

WHAT DID THE CHANCELLOR MEAN?

A LETTER

TO

LORD DURHAM,

A REFORMER.

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TO THE

EARL OF DURHAM.

MY LORD,

I HAVE no intention of under-rating your Lordship's talents; I acknowledge them to be great. Your rank, your wealth, your connexion with Lord Grey (*clarum ac venerabile nomen*), and other circumstances which have occurred in the last few months, have contributed to place you at the head of the party to which you belong. I will not deny that that party has derived an accession of weight and consequence from the circumstance of your Lordship giving it the sanction of your name. Sentiments to which, we were accustomed, from the inferior orators of the party, acquire new importance when they come from the lips of the Earl of Durham. We examine them more minutely in proportion as we respect the person who gives them utter-

ance: Like the straws in amber, we do not so much wonder at the opinions themselves, as at the fact of your Lordship's entertaining them.

The names of party distinction change so often, in this eventful period of our history, that they are not worth disputing about. But, perhaps, if the question were fairly put to you, you would maintain that the change, if there were any, change, was in others, not in you; that you were still what you had ever been, a constitutional Whig — whatever might, for the time being, be the party name for those holding constitutional Whig principles; but, after a careful examination of your Lordship's sayings and doings for a considerable time past, I confess that I consider you a constitutional Whig no longer. You have endeavoured to draw a line, of separation between the great Whig party and yourself as broad and distinct as possible; you have left them far behind in the liberality of your professions, and have been more ferocious in your attacks upon them than the fiercest of their open enemies. But the force with which you projected yourself in advance of the Whigs, has carried you even to the van of the Radicals. You must continue running if you would avoid the disgrace of falling. But even the utmost exertion of your agility will scarcely keep you a-head of that active and long-winded party. To be the "foremost man" of all the time, preceding, at a vast interval, the myriads of your

fellowmen, is a pitch of solitary grandeur which you will never reach, or, at all events, which you will not long retain. You will find it impossible to hit upon any line of policy which multitudes have not already adopted, or which they will not immediately adopt. You will be followed, overtaken, passed and distanced, by the very men who, at present, take a humble station in your train. You, who were once the general, will soon be a private in the ranks. Like Robinson Crusoe, you will cease to be a monarch when you are no longer alone. It would be wise in your Lordship to reflect upon this in time. Even with the diadem on your head, you should not neglect the cultivation of cabbages; for assuredly, at no distant day, you will be reduced to the dibble and hoe.

I hope I shall not offend your Lordship, if, in a spirit of candour and moderation, I make a few remarks on the series of your Northern harangues. The speech with which you favoured the admirers of Lord Grey at the Edinburgh banquet, was the most remarkable delivered on that occasion; not so much for its eloquence, for in that there were many that were equal to it; but for the sentiments it conveyed, and, more than all, for the time and place you had chosen for making these sentiments public. By that speech, though you pointedly directed it against only one indivi-

dual, you, in effect, entered your protest against the policy of Lord Grey, which had procured for him that glorious 'testimony' of the gratitude and veneration of the Scottish people. You objected to the advice which that illustrious statesman left as a legacy to his successors; and were sarcastic, to the extent of your ability, on the caution and circumspection recommended by Lord Brougham. It is not often that that distinguished person has been accused of such enormous crimes as caution and circumspection, and still less frequently has it happened, that he has been rebuked and sneered at with impunity. Luckily for the harmony of the party, and luckily, more than all, for your Lordship, Lord Brougham had too much good taste to retort. It is something, even for a hero, to boast of, that he has bearded a lion, and come from the encounter unharmed. But we know that this was an achievement of the gallant Quixote, though we are, at the same time, given to understand that the lion, upon that occasion, took a less hurtful method than tearing him in pieces, to show his consideration for his challenger. The part of your oration to which I allude is this :

“My noble and learned friend, Lord Brougham, has been pleased to give some advice which, I have no doubt, he deems very sound to some classes of persons — I know none such — who evince too strong a desire to get rid of ancient

abuses, and fretful impatience in awaiting the remedies of them. Now I frankly confess that I am one of those persons who see, with regret, every hour which passes over, the existence of recognised and unreformed abuses. I am, however, perfectly willing to accept the correction of them as deliberately as our rulers, and my noble friend among them, can wish: but, on one condition, and one condition alone — that every measure should be proposed in conformity with those principles for which we all contend. I object to the compromise of opinions, not to the deliberation of what they should be. I object to the clipping, and pairing, and mutilating which must inevitably follow any attempt to conciliate enemies who are not to be conciliated, and who thus obtain an advantage by pointing out the inconsistencies of which you are guilty, in abandoning your friends and your principles, and attribute the discontent felt on this score, to the decay or dearth of liberal principles. Against such policy I, for one, enter my protest, as pregnant with mischief,— as creating discontent where enthusiasm would otherwise exist,— as exciting vague hopes in the bosoms of our adversaries, which can never be realised,—and, as placing weapons in the hands of those who use them to the destruction of our best interests. With this candid explanation, with this free exposition of my principles, which I have never concealed in any

position in which I have been placed, I am ready to grant the utmost extent of deliberation to my noble and learned friend, which he has asked for this night, and which, when given under such conditions, will calm the discontent which has recently prevailed." . .

The sentiments contained in this extract are worthy of all acceptance. There was no heart, I am bold to say, in that vast assemblage, that responded to them more warmly, than the heart of your learned and noble friend. They are the sentiments by which his actions have always been guided, and which he has never hesitated to express. I have carefully studied his speeches, both at the Edinburgh dinner, and elsewhere; and I can discover no single sentence to which your observations will apply. I can see no advice given by him, to delay one moment longer than the safety of the state demands it, the reform of any recognised abuses. I can trace, neither in his words nor actions, any symptoms of sloth or slowness in his course of amelioration. His faith has been shewn by his works of amelioration. He does not consider the "enthusiasm," so much insisted on by your Lordship, as the best engine with which to accomplish political changes. If he recommend a detour, in order to avoid a morass, or raises a bridge to enable him to cross a torrent, he has a better chance of speedily reaching the object of his pursuit, than if he floundered through the

