

**A HISTORY
OF THE PROTESTANT
REFORMATION**

LETTER FIFTEEN



By William Cobbett

1825

**A HISTORY
OF THE
PROTESTANT "REFORMATION"
IN
ENGLAND AND IRELAND**

**Showing how that event has impoverished and degraded
the main
body of the People in those Countries**

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS

Addressed to all sensible and just Englishmen

BY WILLIAM COBBETT.

LONDON

**PRINTED AND PUBLISHED
BY CHARLES CLEMENT
No. 183, FLEET STREET**

AND

**SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS AND NEWSMEN.
PRICE THREE-PENCE EACH NUMBER.**

1825

Entered at Stationer's Hall



**A HISTORY
OF THE
PROTESTANT REFORMATION
LETTER XV**

**The American "Reformation" brought relief to Catholics.
Insurrections Up to The Reign of James II
"Law-Church" opposes Liberty of Conscience
Incredible Penal Code
Softened at Last From The Motives of Fear
Penal Code as it Now Stands
French Revolution Produces a Second Softening of The Code
Result of the "Reformation" in Relation to Religion**

By William Cobbett

Kensington, 31st December 1825

Dear Friends,

428. We have now traced the "**Reformation**", in its feeds, down from the beginning, in the reign of **HENRY VII.**, to the **AMERICAN REVOLUTION**; and, all that remains is, to follow it along through the French **Revolution**, and unto the present day; this is what I propose to do in the present Number. In the next Number, I shall bring under One view my proofs of this proposition; namely, that before the event event called the "**Reformation**," England was more powerful and more wealthy, and that the people were more free, more moral, better fed, and better clad, than at any time since that event.

429. The American Revolution, which, as we have seen, grew directly out of those measures which had been adopted in England to crush the Catholics and to extinguish their religion for ever, did, at its very outset, produce good to those same Catholics by inducing the English government to soften, for the sake of its own safety, that **penal code** by which they had so long been scourged. But now, before we speak of the immediate cause and of the manner and degree of this softening, we must have a sketch of this horrible code,—this monster in legislation, surpassing in violation of the dictates of humanity and justice anything else that the world has ever seen existing under the name of law.

430. We have seen how cruelly the Catholics were treated under **Queen Elizabeth** and **James I.**; we have seen how they were fined, mulcted, robbed, pillaged, and punished in body; but though the penal code against them was then such as to make every just man shudder with horror, we think it then gentleness when we look at its subsequent ferocity. We have seen how Catholics were fined, harassed, hunted, robbed, pillaged, in the **reign of Elizabeth**. We have seen the same in the reign of her immediate successor, with this addition, that Englishmen were then handed over to be pillaged by Scotchmen. We have seen that **CHARLES I.**, for whom they afterwards

fought against **CROMWELL**, treated them as cruelly as the two former. We have seen **CHARLES II.** most unmercifully abandon them to the persecutions of the Church by law established; and during this reign we have seen that the Protestants had the baseness, and the king the meanness, to suffer the lying inscription to be put on the Monument on Fish Street Hill, in the City of London, though **LORD CLARENDON** (whose name the Law-Church holds in so much honour), in that work which the University of Oxford publishes at the "**Clarendon Press**," expressly says (p. 348, continuation) that a committee of the House of Commons, who were very diligent and solicitous to make the discovery, never were able to find any probable evidence that there was any other cause of that woeful fire than the displeasure of Almighty God. What infamy then to charge the Catholics with it; what an infamy to put the lying inscription on the pillar; what an act of justice in **JAMES II.** to efface it; what a shame to **WILLIAM** to suffer it to be restored; and what is it to us, then, who now suffer it to remain without petitioning for its erasure!

431. But it was after **JAMES II.** was set aside that the penal code grew really horrible. And here it is of the greatest consequence to the cause of truth that we trace this code to its real authors, namely, the clergy of the Established Church. This is evident enough throughout the whole of this Church's history; but until the reign of **James II.** the sovereign was of the Church religion, so that the persecutions appeared to come from him or her. But now, when the king was for softening the penal code, when the king was for toleration, now the world saw who were the real persecutors; and this is a matter to be fully explained and understood before we come to a more minute account of the code and to the causes which finally led to its, in great part, abolition.

