

Ireland, beg leave to approach your Majesty with the expression of our profound reverence for your Majesty's office and person.

Having respect to the one and to the other, we have the strongest confidence that nothing which affects the interests and well-being of the Irish branch of our United Church can be other than of liveliest concern to your Majesty.

We beg leave to represent to your Majesty, that measures are now threatened which affect these so deeply, that we cannot believe we have exceeded our duty, or mingled in matters which are outside our province, when we have claimed the privilege of being permitted to lay before your Majesty some of the injurious consequences with which, in our judgment, such measures will be followed, and some of the injustices which they will inevitably involve.

It is now proposed for ever to alienate property which has, from time immemorial, been dedicated to sacred uses. We believe that there is no more precious arrangement than that by which some portion of a nation's wealth is, with the nation's sanction, and under its guardianship, separated off for ever from private possession and common or profane uses, and, to the end that it may be the more inviolable, solemnly set apart to the services of Almighty God,—the enjoyment of it being linked, not merely with the performance of the ordinary duties of a citizen, but with the obligation of setting forth that divine knowledge by which alone men are made capable of fulfilling their higher duties in this life, or brought into any meetness for another. Such a sacred fund exists in Ireland at present. When we see it in danger of being dissipated for ever, we must needs protest against such a step, in the name of that Church which we believe to be the rightful administrator of it, and in the interests of the nation which would thus throw away in a moment the cherished inheritance of centuries,—which, once gone, could never be recovered or replaced.

Nor are the losses with which we are threatened material only. We cannot but call to mind, with thankfulness, that in this Church of ours, as now constituted, your Majesty is, under Christ, in all cases ecclesiastical and civil, supreme. In the destruction of the national character of our Church, with which we are now threatened, in the severing of the ties which bind it to the State and the State to it, in the disappearance of the Royal Supremacy which thereupon must follow, an important safeguard of the Reformed Faith, and of many precious rights will be overthrown. Your Majesty will not merely be deprived of a bright jewel in your Crown, but will see very much of that influence and authority which now are ours, who render no divided allegiance, transferred to another Church which can never be truly national,—finding, as it does, its centre outside of the nation, and submitting to the jurisdiction, which it must recognise as paramount to any other, of a foreign Potentate and Prince.

And, in this view, we humbly submit to your Majesty that the enjoyment by our Church, under the Royal Supremacy, of the temporal emoluments and dignities attached to the Establishment, cannot fairly be deemed a grievance by those whose principles prevent them from fulfilling the conditions on which alone such emoluments and dignities can be enjoyed, consistently with the Constitution of these realms.

There are further mischiefs with which this measure appears to us to be fraught. It is pro-

posed as a healing measure. We believe that it will open new fountains of bitterness in this land, while it will close none of the old. It is proposed as a measure which will bind England and Ireland in closer union. So far from this, we fear that it will discourage those in this country, who, sincerely attached to the English connexion, have hitherto found it the surest pledge for the maintenance of their own liberties and rights, while it will not win back the loyalty of one amongst those who desire and labour for the dissolution of that connexion. Indeed, they who have spoken out most plainly, have candidly avowed that the subversion of our Establishment is principally desired by them as preliminary to other aims and remoter purposes, to which they expect that it will pave the way.

We beg leave to bring before your Majesty some of the injustices which will be inseparable from such a disendowment of our church as lately has been proposed. The pledge, indeed, is offered to us, that all vested interests shall be respected. It would be little if they were so; but we venture to affirm that in such a catastrophe, this, even with the most honourable intentions, would be impossible. In our own cases, and those of a few other of the clergy, it might be done. But, there are investments in just hope as well as in actual possession; and the injustice, which would be inflicted on multitudes of our brethren, would be extreme upon all those who at this time are reasonably looking forward to some modest reward of long and ill-requited labours in the past, but who would thus find themselves for ever cut off from this and from every expectation of it.

But there are other vested rights and interests besides those of the clergy. Our poorer Protestant brethren who have established themselves in every part of the country, and this in the faith of the maintenance of the present settlement of things, they too, have a vested right, for themselves and for their children, in that ministry of Christ's word and sacraments according to the order of our reformed Church which hitherto they have so freely enjoyed. And if we urge their case rather than that of the richer portion of our people, it is not because the rights and interests of the latter are less clearly involved, but only that sacrifices are possible on their part which may enable them in some sort to make good for themselves the loss they will have endured. We cannot, indeed, regard the spiritual condition to which many of the poorer members of our Church, thinly scattered in remote districts, and far from the aid of their richer brethren, will be reduced, without the deepest anxiety and alarm. The witness of our Church for Christ, in His offices, which no man may usurp, in His mediatorial dignity, with which no creature may interfere,—this, God helping, our Church shall maintain to the end, and it shall never cease in the land. But the difficulty of bringing home the means of grace to some portions of our people, if ever the parochial system as now existing should be abolished, will be almost impossible to overcome: and there is extreme danger that, in one way or another, many of those would be lost to us for ever. Some, deprived of the means of grace, would emigrate with their families; but, many must remain to whom this way of escape would not be open. Too poor to provide the services of a Clergyman for themselves, and of a class peculiarly needing the watchful care of one, the heads and some of the elder members of the families might continue steadfast in the faith in which they have been brought up, but they would be little able to