one, or buffeted with the waves of the other. It is unfair to accuse a general of retreating, who is skilfully preparing for his advance: If you are sincere when you say that you know no such persons as evince too strong a desire to get rid of ancient abuses, and a fretful impatience in awaiting the remedies of them, you either display an unaccountable ignorance of what is going on around you—or profess that it is impossible for a desire of reform to be too strong, or for impatience, under abuses, to be too fretful. In the latter case, which I suppose is the true one, you and Lord Brougham are at issue on the point. Lord Grey, in his admirable speech, has the following sentence. . . . “On the one hand, the impatience of abuse inspired many with too heedless a desire to effect greater and more extensive changes than necessity required; and perhaps to push even salutary reform with a dangerous precipitation. On the other hand, there were those with whom power long possessed, now lost or curtailed, had left feelings of bitterness behind, producing opposition to the most generally expressed wishes of the people. I trust that the passions which have been excited on both sides, will speedily subside; and I rejoice in the hope to see those feelings succeeded on the one hand, by the good sense of the people controlling abuses or violence, and on the other hand, a necessary, though perhaps a late conviction as to the necessity of inquiring

into, and ultimately, as to the necessity of correcting such abuses as the wants of the age, and the increased intelligence of the times require to be removed." Here, as it appears to me, are shown the wisdom and the sagacity of that wise and prudent statesman. Does Lord Brougham differ from these sentiments of his (late) illustrious colleague? Does he display more wariness and caution, than the very person whose cautious and circumspect guidance of a mighty political measure, was at that moment receiving its justly merited reward? Hear what he says: "I entirely, and in every point agree in all those wise and statesman-like principles, which were so impressively, so clearly, and I may say, so convincingly expounded to you by my noble friend. Let the government of the country, strong in the support of the crown and of the people, proceed *steadily, firmly, and unflinchingly*, to discharge their duty, by promoting the progress of liberal opinions; but let them not be hurried out of their course, either to the right or to the left, either faster or further than sound reflection, mature deliberation, and statesman-like prudence entitle them to go. There are some men, I know; nay, a great number, honest and conscientious men, I have no doubt,—men, generally speaking, of sound opinions, but somewhat unreflecting, who think action and execution every thing, and all the time that is spent in deliberation, as time thrown away. These men

blamed my noble friend, late at the head of the government, for having done nothing during the session preceding the last, when one-twentieth part of any one of those nothings, that were then effected, would have made the fortune of any other administration."

The conclusion to be drawn from declarations such as these, is not that nothing more will be done, but rather that all our rational expectations will be certainly, though perhaps slowly realized. You have forgotten, or, in the ardour of your career, have perhaps never reflected, that all the people of this country are not comprised in the three parties which take the most prominent part in public affairs. There are thousands, I might perhaps say millions, who do not come under the category of Whigs, or Radicals, or Tories; and it will scarcely be denied, that the forethought and statesman-like deliberation insisted on by Lord Brougham, are more likely, than the shorter and more dashing procedure recommended by your Lordship, to reconcile to liberal measures the great body of what may be called the Neutrals; who, though they are conscious of the existence of abuses, think it safer—

“ to bear those ills they have,
Than fly to others that they know not of.”

All men are not blessed with the confidence and courage of your Lordship. There are many

people, who, though otherwise not indisposed to reform, have been so long accustomed to the old motto of "slow and sure," that they suspect that every measure *must* be dangerous which is rapidly carried through. I do not pretend to attach much weight to such timid counsellors as these; but the fears of such men deserve, at least, *as much* consideration, as the impatience of the more ardent. It is the duty of a statesman to direct all his measures with a due regard to the satisfaction and welfare of all classes in the community. The interests of one party must be balanced against those of another; their rights must be scrupulously investigated, and it appears to me that it would not injure a politician's character for wisdom, if even their honest prejudices were put into the scale.

My Lord, to do all this, is not the work of an hour. There is surely some difference between such a mode of proceeding as this, and the folly which you attribute to the Chancellor, of endeavouring to conciliate those who cannot be conciliated; or of putting swords into the hands of our enemies. So far from endeavouring to conciliate the Rodens and Cumbelands, to whom, I suppose your Lordship refers, as our enemies, he expresses his determination, in the very speech which you object to, to resist them to the uttermost: to be prepared against their machinations, and to persist in his course, in spite of them. This is a new species of concili-

ation, and not very likely, I fear, to win, over the persons upon whom its powers are tried. But if he does not attempt to conciliate, neither does he condescend to intimidate. Perhaps he has such confidence in the justice of his cause, that he thinks both those modes of advancing it neither dignified nor useful. But his arts of conciliation, such as they are, have not been tried only on the party, who, according to your Lordship, cannot be persuaded out of their opposition to reform; he has also tried the same insinuating eloquence to win over the other party from their opposition to delay. It is strange that such flattering declarations of opposition and disregard should fail of their effects upon the first;—wonderful that the seductive softness of such expressions as he applied to the class of politicians who have claimed your Lordship as their chief, should all be thrown away. Alas! his flattery was disregarded, and his compliments not very graciously received. Your hearts swelled with nobler virtues than prudence and caution, and you thought—

“That which in mean men we entitle—patience,
Is pale cold cowardice in noble breasts.”

Appearances, in politics, are nearly of as much consequence as realities; an appearance of haste in legislation is one of the worst signs of a Government. The public mind must be cautiously prepared, even for the declaration of a

principle. Years ago, the sin and impolicy of colonial slavery, and the principle of abolition, were as clearly recognised by our rulers as at this moment; but how carefully was the way smoothed for its reception! How gradually the mighty work of justice and charity grew beneath the hands of its promoters! (A nation cannot change its habits of a sudden, more than an individual.) If the change be doubtful,—and in national changes there are none that do not create doubts in the minds of some class or other,—the benefits of preparation are easily pointed out. In such cases, even the opponents of it have the advantage enjoyed by Goldsmith's Croaker, that they grumble so much at it beforehand, that they have exhausted their murmurs by the time it comes. Improvement; which in the eyes of some persons is synonymous with sin, like sin, becomes less hateful the oftener it is looked at; those who at first were terrified at the hideousness of its mien, become acquainted with its beauties, and end by being its supporters.