432. JAMES II. wished to put an end to the penal code, he wished for general toleration; he issued a proclamation suspending all penal laws relating to religion, and granting a general liberty of conscience to all his subjects. This was his offence. For this he and his family were set aside for ever! No man can deny this. The clergy of the Church set themselves against him. Six of the bishops presented to him an insolent petition against the exercise of this his prerogative, enjoyed and exercised by all his predecessors. They led the way in that opposition which produced the "**glorious revolution**," and they were the most active and most bitter of all the foes of that unfortunate king, whose only real offence was his wishing to give liberty of conscience to all his subjects, and by showing respect to whose mortal remains (displaced by the French Revolutionists) our present king has done himself very great honour.

433. Now we are going to see a sketch of this terrible code. It must be a mere sketch ; two hundred chapters like this would not contain the whole of it. It went on increasing in bulk and in cruelty from the **coronation of Elizabeth** till nearly twenty years after that of **George III.**, till events came, as we shall see, and broke it up. It consisted, at last, of more than a hundred acts of Parliament, all made for the express purpose of punishing men because, and only because, they continued faithfully to adhere to the religion in which our as well as their fathers had lived and died during a period of nine hundred years! The code differed, in some respects, in its application with regard to England and Ireland respectively.

434. In England this code (1) stripped the peers of their hereditary right to sit in Parliament; (2) it stripped gentlemen of their right to be chosen members of the Commons' House; (3) it took from all the right to vote at elections, and though **Magna Charta** says that no man shall be taxed without his own consent, it double-taxed every man who refused to abjure his religion and thus become an apostate; (4) it shut them out from all offices of power and trust, even the most insignificant; (5) it took from them the right of presenting to livings in the Church, though that right was given to Quakers and to Jews; (6) it fined them at the rate of £10 a month for keeping away from that Church to go to which they deemed apostasy; (7) it disabled them from keeping arms in their houses for their defence, from maintaining suits at law, from being guardians or executors, from practising in law or physic, from travelling five miles from their houses, and all these under heavy penalties in case of disobedience; (8) if a married woman kept away from church, she forfeited two thirds of her dower, she could not be executrix to her husband, and

might, during her husband's lifetime, be imprisoned, unless ransomed by him at £10 a month; (9) it enabled any four justices of the peace, in case a man had been convicted of not going to church, to call him before them, to compel him to abjure his religion, or, if he refused, to sentence him to banishment for life (without judge or jury), and if he returned he was to suffer death; (10) it enabled any two justices of the peace to call before them, without any information, any man that they chose above sixteen years of age, and if such man refused to abjure the Catholic religion and continued in his refusal for six months, he was rendered incapable of possessing land, and any land the possession of which might belong to him came into possession of the next Protestant heir, who was not obliged to account for any profits; (11) it made such man incapable of purchasing lands, and all contracts made by him or for him were null and void; (12) it imposed a fine of £10 a month for employing a Catholic schoolmaster in a private family, and £1 a day on the schoolmaster so employed; (13) it imposed £100 fine for sending a child to a Catholic foreign school, and the child so sent was disabled from ever inheriting, purchasing, or enjoying lands or profits, goods, debts, legacies, or sums of money; (14) it punished the saying of mass by a fine of £120, and the hearing of mass by a fine of £60; (15) any Catholic priest who returned from beyond the seas and who did not abjure his religion in three days afterwards, and also any person who returned to the Catholic faith, or procured another to return to it, this merciless, this sanguinary code punished with hanging, ripping out of bowels, and quartering.

