

**LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE
ILLUSTRATED: AND THE SOCIAL
RELATIONS SUSTAINED BY
CHRISTIANS, AS MEMBERS OF THE
COMMONWEALTH, CONSIDERED**

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Liberty of Conscience Illustrated: And the Social Relations Sustained by Christians, as Members of the Commonwealth, Considered by J. W. Massie

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AND

THE SOCIAL RELATIONS SUSTAINED BY CHRISTIANS,

AS

MEMBERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH,

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BY

J. W. MASSIE, D.D., M.R.I.A.,

AUTHOR OF "CONTINENTAL INDIA," "RECOLLECTIONS OF A TOUR,"
"THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE," "THE IRISH CHURCH
AND IRELAND," &c., &c.

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PREFACE.

NONCONFORMITY is again called to renew its youth, and the generous spirits who have studied its great principles are once more summoned to action. Present and recent measures force upon the representatives of our early Christian patriots, a consideration of the solemn responsibilities now devolved upon them. The Long Parliament contained statesmen able and ready to suffer for, or advocate the great principles and sacred obligations which distinguish the true Nonconformist. But there are among our senators of the present day few men "of the greatest parts and most extensive knowledge," concerning whom it may with truth be said, they "could not enjoy any peace of mind, *because* obliged to hear prayers offered up to the Divinity by a priest covered with a white linen vestment." Conscience may have become latitudinarian, and prayers less frequent. There have been statesmen, it would be a blessing could we meet them once more, who "not content with

acknowledging in general terms an overruling Providence," "habitually ascribed every event to the will of the Great Being for whose power nothing was too vast, for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was with them the great end of existence."

However, let not the trembling and conscientious advocate of liberty, in the most sacred and exalted sense, bate one jot, or suffer his courage to droop. Truth is in the field. Aye, and if her champions be not titled nobles, or trading politicians; if her ranks be deserted by those who once carried her banners; using the watchwords and *insignia* of her party; who vaunted their love of liberty, and their leal devotion to her righteous sceptre; but are now, with callous heartlessness, thrusting aside those who sustained them, and by whom their selfish or mere partizan victories have been obtained; still there are good and brave English hearts willing to make sacrifices, and yet again to renew the conflict. There are thousands already trained to a knowledge of their own power, and of the weakness of monopoly in religion as well as trade; who deprecate bounties for state made education, or taxation on the spontaneous production of universal mind in knowledge or religion; as much as they condemned an aristocratic corn-law; or unrighteous obstructions to commercial freedom. These men know where their resources may be developed.

I have lectured on "Liberty of Conscience" in many towns, by the solicitation of numerous friends. The topics, the history, and scenes glanced at, regarded the same period in almost all these lectures. But from the extemporaneous style of address to which I am accustomed, the statements were diversified; and thoughts and facts accumulated. When requested to visit Liverpool, I arranged to occupy two evenings in lecturing on the subject; and at the close of the second address, it was proposed by the Rev. Dr. Raffles, and the Rev. W. Bevan, that I should revise the reporter's notes for the press. The large and respectable assembly harmoniously and warmly approved of their suggestion.

I felt encouraged to follow the course thus recommended, and have endeavoured to shape the whole in a form appropriate for publication. I have also added a lecture delivered in Edinburgh, which was published by the society to whom it was addressed.

The questions introduced in these lectures are, I think, peculiarly appropriate to the exciting movement which government measures have produced, and may, I hope, subserve the cause of liberty, civil and religious, and to direct the minds, especially of Sabbath-school teachers, to principles which, having studied, they may properly inculcate where they have opportunity.

The office of ruler presents temptations to statesmen to encroach upon the prerogatives of subjects,

and usurp the functions which belong to individual enterprise. Theories of benevolence and humanity afford the pretext for intermeddling assumptions. To guard against the evils of such interference, it is needful that independent and liberal efforts be made for diffusing sound principles and knowledge among the youth of a coming manhood. A great amount of responsibility in this work, devolves upon the Sunday-school Teacher; whose influence and intercourse extend beyond the school-room, or the period of Sunday labours. I, therefore, intreat the attention and cordial co-operation of all those, who, in this sphere, are patriotic and enlightened fellow-labourers.

J. W. MASSIE.

Lower Broughton,
April 13, 1847.

*Extracts from the "Patriot," May 27th, 1846, after reporting a
Lecture in the Congregational Library, London.*

"The Rev. J. H. Hinton said: Instead of having anything to correct in the lecture, I can bear my humble testimony to its truth and justice, and the importance of the sentiments that have been presented to us. I beg to move a vote of most cordial thanks to Dr. Massie.

"The Rev. Dr. Campbell said: I am sure that there has not been during this season, and I do not believe that there will have been when it is ended, a more cordial vote of thanks than that which we shall present to Dr. Massie. I do not know that for a long time I have been the subject of so much unmixed, undisturbed, grateful complacency as I have been to-night, that I am a Dissenter. Men talk of succession. I am in the succession to-night, and so are you. . . . When I think of the fact Dr. Massie has brought forth with so much beauty and conclusiveness, that these twelve men, calling themselves 'the Dissenting brethren,' are filling England, America, and the world, I cannot but exclaim, How extraordinary the change! Dr. Massie has said some good things about our Sunday-schools, and I do not know that I could prescribe him a better task—or that I could find a better man to accomplish it—than to prepare a book appropriate to Nonconformist Day-schools. Three-fourths of our common school histories are mere rubbish—bad politically, bad religiously, full of untruth, bad principles, and worse reasoning. There is much occasion for a good Nonconformist school-book; and I beg you, Dr. Massie, to betake yourself to that when you go home.

"The Rev. Dr. Jenkyn said: "I rise with pleasure to support the resolution of thanks to Dr. Massie for his excellent account of the painting. I should be glad if some arrangement could be made to introduce this painting into our theological academies, and if Dr. Massie would give us a third and a fourth edition of his lecture. . . . There have been great struggles for civil and religious liberty; but I think there is coming on, in our own age, another struggle, and one which