a matter of surprise. But that papers which have hitherto been of a different character, should take the same course, is not so easily accounted for. The Cincinnati Journal says, "We had no doubt, when the course of the General Assembly was manifested, and when the four synods were cut off, of the cause which was urging on that body to such extremes of violence. Our belief is confirmed by our correspondent. The question is not between the new and old school—is not in relation to doctrinal errors, but it is slavery and anti-slavery. It is not the standards that are to be protected, but the system of slavery." This correspondent of the Journal, a member of the Assembly, under the date of June 6, writes, "The resolutions for excluding the synods of Utica, Geneva, and Genesee, were offered by R. J. Breckinridge of Baltimore, and sustained by himself and W. S. Plumer of Virginia. The speech of the latter gentleman was the most unfair and uncandid that I ever heard. It was designed to excite the south to vote as one man against those synods,



because they had dared to oppose southern slavery." We have read one report of the speech here referred to, in the Presbyterian, which occupies several columns, and another still longer in the Evangelist, in neither of which have we discovered the least allusion to the subject of slavery. We have asked men of both parties who heard the speech delivered, and they unhesitatingly pronounce the statement untrue. The author of such a letter, if a church member, would, in this part of the church, be subjected to discipline. We have given but a specimen of the manner in which the Assembly and its doings are spoken of by the new school men and presses. And now we ask what can be the object? What good end, supposing the fact were so, can be gained by degrading the moral and religious character of one of the largest ecclesiastical bodies in the country? Are these brethren so determined to produce excitement and reaction, that they care not how religion is disgraced, or its ministers degraded, if they can but accomplish their object? Must the most exaggerated and unfair representations be spread over the whole country, no matter what evil results, in order to throw odium on the majority, and secure an ascendancy for the minority? We are very poor moralists, if such declarations as those just cited are not more offensive in the sight of God, and to the feelings of good men, than the most exceptionable proceedings on the floor of the Assembly.

The only fair criterion by which to judge of any public body is their acts and their official documents. Individuals must answer for themselves. If the Assembly is judged by this criterion, we do not doubt that it will, in the main, secure the approbation of all dispassionate men, who shall take the trouble to understand the subject. The avowed, and we believe the real object, which the majority desired to attain, was to put an end to the contentions which had so long distracted the church, and to secure a faithful adherence to our doctrines and discipline. To accomplish this object, they determined, in the exercise of what they believed to be the constitutional authority of the Assembly, to separate from the Presbyterian church those who, having no constitutional right to a seat in its judicatories, were yet the main supporters of the prevalent errors and disorders. The fact was notorious that a large portion of our ecclesiastical courts were composed in great measure of congregationalists or their representatives. And it was no less notorious that these bodies formed the strength of the party which the majority have

ever believed to be more or less hostile to the doctrines and discipline of our church. It presented itself, therefore, as the most feasible, the most just and proper method of attaining the great object of peace and purity in the church, to separate from it the congregational portion. This we believe the Assembly had a perfect right to do. The only question was about the method of doing it. As to this point there was, no doubt, diversity of views, and very obviously a change of plan. The first step was the abrogation of the plan of union. With regard to this there is, we suspect, but one mind. There were then three methods proposed by which to carry that abrogation into effect. The first was that suggested in the overture from the New Brunswick presbytery, and was substantially the same as that presented in the resolutions offered by Dr. Cuyler. That is, to declare that neither the ministers nor lay-delegates of congregational or accommodation churches should be hereafter allowed to sit as members of any presbyterian judicatory. The second method was that of citing the bodies thus irregularly organized, and proceeding to correct the evil in question by judicial process. This plan would have been perfectly regular. But it would have been tedious and attended with protracted litigation. It was moreover strenuously resisted by the minority, as unauthorized, (though they themselves subsequently proposed it). It became evident, therefore, that it could not be carried through without increasing the contentions it was the object to heal. The third method was to proceed at once to repeal the acts of former Assemblies constituting certain synods composed partly of congregationalists and partly of presbyterians, as unconstitutional and void. That this summary course was not originally contemplated, is evident from the memorial of the convention itself, from the character of the debate on the abrogation of the plan of union, and from the fact that so much time was consumed in debate on the citation of judicatories, which, though resolved upon, was not carried into effect. What were the motives which led to the final adoption of the third method above stated, we are not fully informed. They arose no doubt out of a view of the circumstances of the Assembly, which those at a distance cannot fully appreciate. That it has many advantages it is easy indeed to see. It was undoubtedly constitutional, in relation to all such bodies as could be clearly proved to be formed on the plan of union, i. e. to be composed partly of