435. In Ireland the code was still more ferocious, more hideously bloody, for in the first place all the cruelties of the English code had, as the work of a few hours, a few strokes of the pen, in one single act been inflicted on unhappy Ireland; and then, in addition, the **Irish code** contained, amongst many other violations of all the laws of justice and humanity, the following twenty most savage punishments:—(1) A Catholic schoolmaster, private or public, or even usher to a Protestant, was punished with imprisonment, banishment, and finally as a felon. (2) The Catholic clergy were not allowed to be in the country without being registered and kept as a sort of prisoners at large, and rewards were given (out of the revenue raised in part on the Catholics) for discovering them, £50 for an archbishop or bishop, £20 for a priest, and £10 for a schoolmaster or usher. (3) Any two justices of the peace might call before them any Catholic, order him to declare on oath where and when he heard mass, who were present, and the name and residence of any priest or schoolmaster that he might know of; and if he refused to obey this inhuman inquisition, they had power to condemn him (without judge or jury) to a year's imprisonment in a felon's gaol or to pay £20. (4) No Catholic could purchase any manors, nor even hold under a lease for more than thirty-one years. (5) Any Protestant, if he suspected any one of holding property in trust for a Catholic, or of being concerned in any sale, lease, mortgage, or other contract for a Catholic, any Protestant thus suspecting might file a bill against the suspected trustee and take the estate or property from him. (6) Any Protestant seeing a Catholic tenant of a farm, the produce of which farm exceeded the amount of the rent by more than one-third, might dispossess the Catholic and enter on the lease in his stead. (7) Any Protestant seeing a Catholic with a horse worth more than five pounds might take the horse away from him upon tendering him five pounds. (8) In order to prevent the smallest chance of justice in these and similar cases, none but known Protestants were to be jurymen in the trial of any such cases. (9) Horses of Catholics might be seized for the use of the militia, and besides this Catholics were compelled to pay double towards the militia. (10) Merchants whose ships and goods might be taken by privateers during a war with a Catholic prince were to be compensated for their losses by a levy on the goods and lands of Catholics only, though, mind, Catholics were at the same time impressed and compelled to shed their blood in the war against that same Catholic prince. (11) Property of a Protestant whose heirs at law were Catholics was to go to the nearest Protestant relation, just the same as if the Catholic heirs had been dead, though the property might be entailed on them. (12) If there were no Protestant heir, then, in order to break up all Catholic families, the entail and all heirship were set aside, and the property was divided, share and share alike, amongst all the Catholic heirs. (13) If a Protestant had an estate in Ireland he was forbidden to marry a Catholic in or out of Ireland. (14) All marriages between Protestants and Catholics were annulled, though many children might have proceeded from them. (15) Every priest who celebrated a marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant, or between two Protestants, was condemned to

be hanged. (16) A Catholic father could not be guardian to, or have the custody of, his own child, if the child, however young, pretended to be a Protestant ; but the child was taken from its own father and put into the custody of a Protestant relation. (17) If any child of a Catholic became a Protestant, the parent was to be instantly summoned and to be made to declare upon oath the full value of his or her property of all sorts, and then the Chancery was to make such distribution of the property as it thought fit. (18) "Wives, be obedient unto your own husbands," says the great Apostle. "Wives, be disobedient to them," said this horrid code; for if the wife of a Catholic chose to turn Protestant it set aside the will of the husband and made her a participator in all his possessions in spite of him, however immoral, however bad a wife or bad a mother she might have been. (19) "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." "Dishonour them," said this savage code; for if any one of the sons of a Catholic father became a Protestant, this son was to possess all the father had, and the father could not sell, could not mortgage, could not leave legacies or portions out of his estate by whatever title he might hold it, even though it might have been the fruit of his own toil. (20) Lastly (of this score, but this is only a part) "the Church, as by law established" was, in her great indulgence, pleased not only to open her doors, but to award (out of the taxes) thirty pounds a year for life to any Catholic priest who would abjure his religion and declare his belief in hers!

436. Englishmen! is there a man, a single man, bearing that name, whose blood will not chill at this recital, who, when he reflects that these barbarities were inflicted on men because and only because they adhered with fidelity to the faith of their and our fathers, to the faith of Alfred, the founder of our nation, to the faith of the authors of Magna Charta and of all those venerable institutions of which we so justly boast, who, when he thus reflects, and when he, being as I am, a Protestant of the Church of England, further reflects that all these cruelties were inflicted for the avowed purpose of giving and preserving predominance to that Church, will not with me not only feel deep sorrow and shame for the past, but heartily join me in best endeavours to cause justice to be done to the sufferers for the time to come?