But statesmen, like your Lordship, are restrained, I am afraid, by no considerations of this kind. You would annihilate both time and space, in the rapidity of your movements; not considering that while you travel on the railway, your less gifted countrymen are travelling, some in a post-chaise, others in a wagon, while the greater number of us are plodding wearily

on foot. Granting even that the end of our journey were the same, you will allow that, by these different modes of conveyance, we cannot all travel in company; and it may happen, that the prodigious velocity of your pace, may make you see objects in a different light from what we do. The wall of a gentleman's park, the steeple of a country church, may hurt your Lordship's eyes as you whirl past them in your comet-like career; while to us poor pedestrians, they seem admirable adjuncts to the landscape, and furnish us with a safe and agreeable shade. It is you, my Lord, and statesmen of your Lordship's class, who furnish weapons to the enemies of all reform, by the unlimited scope which you offer to innovation. You scorn the idea of a stop in your career; you enter upon a race, without fixing upon a goal, as if your object were, not the attainment of a prize, but the mere pleasure of running. You spurn the thoughts of even the smallest interval, between the heats, and look with contempt on the space you have already traversed,

“ Nil actum reputans, dum quid superesset agendum.”

The cautions of Lord Brougham were forced from him, not by his indifference to reform, but by his desire for it. He feels that all improvement is endangered, more by the intemperance of its advocates, than by the attacks of its enemies. I rejoice, therefore, that he stated

so emphatically his opinion of those *veni, vidi, vici*, repairers of our constitution.

“These, then, are not wise counsellors to listen to, these are not safe guides to follow, these are not fair judges of the merits of any British statesman.”

“If I differ with these persons, not doubting their honesty, but distrusting their zeal, I only differ with them, as to the pace at which we are to travel; but as to the direction we are to go in, we mutually agree.”

But we must search deeper than any formal oration, delivered at the Edinburgh dinner, for the causes of your Lordship's attack upon Lord Brougham. I use the word attack, deliberately, as both by your manner at the time, and your open declaration afterwards, you have shown that your taunts were personally directed to him. So far as your speeches can be judged from, you differ in no one particular, from the sentiments contained in the speeches of that noble Lord. For, you will remark, that the dilatoriness of Lord Brougham, to reform any *recognised* abuse, is a gratuitous assumption of your own. I deny that in any sentence he ever spoke, he advocated *unnecessary delay*, in the removal of any unreformed evils. In your eloquent declarations on the subjects of “safe and practical reform, the correction of abuses, the legitimate influence of the crown, the due pri-

vileges of the nobility, and, at the same time, the extension of the liberties of the people, and their adaptation to the increased and increasing intelligence of the age," — you trod on precisely the same ground, which the Chancellor had gone over before. And yet, though you thus agreed in words, you had the dexterity to show that you were, by no means, agreed in any thing *but* words. You showed, beyond the possibility of a mistake, that you differed from Lord Brougham, both in the manner of your reforms, and their extent; and you gave us clearly to understand, that you wished yourself to be considered as much before Lord Brougham, in the race of reformation, as he is, before the nondescript Reformers whom he mentions, who "advance backwards."

But there is a heavier charge to be brought against your Lordship than precipitancy. You bring an accusation of a more serious nature than delay, against your noble and learned friend,—and your censure on his conduct, is not open and direct, as in so weighty a matter it ought to have been. We are left to gather by implication, what the crimes are, with the infamy of which you wish to load him. You objected to a "compromise of opinions"—to "clipping and paring and mutilating;" of all which things, whilst you proclaimed your own untarnished innocence, you wished to insi-

nuate that the Chancellor had been, or was likely to be guilty. If you were called upon to point out the specific ground of these heavy charges,—to support one of them with the shadow of a proof,—to give one reason for entertaining for a moment, the slightest suspicion of such unprincipled tergiversation, it would require a strong effort of your Lordship's ingenuity. The day will most assuredly come, when you will be called upon to substantiate your charge. It has already been most promptly and indignantly denied, and expectation is on tip-toe to see with what documents you will verify your assertions. It should be no light proof which emboldened you to bring such an accusation.

The character of Lord Brougham, is of too much importance to his countrymen, to be breathed on with impurity. He has arrived at that pitch of greatness when his reputation ceases to be a private possession. His fame is a property shared by us all, and any unjust diminution of it is, to all the admirers of genius, to all the lovers of patriotism, in the nature of a personal loss. He has earned the confidence of his countrymen, by a long life of active services in their cause. His popularity is not to be endangered by the captious opposition of disappointed newspapers, nor even by the sneering insinuations of belted Earls. Their frog-like

puffings will only put them to the risk of bursting, without at all raising them to the proportions of the object of their envy.

I will not take up your time with any comments of mine, on the share you had in the preparation of the Reform Bill,—on the merit you claim at one time as its principal author, and the still greater merit you claim at another, in disowning some of its principal provisions. These, and many other things, I pass over, because you have publicly asserted that the accusations brought against you on these grounds, are totally unfounded. I will only say, that you are indebted to the half-revelations you made upon several occasions, for the suspicions of alteration and compromise, to which I have alluded; and that your insinuations of treachery, and breach of confidence, are rather what might have been expected from the bitterness of detected guilt, than the dignity of innocence. It is to be lamented that the letter of Lord Grey came at such an unlucky moment. It should have come to you before you had made your speech at Gateshead, or should not have reached you till you had made a full and open explanation at Glasgow. But with such a seal upon your lips, you did wisely to be silent.

Passing over these as matters upon which no certain conclusion can yet be come to, and troubling you with a very few observations on the Chancellor's declarations at Aberdeen, Inver-

ness, and elsewhere, within the last few months, I will venture some remarks on the topics of your Lordship's address at the Glasgow dinner.

Luckily, the uniformity of the opinions expressed in all his speeches during the Chancellor's Northern Tour, enables me to be very brief in the observations I make on them. The sentiment which appears from the newspapers to have excited the greatest indignation among the admirers of your Lordship, is contained in the following passage:—

“ One set accuse us of doing too much, and another of doing nothing. One set says we move slowly (that is, safely); the other as pertinaciously contend, that we are going too fast. One set, from honest prejudices, are against all improvements, because they are satisfied with things, as they are, and believe that they cannot be made better. I respect them; but differ from them. Another set think we never do anything. You open the trade to China, and you abolish slavery, (both the work of one session,) and yet we are told the session did nothing. My own opinion is, that we have done too much, rather than too little, though it was necessary to do justice and lay the foundations of future good government. Less was necessarily done last session than the former, because, if you open the trade to China one year, you do not want to open it the next. If you set slaves free in 1833, there are no slaves

to liberate in 1834. If you reform the Court of Chancery in one session of Parliament, the same task is not left to the succeeding session. If we have done little last session, I fear we shall do less in the next."