congregationalists and partly of presbyterians.* It was moreover summary. It prevented the prolonged agitation of the question and the consequent distraction of the church.

A third subject for remark is the position assumed by the minority and their friends since the rising of the General Assembly. They assume that the Assembly ceased to exist in law and fact after the vote vacating the seats of the commissioners from the Western Reserve, and that the acts excluding that synod and those of New York are unconstitutional and void. They therefore avow their purpose to send a full delegation to the next Assembly, and then and there to demand their seats in that body, and in case of refusal, to declare themselves the true General Assembly of the Presbyterian church in the United States, and, as such, to lay claim to all the property and institutions of the church. We are no lawyers, but law must be a very different thing from reason, if this be not a perfectly futile scheme. In the first place, they are not in fact the Presbyterian church of the United States; and no declaration of theirs can alter the fact. If they are the Presbyterian church, we should like to know what all the ministers, elders and congregations throughout New Jersey, Pennsylvania, the South and the West, are? Must a set of men, avowedly of congregational origin, who, as a body, by their own confession, came into our church by compromise and accommodation, be recognized as the only true church, to the exclusion of the whole original body by which they were received? If this effort is crowned with success, we may expect to see the Irish Catholic emigrants meeting to declare themselves the United States, to the exclusion of every man born in the country. If this plan could be accomplished, it would be without a parallel for injustice and violence, since the days when the presbyterian ministers of Scotland were excluded by the prelatists under Charles II. We have little doubt that before the year is over these brethren will be heartily ashamed of this project, and wish every record of their present purposes and avowals blotted out of existence.

In the second place, they admit the fact, which they profess to deny, in the very act of denying it. This is not a

* As the facts with regard to the three synods in New York are in constant progress of disclosure, and may be expected soon to come before the public in detail, the full discussion of this question is deferred for the present.

thing that often occurs, but it occurs here. The fact denied is, that the late Assembly had a legal existence after the exclusion of the commissioners of the Western Reserve; and yet the minority declare their purpose to appear on the floor of the next Assembly; thus recognizing that body as the legitimate and legal successor of the preceding Assembly. The Assembly of 1838, will meet only in virtue of the requisition of the Assembly of 1837, a requisition made on the last day and last hour of its sessions. But if the Assembly of 1837 ceased to exist in law ten days before this requisition was made, we should like to know by what authority another Assembly can meet. The Philadelphia convention could, with the same show of law and reason, claim to be the General Assembly and seize the funds of the church, as the minority convention of next year. If their assumption is correct, the General Assembly is dead, and the Presbyterian church, as a corporate body, is dead. The property has escheated to the commonwealth, and we must all begin anew. We should not wonder to see this ground assumed. It would not be near so strange as for the same individuals to sit and act in a body for near ten days after they declare it to have been dead in law and in fact.