437. As to the injustice, as to the barbarity, as to the flagrant immorality of the above code, they call for no comment, being condemned by the spontaneous voice of nature herself; but in this shocking assemblage there are two things which impel us to ask whether the love of truth, whether a desire to eradicate religious error, could have formed any part, however small, of the motives of these punishers? These two things are, the reward offered to Catholic priests to induce them to come over to our Church, and the terrible means made use of to prevent the inter-marriage of Catholics and Protestants. Could these measures ever have suggested themselves to the minds of men who sincerely believed that the Church religion was supported by arguments more cogent than those by which the Catholic religion was supported? The Law-Church had all the powers, all the honours, all the emoluments, all the naturally worldly allurements. These she continually held out to all who were disposed to the clerical order. And if, in addition to all these, she had felt strong in argument, would she have found it necessary to offer, in direct and barefaced words, a specific sum of money to any one who would join her, and that, too, when the pensioned convert must, as she well knew, break his solemn vow in order to be entitled to the pay? And as to inter-marriages, why not suffer them, why punish them so severely, why annul them if the Law-Church were sure that the arguments in her favour were the most cogent and convincing. Who has so much power over the mind of woman as her husband? Who over man as his wife? Would one persuade the other to a change of religion? Very likely. One would convert the other in nineteen cases out of twenty. That passion which had subdued religious prejudices would, in almost every case, make both the parties of the same religion. But what had the Law-Church to object to this, if she were sure that hers was the true faith ; if she were sure that the arguments for her were more clear than those for her opponent; if she were sure that every one who really loved another, who was beloved by that other, and who belonged to her communion, would easily persuade that other to join in that communion? What, in short, had she, if quite sure of all this, to fear from inter-marriages? And if not quite sure of all this, what, I ask you, sensible and just Englishmen, what had she to plead in justification of the inhuman penal code?

438. Talk of the a fires in Smithfield! Fires, indeed, which had no justification, and which all Catholics severely condemn: but what, good God! was the death of about two hundred and seventy-seven persons, however cruel and unmerited that death, to the torments above described, inflicted for more than two hundred years on millions upon millions of people, to say nothing about the thousands upon thousands of Catholics who were, during that period, racked to death, killed in prison, hanged, bowelled, and quartered! Besides, let it never be forgotten that the punishments in Smithfield were for the purpose of reclaiming, for the purpose of making examples of a few who set at nought the religion of their fathers and that in which they themselves had been born. And if these punishments were unjust and cruel, as all men agree that they were, what shall we say of, how shall we express sufficient abhorrence of, the above penal code, which was for the punishment, not of a few, but of millions of people; or the punishment, not of those who had apostatised from the religion of their fathers, but of those who to their utter worldly ruin adhered to that religion? If we find no justification—and none, we all say, there was—for the punishments of **Mary's reign**, inflicted, as all men know they were, on very few persons, and those persons not only apostates from the faith of their fathers but also for the most part either notorious traitors or felons, and at the very least conspirators against, or most audacious insulters of, the royal authority and the person of the queen; if we find no justification, and we all agree that there was none, for these punishments inflicted, as all men know they were, during a few months of furious and unreflecting zeal, just after the quelling of a dangerous rebellion which had clearly proved that apostate and conspirator were one and the same, and had led to the hasty conclusion that the apostasy must be extirpated, or that it would destroy the throne; if we find, even under such circumstances, no justification for these punishments, where are we to look for, not a justification, but for a ground of qualification of our abhorrence of the above mentioned barbarities of more than two hundred years, inflicted on millions upon millions of people; barbarities premeditated in the absence of all provocation; contrived and adopted in all the calmness of legislative deliberation; executed in cold blood, and persevered in for ages, in defiance of the admonitions of conscience; barbarities inflicted, not on apostates, but on those who refused to apostatise ; not on felons, conspirators, and rebels, but on innocent persons, on those who had under all and every circumstance, even while feeling the cruel lash of persecution, been as faithful to their king as to their God!— and as if we were never to come to the end of the atrocity, all this done, too, with regard to Ireland, in flagrant breach of a solemn treaty with the English king!