"Upon this plain and straightforward statement have been founded the witty, but sophistical strictures of the Examiner, and the coarse and verbose declamations of the Times. But the wit, even of the Examiner, is, in this instance, thrown away,—its illustration is not so apt as many others, which have given such a reputation to that very ingenious and powerful paper. "Let us suppose," it says, in reference to the Chancellor's speech, "that we have to journey to Edinburgh. It is quite true, that every mile we leave behind us, diminishes by so much the distance before us; but what should we say to a coachman, who, having begun by driving ten miles an hour; slackened his speed at every stage, till the horses crawled along at the rate of a mile an hour, and, in answer to our remonstrances held forth thus: 'The horses will go on, but they will not make one step till they are sure of the ground on which they made the former. They will not scamper neck or nothing. I have heard the complaints of the passengers, but I don't care a button. One set of folks, the masters of the opposition coach, the stick-in-the-mud, accuse me of driving too fast: and another set, my

passengers, say I go too slow. You went the Barnet stage ten miles in the hour, and yet now that we are going a more advanced stage at a good mile an hour; you put your heads out at the window and cry out, that I am going to sleep on the road. Less is of necessity done this hour than the last, because, if you go the Barnet stage at six o'clock, you do not want to travel the Barnet stage at eight o'clock. If you go to Hatfield at seven o'clock, there is no Hatfield stage to be run at nine o'clock. If you travel one stage in one hour, the same job is not left to the succeeding hour. If we have travelled over little ground in the last hour, I am sure we shall travel over less in the next, and good reason why, since when we set out, we were three hundred and seventy miles from Edinburgh, and now we are only three hundred miles from Edinburgh, and, as there is less distance to go over, we may be more and more leisurely in travelling the stages, doing in each that comes, less than in the one before.' "

It is a pity to destroy so facetious a similitude, by remembering that Reform is not a journey to Edinburgh, nor the Chancellor a coachman. But, adopting the illustration which the Examiner proposes, the coachman's harangue would be very different. He would tell us that "the road to Edinburgh was full of almost impassable hills, and almost unfathomable ruts; that at some of the stages the inn-keepers

totally refused a change of horses ; and that, therefore, he was forced to go a slow pace in order to insure arriving at his journey's end ; that the landlords, at Newcastle and Alnwick, did every thing in their power to put him off the road, by clogging his wheels and laming his horses ; and, besides all that, that the persons who had booked themselves to Edinburgh, were very well pleased with his careful driving, and that the murmurs at his slowness proceeded from some stragglers who had mounted his vehicle, but didn't intend to stop at the end of his journey, but were anxious to hurry on to John o'Groat's house." But badinage of this kind is no argument. The Chancellor, I think, even your Lordship will confess, may be recovered by a very unskilful physician from this attack of *Anthony's* fire.

What does Lord Brougham's declaration amount to ? Merely to this,—That, if either party of his accusers is right, those who accuse the government of having done too much, have a more ostensible ground of complaint, than those who maintain that it has done too little,—that it has crowded too many important measures into the short period of its existence, rather than too few. Do we gather from this, that Lord Brougham repents of what has been done ? He boasts of every measure that has passed. He dwells with justifiable pride on the most important of those measures, and says, let what

we have already done, guarantee what we are about to do,—but, do what we will, the “do mores” will not be contented,—they will twit us with a relaxation of activity, because we do not furnish them once a-week, with measures of equal magnitude with those we have already produced. And those very measures they now declare to be nothings. “By those who fancy we did little last session, I fear we shall be considered to do less the next.” By this declaration, addressed to the “do mores,” he implied a parallel rebuke to the “do nothings.” By those who fancy we did *too much* last session, I fear we shall be considered to do more the next. This appears to me, my Lord, to be the plain meaning of the whole of the Chancellor’s orations during his late residence in Scotland. They have been perverted, for purposes which it is easy to perceive; but no ingenuity will be sufficient to convince the steady-minded countrymen of Lord Brougham, that he has either deserted the cause of Reform, or gone over to the precipitate counsels recommended by your Lordship.

“But misrepresentation of the Chancellor’s speeches has been successful, not only in raising a clamour against him in certain quarters, but also in bringing your Lordship more prominently forward. You are made a tool of, without being aware of it. You are honoured, feasted, and eulogized, as much out of spite to Lord

Brougham, as out of respect to your own good qualities. Are you sure, that while you are thus made the tool of others, you are not a dupe to yourself? Are you certain that your professions of liberality, your declarations against delay, are not caused by your personal enmity to Lord Brougham, rather than in the convictions of your own good sense? Whatever was the cause, it is not to be denied that your hostility to the Chancellor, and your openly declared contempt for procrastination, have procured you a triumph. Such a triumph, at least, as is afforded by being made the idol of the Ultra Radicals of Glasgow. You are the recognised leader of the thick-and-thin Reformers, in the commercial metropolis of Scotland. The "men of the West," as they call themselves, have done you all the honour they had it in their power to bestow. They dined in your honour, and drank in your honour, and made speeches in your honour. The West may have many things to boast of: but it was the opposite quarter, we are told, that sent forth the wise men.

Of the speeches delivered at that dinner, it is scarcely a compliment to your Lordship to say, that yours was infinitely the best. In its sentiments, it was open and manly, and moderate in its tone. You there speak as a statesman ought to speak, and are as eloquent in your praises of caution and slowness, as that archetype of inertness, the Chancellor himself. But

having accepted the dinner in the avowed character of an opponent of Lord Brougham; having been invited purposely to mark the sense entertained by the Radicals, of your declaration at the Edinburgh dinner *against* the policy of Lord Brougham, it seems scarcely fair to your Lordship, to adopt that very policy, and utter the very same advices in the one town, which you had acquired your popularity, by repudiating in the other.

