

Bellefonte Patriot. *Beggerly Readers*

BELLEFONTE, CENTRE COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, PRINTED BY W. BRINDLE.

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CONDITIONS.

The price of this paper is *two dollars and fifty cents* per annum—but if paid half yearly in advance, two dollars only will be charged.

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Mr. Brindle,

In the last number of the Patriot you presented to your readers a lively description of the way and manner in which the banking institutions of Mother-Britain manage their monied matters, and wind up their concerns: by which it appears that in this, as well as in many other things, we very adroitly imitate the children of our mother's household at home. You know, sir, we have it from very high authority, that our mother is the bulwark of the religion we profess, and all our wiser and better sort of people allow that we ought to follow her example in all things in which religion is concerned. I therefore send you a case in point, extracted from a London paper, which shows the kind of religious discipline which our pious mother exercises over her backsliding children under her immediate jurisdiction, who wilfully, or ignorantly, transgress her religious regulations. It also shews with what fervent zeal our mothers nobility and magistrates execute the laws of her house, made for the purpose of preventing the members of her family from worshiping in corners or secret places. By the observations of the London editor, you will find that it was published there to put the people on their guard, and prevent them from transgressing in like manner. For the same reason, I wish you to publish it here. For it is universally admitted, by all our lawyers and judges, that England is the country from whence we derive our laws, as well as our religion, and every other good thing. Now it is possible, sir, that this statute, under which the hon. Charles Noel was punished, may be adjudged by our courts to be in force in this country; as it was enacted long before our revolution. For we derive, by inheritance, a title, not only to the common law of England, but also to all her statute laws, as far as our courts may please to adopt them; and what of them they will adopt no human being can conjecture, until they issue their fiat from the bench; and that is never done until some unlucky wight is brought up before them for having committed a breach of some of those antiquated statutes with his eyes shut. The people had therefore better take care how they assemble in *unlicensed* conventicles under the pretence of exercising religious worship, contrary to the statute in such case made and provided.—Forty pounds sterling (equal to \$177 78 cents) is no trifle in these hard times: and on an information, this very case of the

King vs. the hon. Charles Noel, may be produced as an authority on the trial of the transgressor. Query—Is our Court House licensed?

INQUISITOR.

From a London Paper.

Several of the public prints have informed us, that the Hon. Charles Noel has been lately fined 40*l* for a certain violation of the laws, at which they have obscurely hinted. But as we have been favored with the particulars from an authority on which we can fully rely, we hope Mr. Noel will excuse our laying them before the public: and we are confident the noble Earl (Romney) who was so active in the prosecution, will applaud us for suggesting the caution to other persons, equally unacquainted with the offence.

It seems the late Lord Barham, of Barham Court, had founded a Sunday School in the village in which he resided, and had been himself in the habit of attending evening worship carried on therein, with a view to the benefit of the parents of the children and other inhabitants who may choose to attend. Since his lordship's death, the Hon. Mr. Noel having come to reside in the same mansion, and his health making it imprudent for him to venture out in the cold and damp winter evenings, he thought proper, as a temporary measure, to remove the service to his own house: and without suspecting that he was violating any existing law, he permitted his neighbors and tenants to attend. But to avoid the danger of an error in our statement, we give the following literal extract from the information exhibited in court.

KENT to wit. *To the Constables of the lower half hundred of Twyford, &c.*—“Whereas INFORMATION and COMPLAINT have been made before us. His Majesty's justices of the peace of the said county by the Rt. Hon. Charles, Earl of Romney, that the Hon. Charles Noel, of Barham Court, in the parish of Trenton, &c. did on Sunday the 7th day of Jan. last past, knowingly permit and suffer a certain congregation or assembly for *religious worship* of Protestants (at which there were present more than 20 persons, (to wit) 30, or thereabouts, besides the immediate family and servants of the said Charles Noel,) to meet in the said mansion house and premises, occupied by the said Charles Noel as aforesaid,—the said mansion-house and premises not having been duly certified and registered—according to the directions of the statute in such case made and provided,” &c. &c.

This document was signed by five magistrates of the above county, and the appearance fixt for the 1st of April, on which day the following witnesses were summoned to attend, viz. the Rev. John Kennedy, vicar of Teston, Rev. R. Wood, curate of Nettlestead. Nettleford, parish clerk of Teston, D. Thompson, steward at Barham court, J. Gardiner Jeffery, of Yielding, gent. and J. King, late servant to the said Rev. John Kennedy; but of whom only two were called in evidence.

Mr. Thompson having proved the occupancy of the house by Mr. Noel, then delivered a letter to the chairman of the sitting, which being read, was expressive of regret, that under mistaken views he had violated the law, and submitting to the decision of the bench to what degree of penalty his error had made him liable.

Rev. Mr. Kennedy, being sworn, was

interrogated by Lord Romney, whether more than 20 persons were present beside Mr. Noel's domestics, and whether there were any besides parishioners of Teston, answered both questions in the affirmative.