In the third place, what do these brethren propose to accomplish? Suppose they should succeed in having their convention recognized as the true General Assembly, and invested with all the corporate property of the church—is this what they wish? This cannot be. They cannot wish to possess themselves of what they know and acknowledge is not theirs. When the proposition for an amicable separation was under consideration, they at once relinquished their claim to the institutions of the church and the funds connected with them. This is not a controversy about funds. That point created no dispute. What then is to be attained? The possession of the style and title of the Presbyterian church? That also was relinquished. The only point, as the committee of the minority state in their report, on which they differed from the committee of the majority, was whether the division should be made by the Assembly or by the presbyteries. If the presbyteries wish division, why can they not effect it? What is to hinder them from pursuing precisely the course which the minority pointed out. This way has not been closed by the action of the Assembly. We see indeed that it is beset with difficulties; but these existed at the time the proposition was made in as much force as

they do now. "The Presbyterian church in the United States of America" now exists; if any presbyteries wish to form an "American Presbyterian church," they have nothing to do but to direct their delegates to meet and organize as the General Assembly of that body. They would then have all the rights and privileges which they could have enjoyed under their own plan of division, and would be exposed to no disabilities or forfeitures which would not have accrued under that plan. The proposition which they at first made, that the present ecclesiastical body should cease to exist, and two new bodies be formed, neither of which was to be considered the successor in law or fact of the present body, was the most extraordinary proposition ever submitted by one set of reasonable men to another. The effect of its adoption would be to alienate not only all the property held under the charter of the General Assembly, but of every thing held in virtue of a connexion with that body. It was in fact asking the majority to throw away and give up to the state all property which they hold in trust for pious uses. This breach of faith, and waste of funds, were asked for no conceivable reason, other than a dislike, on the part of the minority, to be regarded as the minority. It could have benefited them in no one respect in a legal point of view. It would only be involving the whole church in the difficulties which they think will now press upon a part. This proposition, however, was virtually withdrawn, when the committee of the minority reported, that the only question between them and their brethren, was whether the Assembly or the presbyteries should effect the separation.

Studious efforts seem to be made, for the purpose of excitement, to produce the impression that the action of the Assembly must unsettle the titles of church property to a great extent. A most unwise and improper editorial article appeared in the *New York Observer* of June 24, on this subject. In the article referred to, the idea is advanced that far the greater part of the property of the churches is held by titles which connect it with the General Assembly, and consequently that it is now at the mercy of any insignificant minority in any congregation disconnected with that body. In the first place, we do not believe this to be true. As far as we know, or can learn from legal men residing in different parts of our Union, church property is held, even in those districts which have always been presbyterian, in the great majority of cases, by titles which require nothing more than

presbyterianism. The idea therefore seems preposterous that congregationalists (and such were the founders of almost all the churches within the bounds of the excluded synods) should make their property dependent on a connexion with the General Assembly. In the second place, we do not believe that any court would give the property to an insignificant minority, when the very act of the Assembly, dissolving our connexion with these synods, disclaims all idea of excommunication or discipline. It is only where the majority have departed openly from the principles of those by whom the property was given, and in virtue of fidelity to which it is held, that such a decision would be just. The tendency of the courts in this country is so strongly towards the majority, that even in case of the most obvious departures from the faith of the society, it is difficult for the minority to secure even a portion of the property. The courts proceed upon the principle that the majority must govern, and have a right to decide, what is, and what is not consistent with the faith and order of the church to which they belong. In the third place, supposing the ground assumed to be valid, how can it be consistently urged by those who proposed that the present Presbyterian church should be dissolved, and the General Assembly cease to exist? According to their present doctrine, they wished to invalidate the title not only to their own church property, but also to that held by the church as a corporation, and by the congregations connected with the majority. Why was such a proposition made, if it was supposed it would produce such wide-spread disorder and distress? There are difficulties enough in the way of the proper adjustment of the existing causes of contention, without agitating the public mind with imaginary dangers. Our own belief is that when the present excitement has subsided, and religious principle resumed its proper, or even its accustomed influence, it will be found that both parties are disposed to do right, and when this is the case, there must be some way to bring these difficulties to a satisfactory conclusion.

NOTICE.

The Difficulties of Arminian Methodism. By William Annan.

THIS little volume, which has gone through two editions, and is about to undergo a third, had, until lately, escaped our notice. And we have now only room to say, that the author has, by this production of his pen, proved himself to be a workman that need not be ashamed. Whoever wishes to see the objections commonly made by Arminians to the Calvinistic system fairly rolled back on their own, will find satisfaction in the perusal of this work.