“No doubt, many and weighty obstacles will be in your path, and in the path of your truly honest and independent representatives; but all can be overcome with firmness and decision, but *not with rashness and violence.*”

Nothing can be truer than this, and nothing, to my poor understanding, can be more like the opinions delivered by the Chancellor. His prophecies of the fulfilment of our legitimate claims are as full of heart and hope as your Lordship's; and the means he recommends to obtain them, are the same. He, as well as your Lordship, bids us be firm in our demand for ameliorations; but at the same time (to borrow your Lordship's words) to continue “the exemplary patience with which we have waited for the harvest, the seeds of which were planted in the Bill of Reform.” He, as well as your Lordship, promises us the “perfecting of that act:” he, as well as your Lordship, promises us “the purification of the Church Establish-

ment of England and Ireland, from all acknowledged abuses:" and he, as well as your Lordship, promises us "the Reform of Corporation abuses in England," and, "the strictest continuance of economy and retrenchment." He does not lay such stress as your Lordship seems to do, on the repeal of the Septennial Act. Its repeal, and the substitution of Triennial Parliaments, would have no effect for good or evil, unless that it would in so far *narrow* the ground of radical vituperation. But your Lordship, whilst declaring for the repeal of the Septennial Act, is not so obscure as the party who asked your opinions, on the period you would put in its place. With a caution highly to be praised, they abstained from particularizing the period that would be most agreeable to themselves. You stated that you continued convinced of the superior advantages of a Parliamentary existence of three years. I will venture to prophecy, that if you continue firm in this conviction, your popularity among the Glaswegians, will fall as rapidly as it rose. My Lord, you should not have been present at that dinner as the representative of the political opinions of that party, unless you truly and conscientiously agreed with them. You could not be ignorant that your supporters on that occasion, would be satisfied with no intermediate duration, but that their desire is for an election every year. If such be your desire also, and you are not re-

tained in your former opinion by a fear of inconsistency, it was magnanimous to deprive yourself of the éclat, which the bold declaration of it would have procured you; but if you are still in favour of a less frequent dissolution, you are not the man they took you for, and were more properly employed in paying honour to Lord Grey, than in receiving, at Glasgow, the honours paid to yourself. In the same way, when you talk of purifying the Church from its abuses, you stop short in the middle of your journey. If there is one bond of union among the party with which, by dining with them on that occasion, you identified yourself, more intimate than another, it is not a reformation of the Church, but an abrogation of it. This has been their watchword, and the shibboleth of their party; — the question of questions; — the consummation they most devoutly wish. I judge no man harshly. I suppose they are conscientiously persuaded that an Establishment, by which to the poor the Gospel is preached, is inimical to the spread of religion; that a body of men properly qualified for their calling, by learning and good conduct, set apart for the express purpose of showing a good example, and bound by their laws to teach only what is demonstrable by warrant of the Scripture; that this body of men, spread all over the country, and showing the light of philanthropy and good works, in the poorest and most secluded

villages; that this body of men are hurtful to the morals of the people, and useless in restraining an unjudging fanaticism on the one hand, or an unenlightened unbelief on the other. But, in these opinions, your Lordship does not coincide. You talk of reforming the abuses of the Establishment, not doing away with it altogether. Your supporters at the Glasgow feast will be little obliged to you for any reform of abuses, by which the existence of this object of their enmity will be insured. It is not repair they require, but demolition. I do not affix this to them as an accusation. Look in all their publications, you will see this doctrine more strongly insisted on than any other. Whatever may be the subject they commence with, with this it is sure to end. If they begin with taxation, free trade, monopolies, poor laws — any thing — the peroration concludes with the unfailing sentence, *delenda est Carthago!* I am not going to argue in favour of an Establishment, because, upon this point, your Lordship is convinced. I can only repeat, with your decided opinions on that very important subject — opinions identical with those expressed by the Chancellor — that your zeal for the *Reformation* of the Church, was not the ground upon which you gained your superiority in their good graces over Lord Brougham. You must, either give up your maintenance of the Church, and continue the acknowledged leader of the

Radicals, or persevere in your defence of the Establishment with such reforms as shall contribute to her security, and fall back into your more congenial position of a useful and honoured coadjutor of the repairers, and not the destroyers, of our institutions.

Up to this point, unless with regard to the duration of Parliaments, I see nothing in your declarations at Glasgow, in which you do not perfectly agree with the best and most trusted of our statesmen. But, in answer to the Trades' Address, you spoke out more boldly. In the objects which they considered indispensable to their happiness, you cordially joined; — these were Householder Suffrage, Short Parliaments, (why not express their meaning and say Annual Parliaments at once?), and Vote by Ballot. Perhaps one reason for your Lordship's prompt acquiescence in the justice of their immediate claims is contained in the proviso that this honour is paid to you, and their wishes for your farther success are entertained solely on condition of your agreeing with them in their demands. "Taking it for granted," they say, "that your Lordship's response is in the affirmative, we earnestly desire that you may be speedily called on to fill an influential and responsible station in His Majesty's counsels." And taking it for granted, also, that a paltry, and illiberal, and totally uncalled for attack on the individual to whom your personal dislike is

the parent or promoter of your political opposition, would be agreeable to your Lordship, they add, "And that you may be long spared with all your faculties and energies entire, to promote the freedom, prosperity and happiness, of the people of this great empire, and never, like some who, in office, instead of rising in public confidence and esteem, have miserably failed even in common honesty, sink into disrepute." It was in response to this address, in which other subjects are handled such as "the mean, but lordly paupers of the soil;" and "the pitiable ignorance, violent prejudices, and heartless illiberality of certain of the upper classes," that your Lordship declared your concurrence in the propriety of their aspirations. You will observe, that the Trades did not endeavour to conceal, that their aims stretched far beyond objects of their immediate claims. They asserted their right to the future acquirement of every thing they thought proper to ask, but boldly stated their demand, *now*, of the possession of Household Suffrage and the Ballot. With regard to the former of these, you say, in your reply, your opinions have been long known; and, as to the latter, after mature deliberation, you have made up your mind in its favour. The absence of the Ballot, therefore, is one of the recognised abuses, every hour of whose existence fills you with regret. It is, of course, impossible to tell what was the course of study

you pursued, in order to arrive at this determination ; from what proofs of its usefulness, in the history of other countries, you advocate its introduction here. It is not an untried experiment, and its consequences are very prominent in the annals of the nations who practised it. I attach very little importance to the argument against it, that it is un-English. I hope it will never be un-English to adopt, from any quarter, changes which shall be manifest improvements ; but I trust, at the same time, that it will never cease to be un-English to try vague experiments in matters of vital importance.