Here Lord Romney said, that he thought it necessary to observe, that as *complainant* and *informer* he took the whole matter upon himself, and added, that he had learned with surprise and astonishment, that Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Wood, two *clergymen* of the church of England, should countenance by their presence the illegal proceedings of Barham Court. In reply to this, Mr. Kennedy begged leave to impress upon the minds of his Lordship and the Bench, that for the reasons assigned in the letter by the Chairman, he was equally unconscious that the assembly at Barham Court was illegal, and referred to what had been the practice at the school in the time of Lord Barham.

Mr. Kennedy added, that he could assert from Mr. Noel's authority, that no one could more venerate our laws, or was desirous to pay due respect to magistrates; that his error had been unintentional, and arose from misconception; and respecting his *public* sentiments he need not intrude farther upon their time. But as Mr. Noel was not present, (being called to attend the death-bed of a beloved sister in a distant county,) he requested the indulgence of the Bench to offer a few words upon his *private* character, to which in his absence he could speak more freely. He had known him from infancy to manhood, and hesitated not to say, that a person of more solid practical Christianity—of more amiable manners, of more humane benevolence—of greater generosity of mind, or with a greater degree of the milk human kindness, he had never known; and was persuaded he might affirm he would not knowingly do the least injury to any human being, but would rejoice in doing good to all, and more especially that good which ended not with the present life: in a word he was the gentleman and the christian! With such dispositions, such views and such intentions, the degree of *criminality* attached to his error in his judgment, and the degree of *punishment* is merited might cheerfully be submitted to the Bench.

After some farther conversation, the witnesses were ordered to withdraw, but in a few minutes recalled, and informed that the Bench had convicted Mr. Noel in the full penalty of *forty pounds*, for two offences, on Dec. 31, 1815, and Jan. 7 1816.

Mr. Thompson, the steward immediately paid the penalty, and at the same time enquired whether one moiety of the penalty did not belong to the poor of Teston parish; to which the chairman answered, that when the expenses of the prosecution were paid of what remained one half went to the informer (Ld. Romney we presume) and the other to the poor!

The reader has the whole case now before him, on which we shall offer only a few very brief remarks. 1. That the prosecution is grounded on the last Toleration Act, and on a clause which seems at the time to have attracted but little notice, as referring only to the registry of Dissenting Chapels but which, it appears, applies equally to meetings of members of the establishment not on consecrated ground. 2. That the Assembly thus made criminal was not a *political* or a *convivial* meeting

or was the assembly for a *ball* but for *religious worship* (as the information states) and that on the Sabbath day. 3. The worship is expressly stated to be *Protestant*, not Roman Catholic, which as far as we can learn, requires no license, but simply to enter the name of the officiating priest.

4. That it was not a meeting of Protestant *Dissenters*; though some might possibly been present, they are not named, nor are they involved in the accusation: but Mr. Noel, a member of the church of England, his parish priest, the parish clerk, and the curate of a neighboring parish, are particularly named. Now herein seems a difficulty: Dissenters may license a house, or a field, or a barn for public worship; but a member of the church of England cannot conscientiously do this, as it ranks him without the pale of the establishment: he is therefore under disabilities unknown to either Catholic or Protestant Dissenters.

5. The Act gives magistrates a discretionary power to mitigate the *pounds* of the penalty to *shillings*; and it is known that in many cases, as swearing, Sabbath-breaking, drunkenness, short weights and measures, and some other faults mentioned in the late Police Report, Magistrates often shew themselves very tender-hearted; but praying and preaching are, it seems, crimes of such enormity, that they admit of no palliation, no mercy! Lastly, in respect to Lord Romney, and to prevent any mistake which might arise from a trifling similarity of name, remark, that it was not this noble Earl, but Lord Radnor, who two or three years since fined Kent, the Methodist, for saying his prayers in public without a licence; though the Court of King's Bench had afterwards the temerity to reverse the judgement and return the penalty—*Par nobile fratrum!*

Beggerly Readers.—Another opportunity is presented to us of exposing the littleness and pitiful parsimony of that class of beings which are always willing to read but never to encourage those who are instrumental of their gratification. Almost every neighborhood is infested with one or more of these worse than Egyptian plagues who can scent a newspaper a mile off, and borrow and steal it before its right owner can enjoy the privilege for which he had paid and which by every rule of civility and good nature he has a right to enjoy—that of reading it himself.

What right has a man to expect that his neighbor should be at all the trouble and cost of procuring a newspaper or other periodical work and give up the use of it to those who pay nothing—to whom borrowing has become so habitual that it is as much a thing of course, as sleeping and eating? These borrowers or beggars, or stealers, (they may choose which ever epithet suit them best) might with as much show of decency, call upon their good natured neighbour every day at dinner time, and fill their unconscionable maws with what they find upon his table, as thus to deprive him of what he has provided, for the indulgence of his intellect.

New England Galaxy.

By the ship Ocean, Fowle, arrived at Charleston, from Bremen, we learn, that two detachments of Danish cavalry and infantry, passed through Bremen, on their return from France, on the 15th January. The Hanoverian contingents had passed through that city a few days previous.