439. And is this the tolerant, the mild, the meek Church as "**by law established**"? Have we here the proofs of Protestant faith and good works? Was it thus that **St. Austin** and **St. Patrick** introduced, and that **St. Swithun**, and Alfred, and **WILLIAM OF WYKHAM** inculcated the religion of Christ? Was it out of works like these that the cathedrals, and the palaces, and the universities, and the laws, and the courts of justice arose? What? Punish men for retaining the faith of their fathers; inflict all sorts of insults and cruelties on them for not having become apostates; put them, because they were Catholics, out of the protection of all the laws that their and our Catholic ancestors had framed for the security of their children; call their religion "**idolatrous and damnable**," treat them as obstinate idolaters, while your Church Calendar contains none but saints of that very religion; boast of your venerable institutions, all of Catholic origin, while you insult, pillage, scourge, hunt from the face of the earth, the true and faithful adherents to the faith of the authors of those institutions? "Aye," the persecutors seem to have answered, "and hunt them we will." But why, then, if religion be your motive, if your barbarities arise from a desire to convert men from error, **why be so lenient to Quakers and Jews**; why not only not punish, but suffer them even to appoint parsons to your churches? Ah! my friends, the Law-Church had taken no tithes and lands, and others had taken no abbeys and the like from Quakers and Jews! Here was the real foundation of the whole of that insatiable rancour which went on from **1558 to 1778**, producing, to millions of innocent people, torment added to torment, and which, at the end of that long period, seemed to have resolved to be satisfied with nothing short of the total extermination of its victims.

440. But now, all of a sudden, in 1778, the face of things began to change; the Church as by law established was all at once thought capable of existing in safety with what "**Reformations**" can do when pushed to their full and natural extent. In England the "**Reformation**" contented itself with plundering the convents and the poor of their all, and the secular clergy in part. But in France they took the whole, though we ought to mark well this difference, that in France they applied this whole to the use of the public; a bad use, perhaps, but to public use they applied the whole of the plunder, while in England the plunder was scrambled for and remained divided amongst individuals!

441. This great event was soon followed by another greater; namely, the **FRENCH REVOLUTION**, "**Reformation**" the **FIFTH**. Humiliation greater than English Government had to endure, in the above, it is difficult to conceive; but the **French Revolution** shows the world what "**Reformations**" can do, when put to their full and natural extent. In England the "**Reformation**" contented itself with plundering the common people, the poor of their all, and the secular clergy in particular, in France, they took the whole; though we ought to note well this difference; that, in France, they applied the whole to the use of the public; a bad use, perhaps, but public use they applied the whole of the plunder; in England, the plunder was scrambled for, and divided amongst individuals!

442. Well, but here was a great triumph for the clergy of the "**Church as by law established**"! They, above all men, must have hailed with delight the deeds of the French "**Reformation**"! No: but on the contrary were amongst the foremost in calling for war to put down that "**Reformation**"! What? Not like this "**Reformation**"? Why, here were convents broken up and monks and nuns dispersed; here were abbey lands confiscated; here was the Catholic religion abolished; here were Catholic priests hunted about and put to death in almost as savage a manner as those of England had been; here were laws, seemingly translated from our own code, against saying or hearing mass, and against priests returning into the kingdom; here was a complete annihilation (as far as legislative provisions could go) of that which our Church clergy called "**idolatrous and damnable**"; here was a new religion "**established by law**"; and, that no feature might be defective in the likeness, here was a royal family set aside by law for ever by what they called a "**glorious revolution**"; and there would have been an abdicating king, but he was by mere accident stopped in his flight, brought back and put to death, not, however, without an example to plead in the deeds of the English double-distilled Protestant "**Reformation**" people.

443. What! Can it be true, that our Church clergy did not like this French "**Reformation**"? and that they urged on war against the men who had sacked convents, killed priests, and abolished that which was "**idolatrous and damnable**"? Can it be true that they who rose against King **JAMES** because he wanted to give Catholics liberty of conscience, that they who upheld the horrid penal code in order to put down the Catholic religion in England and Ireland,—can it be true that they wanted war to put down the men who had put down that religion in France! Aye, aye! But these men had put down all tithes too! Aye, and all bishoprics, and deaneries, and prebendaries, and all fat benefices and pluralities! And if they were permitted to do this with impunity others might be tempted to do the same! Well, but, gentlemen of the **Law-Church**, though they were wicked fellows for doing this, still this was better than to suffer to remain that which you always told us was "**idolatrous and damnable**." Yes, yes; but then these men **established by law atheism**, and not "**Church of England Christianity**." Now in the first place they saw about **forty sorts of Protestant religion**; they knew that thirty-nine of them must be false; they had seen our rulers make a **Church by law**, just such an one as they pleased; they had seen them alter it by law; and if there were no standard of faith, no generally acknowledged authority, if English law-makers were to change the sort of religion at their pleasure, why, pray, were not French law-makers to do the same? If English law-makers could take the spiritual supremacy from the successor of St. Peter, and give it to **Henry the-wife-killer**, why might not the French give theirs to **LEPEAU**? Besides, as to the sort of religion, though atheism is bad enough, could it be worse than what you tell us is "**idolatrous and damnable**"? It might cause