The Romans, during all the most glorious and freest period of their existence, voted in a manner, and on principles somewhat similar to ours. There was a due regard paid to property as well as numbers, and by that means the balance of the state was preserved. But when liberty was verging to licentiousness, and some even of the patricians condescended to become demagogues, and to be leaders in the wildest inroads on the ancient constitution, — when their votes were taken by tribes which enabled numbers to preponderate over wealth, the direct influence of property was overwhelmed. But there still remained the influence of shame or of gratitude ; for the booths in which their votes were delivered were public, and each man's suffrage was openly pronounced. This was felt as a restraint, and was speedily got rid of. The rest is in the words

of Gibbon:—“ A new method of secret ballot abolished the influence of fear and shame, of honour and interest, and the abuse of freedom accelerated the progress of anarchy and despotism. The Romans had aspired to be equal; they were levelled by the equality of servitude, and the dictates of Augustus were patiently ratified by the formal consent of the tribes and centuries.” But even the farce of consulting them was soon discontinued—“ and their abolition, which Augustus had silently prepared, was accomplished without opposition, and almost without notice, on the accession of his successor.”* The legislators of other countries, whose ardour for liberty was increased by their recent escape from tyranny and oppression, came to a different opinion upon this momentous subject. The question was anxiously debated among the consolidators of Mexican freedom, and after mature deliberation, was rejected. In that country at that time, there were no such difficulties to contend with in the introduction of a new practice as in a country like our own, where the object of the wise amongst us, is not so much the adoption of new and untried measures, as the restoration of old. The opposition which I would offer to the Ballot is founded on a conviction, that without doing away with a single evil of our present system, not even with

* Gibbon, Book xliv

the degrading one of intimidation, it would give rise to twenty more.

The joint gifts of Household Suffrage, and the Ballot, would inundate the country with a flood of duplicity, perjury, and corruption of all kinds, to which the scenes of a contested election, under the old law, would bear no comparison. It was with a knowledge of this fact,—a knowledge in their case founded upon sad experience, that the American representatives of the Ballot States, publicly declared that the system was a mockery,—and that it gave rise to more fraud and injustice than the open system of the other states.

The Ballot will never be adopted as a desirable measure, by those among our statesmen who are in favour of a mild and unpernicious liberty. The cycle of political changes is very well ascertained; the destinies of nations pursue their march in a circle, from which there seems to be no deviation. When freedom accelerates its progress, imagining it is foremost in the race, it only the sooner overtakes despotism, which is lagging in the rear.

This is, indeed, as your Lordship remarks, a crisis in the history of our country. We have reached that point in our career, when, to go back is impossible, and to advance is full of danger. If education were universal — a dream, I fear, of the enthusiast, rather than a hope of the philosopher,—a new state of things might

call for new institutions. Power would distribute itself in the channels opened for its reception by knowledge. If there is a man who deserves more of his countrymen,—even of the followers of your Lordship, for his efforts to procure for them the political influence which their utmost ambition can desire, that man is the very person against whom it has pleased your Lordship to encourage their indignation; whose influence you do your best to weaken, and whose character you endeavour to destroy. His efforts in their cause have not been confined to eloquent orations in their favour, nor to still more eloquent rebukes of their opponents. He has laboured, how assiduously is known to all, to prepare them for the possession of those Benefits which your Lordship would thrust upon them, while they are still unable to appreciate their value, or understand their use. They will soon be undeceived in the estimate they have at present been led to form of their most skilful benefactor. They will see that his steady and gradual extension of useful information will reach the same point, in securing their just rights, but by a surer path than the headlong vigour of your Lordship.

Much as I, in common with other Reformers, regret your Lordship's secession from the camp, I rejoice that it happened at the time, and under the circumstances it did. That a large portion of the people, who were united to the

Tories by their fears of the inconsiderate vehemence of the Whigs, will now see that such hurried and dangerous counsels are confined to a very small section of the Reformers. They will see, that whatever is good in the advice you give them has been acted on already,— that the firmness you insist on is united, in them, with caution, which you condemn; that your sneers upon their delay are as groundless and as easily refuted, as the taunts of another faction upon their haste. They will see, since you have so openly thrown down the gauntlet, that the cause of Improvement is no longer embarrassed by your help; and that the ameliorations under the auspices of Lord Melbourne, and, aided by the vigour, the eloquence, and the prudence of Lord Brougham, will be at once extensive enough to satisfy the wise, and safe enough to reconcile the timorous.

Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,

A REFORMER.

Nov. 7th, 1834.

THE CONSERVATIVE PEERS,

AND

THE REFORM MINISTRY.

THE
CONSERVATIVE PEERS,
AND THE
REFORM MINISTRY

“ Le jour de la Création, quel bruit n'eût-il pas fait !
Mon Dieu, conservons LA CHAOS.”

PAUL LOUIS COURIER.

LONDON :
JAMES RIDGWAY AND SONS, PICCADILLY.

MDCCCXXXVI.

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THE CONSERVATIVE PEERS.

• WHEN it became a question, some years since, as to disfranchising Grampond, Mr. CANNING, addressing himself to his constituents at Liverpool, delivered himself on the subject in this wise :
“ I have no objection to doing as Parliament has
“ often done in such cases, (supposing always
“ the case to be proved,) to disfranchising the
“ borough, and rendering it incapable of abusing
“ its franchise in future. But, though I have no
“ objection to doing this, I will *not* do it on the
“ principle of speculative improvement. I do it
“ on the principle of specific punishment for an
“ offence ; and I will take good care, that no
“ inference shall be drawn from my consent in
“ this specific case, as to any sweeping concurrence
“ in a scheme of general alteration—*dis-*
“ *franchising* GRAMPOND (if that is to be so),
“ *I mean to preserve OLD SARUM*.*”

* Speech at the Liverpool Dinner, given on his re-election in 1820. Vol. VI., page 387, of the edition corrected and revised by himself.

