

not be gifted with such foresight as to enable him to know beforehand in what manner, and subject to what conditions, his wealth may be best distributed among his descendants, several generations hence, for their own benefit or that of the community at large. Whether, in ecclesiastical matters, also, there should not be some means provided of breaking the entail without resorting to what is termed in Scotland "a disruption," so that deviations from theological formularies many centuries old, should not be visited with pecuniary losses or disgrace—whether it be expedient to allow the Romanist or Calvinist, the Swedenborgian or Socinian, and every other sectary to enforce, by the whole power of the wealth he may bequeath to posterity, the teaching of his own favorite dogmas for an indefinite time, and when a large part of the population on whom he originally bestowed his riches have altered their minds, are points on which a gradual change has been taking place in the opinions of not a few of the higher classes at least. Of this no one will doubt who remembers or will refer to the debates in both Houses of the British Parliament in 1844,* and the speeches of eminent statesmen of opposite politics when the Dissenters' Chapel Bill was discussed.

But whatever variety of views there may still be on this subject in Europe, it is now the settled opinion of many of the most thoughtful of the New Englanders, that the assertion of the independence of each separate congregation, was as great a step toward freedom of conscience as all that had been previously gained by Luther's Reformation; and it constitutes one of those characteristics of church government in New England, which, whether approved of or not, can not with propriety be lost sight of, when we endeavor to trace out the sources of the love of progress, which has taken so strong a hold of the public mind in New England, and which has so much facilitated their plan of national education. To show how widely the spirit of their peculiar ecclesiastical system has spread, I may state that even the Roman Catholics have, in different states, and in three or four cases (one of which is still pending, in 1848–9), made an appeal to the courts of law, and endeavored to avail themselves of the

* See the Debates on 7 & 8 Vict., ch. xlv. A. D. 1844.