people to be damned, but could it cause them to be more than damned? Alas! there remains only the abolition of the tithes and of the fat clerical posts as a valid objection, on your part, against "**Reformation**" the fifth; and I beg the nation to remember that the war against it has left us to pay for ever the interest of a debt, created by that war, of seven hundred millions of pounds sterling, a war which we never should have seen if we had never seen that which is called a "**Reformation.**"

444. The French Revolution, though it caused numerous horrid deeds to be committed, produced, in its progress and in its end, a great triumph for the Catholics. It put the fidelity of the Catholic priests and the Protestant pastors to the test; and while not one of the former was ever seen to save his life by giving up his faith, all the latter did it without hesitation. It showed, at last, the people of a great kingdom returning to the Catholic worship by choice, when they might have been, and may now be, Protestants without the loss of any one right, immunity, or advantage, civil or military. But the greatest good that it produced fell to the lot of **ill-treated Ireland**. The Revolutionists were powerful, they were daring; they, in **1793, cast their eyes on Ireland**; and now, for the second time, a softening of the penal code took place, making a change which no man living ever expected to see! Those who had been considered as almost beneath dogs, were now made capable of being magistrates; and now, amongst many other acts of generosity we saw established at the public expense a college for the education of Catholics exclusively, thus doing by law that which the law-givers had before made high treason! Ah! But there were the French with an army of four hundred thousand men, and there were the Irish people, who must have been something more or less than men if their breasts did not boil with resentment. Alas! that it should be said of England that the Irish have never appealed with success but to her fears!

445. And shall this always be said? Shall it ever be said again? Shall we not now, by sweeping away for ever every vestige of this once horrible and still oppressive code, reconcile ourselves to our long ill-treated brethren and to our own consciences? The code is still a penal code; it is still a just ground of complaint; it has still disqualifications that are greatly injurious, and distinctions that are odious and insulting, (1) It still shuts Catholic peers out of those seats in the House of Lords which are their hereditary right, and Catholic gentlemen out of the House of Commons. (2) Then, as if caprice were resolved not to be behindhand with injustice, this code, which allows Catholic freeholders in Ireland to vote at elections for members of Parliament of the now "**United Kingdom,**" refuses that right to all Catholics in England! (3) It excludes Catholics from all corporations. (4) It excludes them from all offices under the government in England, but admits them to inferior offices in Ireland. (5) It takes from them the right of presenting to any ecclesiastical benefice, though **Quakers and Jews are allowed to enjoy that right.** (6) It prevents them from endowing any school or college for educating children in the Catholic religion; and this, too, while there is now, by law established, a college for this very purpose supported out of the taxes! Here is consistency, and here is, above all things, sincerity! What! maintain out of the taxes a college to teach exclusively that religion which you call "**idolatrous and damnable**"? (7) This code still forbids Catholic priests to appear in their canonical habiliments, except in their chapels or in private houses; and it forbids the Catholic rites to be performed in any building which has a steeple or bells! What! forbid the use of steeples and bells to that religion which created all the steeples and all the bells; that built and endowed all the churches, all the magnificent cathedrals, and both the Universities! And why this insulting, this galling, prohibition? Why so sedulous to keep the symbols of this worship out of the sight of the people? Why, **gentle Law-Church**, if your features be so lovely as you say they are, and if those of your rival present, as you say they do, a mass of disgusting deformity; why, if this be the case, are you, who are the most gentle, amiable, and beautiful Church that law ever created—why, I say, are you so anxious to keep your rival out of sight? Nay, and out of hearing, too! What! gentle and all-persuasive and **only true Law-Church**, whose parsons and bishops are such able preachers, and mostly married men into the bargain, what are you afraid of from the steeples and bells if used by Catholics! One would think that the more people went to witness the "**idolatrous**" exhibitions the better you would like it. Alas! gentle and lovely Law-Church,