In this last sentence we have at once the substance and the secret of the Conservative system. If an abuse has become so flagrant that they feel constrained by necessity and by shame to get rid of it, they will—if it must be so—consent to its removal; taking care, however, to have it well understood that the remedy of a specific abuse, is not to be taken as an earnest of their intention to act on the principle of general improvement. While they cling to corruption as a system, they have no objection to wipe out a blot here and there; all attempt at any thing beyond, they denounce as so much of wild experiment and dangerous speculation. Such was the creed of Mr. Canning, to whom the Tories have since erected a statue, that the Lisbon job and the jokes of “the joyous and lepid Consul*” against reform, might keep green in our memory, and wean us from the circle of the worshippers of truth and freedom.

If we would calculate what has been gained to the cause of Reform, by the gradual spread of public intelligence, and the steady progress of public opinion, we have only to imagine the member for Liverpool addressing his constituents

* “As for the joyous and lepid Consul, he jokes upon “neutral flags and frauds—jokes upon Irish rebels—jokes upon northern, and western, and southern foes—and gives himself no trouble upon any subject.”—*Peter Plymley's Letters*, 1808.

in a speech, containing an open and avowed defence of rotten boroughs, and of the profligate system of misgovernment which they created and upheld, and heaping scorn and ridicule upon those, who, as Mr. Canning phrased it, were "bitten by the doctrines of reform;" we have only to imagine such an address, to conceive the hisses, the indignation, the uproar, which would fill up every pause in his oration, and put the scoffer to silence. And yet fifteen years only have passed away since these statements, which now would not be endured, and to which no candidate in his senses would give utterance, gave Mr. Canning a majority of 1300 out of 2000 voters, upon the poll.

That the principle here avowed by Mr. Canning, is the Conservative principle of the present hour, we shall have occasion to show as we proceed. We may trace this great and portentous change to the passing of the Reform Act. That there has been no reaction, we owe to the fidelity which ministers have shown to the cause of reform, and to the firmness with which they have followed out its principles. No session has since passed, in which that cause has not been advanced, and those principles gained strength; and this too, in despite of an opposition the most compact, the most strenuous, and the most bitter, that any administration ever had to contend against.

Nothing is so prejudicial to the management of any public trust, as the withholding from

those who act in it, the recompence of fair and honorable service. It unfortunately happens, that, in party politics, the more zealously the duty has been discharged, the stronger will be the resistance, and the louder the outcry. Between antagonist powers this is to be expected; but between parties governed by the same interest, and looking forward to the same ends, every tendency of that sort is not merely impolitic, but unnatural. It is rumoured every where, that political differences exist between the Whigs, and that class which are comprehended in the term Radicals. But these differences are not of a kind which need disturb the harmony of their views, or destroy the unity of their efforts. It is quite impossible that ministers can fulfil their engagements to the nation, if those whom they have a right to reckon upon as their firmest allies, perplex their views, instead of aiding them, and constrain them—as in some instances they have done—to abandon measures from which they had expected the best effects.

Measures of Reform may be divided into two classes.

The first, are those which require to be carried out boldly and at once, to the full extent of all the change which they essentially call for. The second, are those which require to be worked out slowly—in which the alteration should be progressive and preparatory,—and where the success

of each successive step must guarantee the safety, as well as the utility, of that which is to follow.

I would press this view on the peculiar consideration of every one whose mind is at all turned to the subject of Government, and to the conduct of those who administer it.

In Reform, for instance, in the Law department, the evils to be remedied are, for the most part, visible. Their daily recurrence forces them upon public observation. The inadequacy of the particular law to its purpose,—the length, and expensiveness of its process—the degree in which it fails to secure the rights and property of the subject—these, and other attendant defects, are of a nature so palpable, as to dictate their own remedy, and require nothing but honesty and good intention, to effect their speedy and secure removal.

So likewise, in matters of Financial reform, the errors of the system are seldom looked at with a view to their amendment, till they have become a theme of general complaint. When it comes to be reformed, the mode and measure of correction presents itself, and no serious danger is to be apprehended from rash decision. On these, and many other subjects of reform, the same spirit and activity which is required to carry them to a certain extent, will carry them the whole length; and the whole ought to be attempted, in order to give weight and dignity to

the struggle, and to excite an adequate share of public interest. A piece-meal improvement, in such cases, will neither obtain the sympathy, nor the assistance, of the bulk of the people. The value of the acquisition must be felt, or they will not bestir themselves to obtain it.

It will readily be perceived that, on the subject of Ecclesiastical Reform, to proceed on this bold and decisive spirit, would be perilous in the extreme. To curtail the extensive power of the higher clergy;—to abridge their usurped authority;—to controul their public or private patronage;—to regulate the pernicious distribution of spiritual preferment;—to remedy the mis-appropriation of the cathedral and collegiate revenues;—in a word, to apply an effective remedy to the mass of ecclesiastical abuses, and to make our present political church establishment subservient to the pure purposes of Christianity—and to no other—is one of the hardest and heaviest tasks which a government can impose upon itself, or which can be imposed upon it by the people.

That the Church Reform Bill of last session should not have satisfied the Radical party was a result to be expected. Not only did *they* require more, but the national interest required more. But did the national interest require more as a *preparative measure*? Appealing, as this subject does, to all our earliest associations

of thought and feeling, and having some of the strongest prejudices of our nature to wrestle with, would it have been politic for ministers to have attempted more at the outset, counting—as they might well do—upon all the intrigue that would be put in motion, and all the passions that would be engendered?

The Church question, it must be remembered, was not one which Ministers were at liberty to deal with according to their own notions of the obligations which arose out of it. His Majesty's Commissioners, sanctioned in a great measure by Parliament, had, in their Reports, chalked out, and recommended, the course which it would be most expedient to adopt. They had furnished in detail the evidence which guided *their* judgment, and which it was expected would guide the judgment of the Legislature as to the improvements which it might be found expedient to introduce.