there are not now in the kingdom many men so brutishly ignorant as not to see the real motives for this uncommonly decent prohibition. **(8)** It forbids a Catholic priest in Ireland to be guardian to any child. **(9)** It forbids Catholic laymen in Ireland to act in the capacity of guardian to the children, or child, of any Protestant. **(10)** It forbids every Catholic in Ireland to have arms in his house, unless he have a freehold of ten pounds a year, or £300 in personal property. **(11)** It disables Irish Catholics from voting at vestries on questions relating to the repair of the church, though they are compelled to pay for those repairs. **(12)** Lastly, in Ireland this code still inflicts death, or, at least, a £500 penalty on the Catholic priest who celebrates a marriage between two Protestants, or between a Protestant and a Catholic. Some of the judges have decided that it is death; others that it is the pecuniary penalty. Death or money, however, the public papers have recently announced to us that such a marriage has now been openly celebrated in Dublin between the present **Lord Lieutenant of Ireland** (who must be a Protestant) and a Catholic lady of the late rebellious American States! So that, all put together, Dublin exhibits at this moment a tolerably curious scene:—A college established by law for the teaching of that religion which our Church regards as "**idolatrous and damnable**," and be guilty of teaching which was, only a few years ago, high treason! **A Lord Lieutenant of Ireland**, who must belong to our Church and who must have taken an oath protesting against the Catholic supremacy, taking to his arms a Catholic wife, who must adhere to that supremacy! Then comes a Catholic priest, marrying this pair in the face of two un-repealed laws, one of which condemns him to death for the act, and the other of which condemns him to pay a fine of five hundred pounds! And lastly comes, as the public prints tell us, a complimentary letter on the occasion to the bridegroom, on the part and in the handwriting of the King!

446. Well, then, is this code, is any fragment of it, longer to continue? Is it to continue now, when all idea of conversion to Protestantism is avowedly abandoned, and when it is notorious that the Catholic faith has, in spite of ages of persecution, done more than maintain its ground? Are peers still to be cut off from their hereditary rights and honours; are gentlemen to be **shut out of the Commons' House**; are lawyers to be stopped in their way to the bench; are freeholders and freemen to be deprived of their franchises; are the whole to lie under a stigma, which it is not in human nature should fail to fill them with resentment; and all this because they adhere to the religion of their and our fathers, and a religion, too, to educate youth in which, exclusively, there is now a college supported out of the taxes? Is all this great body of men, forming one-third part of the whole of the people of this kingdom, containing men of all ranks, from the peer to the labourer, to continue to be thus insulted, thus injured, thus constantly irritated, constantly impelled to wish for distress, danger, defeat, and disgrace to their native country, as affording the only chance of their obtaining justice? And are we, merely to gratify the **Law-Church** by upholding her predominance, still to support, in peace, a numerous and most extensive army; still to be exposed, in war, to the danger of seeing concession come too late, and to all those consequences the nature and extent of which it makes one shudder to think of?

447. Here, then, we are, at the end of three hundred years from the day when **HENRY VIII.** began the work of "**Reformation**"; here we are, after passing through scenes of plunder and of blood such as the world never beheld before; here we are with these awful questions still before us; and here we are, too, with **forty sorts of Protestant religion**, instead of the one fold in which our forefathers lived for nine hundred years; here we are, divided and split up into sects, each condemning all the rest to eternal flames; here we are, a motley herd of **Church people, Methodists, Calvinists, Quakers, and Jews**, chopping and changing with every wind; while the faith of **St. Austin** and **St. Patrick** still remains what it was when it inspired the heart and sanctified **the throne of Alfred**.

448. Such, as far as religion is concerned, have been the effects of what is called the "**Reformation**": what its effects have been in other respects, how it has enfeebled and impoverished the nation, how it has corrupted and debased the people, and how it has brought barracks, taxing-houses, poor-houses, mad-houses and gaols, to supply the place of convents,

hospitals, guilds, and almshouses, we shall see in the next chapter; and then we shall have before us the whole of the consequences of this great, memorable and fatal event.

The End of Letter 15



The French Revolution



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Word of the Lord from Jerusalem"
(Isaiah 2:3)."**