Numbers are accustomed to connect Ecclesiastical Reform with religion and the Gospel; and, though heedless of the duties which the latter enjoin, are, nevertheless, great sticklers for the Church as by law established! Careless enough of the vitality and essence of religion, they are desperately faithful to its forms. Not that they approve the continuance of that traffic for worldly honours which disgraces the priesthood;—not that they wish the parochial clergy should labour for a miserable pittance, while the Dignitaries of

the Order are busied with *translations* and *commendams*, and are seeking, not the instruction of the poor and ignorant, but their own preferment, and the patronage which leads to it;—not but that an individual of this stamp bears great respect towards those persons in the government to whom the constitutional trust has devolved of rectifying all such abuses; but, on the other hand, he was confirmed by the Bishop—he has listened to the same voice from the same pulpit, from his youth up—his pew, with its faded green lining, was the pew of his father before him,—it has been in the family time out of mind. The Protestant establishment has become to him the great link between heaven and earth; he has no clear conception of any other; and the instant the cry is raised, of “The Church is in danger,” he begins to gird up his loins, and to prepare for the defence of his hearth, and his altar.

Paley says, and says truly, that “Man is a bundle of habits.” It is easy to talk of the necessity of infusing new blood into his corrupt and worn-out constitution, but it is an infinitely easier task to persuade him to continue as he is, than to submit to the remedy. Those who cannot deny that such infusion would be serviceable, insist that the benefit would be too dearly bought. It is thus with the Tories. They do not openly defend the abuse which is sought to be extirpated; they will even admit, for

the show of justice, that its removal is to be desired; but they contend that the projected improvement is full of hazard—that we are changing that under which we have hitherto gone on, at least in safety; for that which we have never tried, and which may lead we do not know where. To feeble minds this sort of reasoning savours of discretion, and in such minds discretion is a cardinal virtue. On no subject can this reasoning be applied so forcibly, and with such sure effect, as to the Reform of the Church. On no subject can dissension and distrust be so easily sown in the very seat of confidence. It is, beyond all others, prolific of disunion, from the very nature of the feeling it excites, and the interest it involves. It follows, that a slow and deliberative caution becomes not only matter of sound policy, but of positive duty.

Among the names subscribed to the Reports of the Church Commissioners, are those of the Lord Chancellor, the Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord Melbourne, Lord John Russell, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer; but it does not therefore follow that the Reform recommended was, in the opinion of those persons, an adequate and effective Reform. That they thought a more extensive Reform desirable there is no doubt; but any attempt on their part to carry it further would have availed nothing.—The numerical superiority was opposed to them: all that they could do with effect

was, to make it somewhat more comprehensive than otherwise it would have been. The reduction of the Bishops' salaries, and the suppression of certain Bishoprics, established the right of government to regulate and to control the distribution of the ecclesiastical revenues. By that reduction and suppression, this great *principle* was implied and conceded. This principle, thus recognised, cannot hereafter be resisted. The argument drawn from the sacredness of Church property — always hitherto contended for with such inflexible zeal—has been made to give way. The debatable ground being thus cleared of what has, from time immemorial, occupied so great a portion of it, a way is opened for effecting all the Reform which the existing abuses call for, and which the real strength and safety of the Establishment may be found to require.

The complaints of the Tories, and of the Radicals, take an exactly opposite direction. The Tories complain that ministers are going too fast and too far. The Radicals complain, that they go neither fast nor far enough. The *latter*, in the course they are taking, inspire the *former* with the hope of returning to power. The chief, indeed, the only reliance of the Conservatives, is upon the alienation of the Radical party from the government. It is the hope of this desertion that gives them confidence; and it is to this hope that we

owe the extent and intensity of their efforts to recover the reins of government.

But is there any thing wise in the course which gives birth to such an expectation? Is it wise in the Radical party in the House of Commons, to assist in breaking the chain which unites a liberal Ministry with a confiding people?

Let this party give the Government to understand that they wish for a thorough and real Reform in all the Institutions, which call for it, both in Church and State,—slow if you will, but substantive,—conducted, not feebly, from a fear of hostility,—but in the spirit of a manly and liberal policy;—changing nothing which ought not to be changed, but sparing no abuse, which it is the interest and the wish of the people to abolish.—This language would be explicit and intelligible. But, if instead of this, they are made to encounter a capricious and wavering hostility, which, while it weakens their power tends to lessen their character with the country, and to make their position as a Ministry, equivocal and uncertain,—there is no honesty of intention, or strength of talent, that can long bear up against it. The Radicals, by such a course, do not protect the people against the Government; they make the government useless to the people.

If the principles of change work slowly, they are not, on that account, to be the less cherished. The cause of Reform is, in the mean time, gaining

new advocates. The public press—the honest *and enlightened portion of it*—is daily extending the influence of public opinion, and there is no fear but the progress of improvement will keep pace with the progress of intelligence. It ever has done so, and it ever will. He has read history to little purpose, who has not remarked how gradually the advancement of knowledge has re-organized the whole system of society. Ecclesiastical abuses have stood their ground longer than any other. Why is this? Because they have been interwoven with the abuses of the State. The rulers in the monarchy have been always, more or less, connected with families of great hereditary property and influence in the kingdom. The Church has ever been the great engine for keeping down the power of the people. The clergy—whether in conduct or in doctrine—never lose sight of the enrichment and supremacy of their Order. Clerical magistrates throned on the judicial bench in every county, and every city, and every borough town. The pulpits of every village are employed to give to the minds of the multitude, that direction which best accords with the wishes and interest of those in power. Do the Radicals in Parliament imagine that the deranged movements of all this machinery can be regulated by a single effort? Do they really believe that its accumulated imperfections can be rectified in a single session, and this too,

amidst the bitter hostility of an adverse faction? If they separate themselves from the party of the moderate and rational, in the heat of such an intemperate expectation, they will well deserve to lose that respect and consideration which they deservedly possess with the country, and which it is essential they should retain. Such a disunion, though it might not be fatal to the cause of Reform, would long delay its advancement, in spite of every effort in its favour on the part of the governing power. At this crisis, with all the power and stratagem that is employed against them, the Reformers cannot afford to narrow the foundation on which they stand. As it is, their strength is barely equal to the struggle. If weakened by distrust and dissension, their power is gone, and their usefulness is at an end.

The complaint of many has been that the Session passed away in fruitless concessions, by which the public profited nothing. That the most important bills were despoiled of half their efficacy, by being clipped and pared down to accommodate them to the taste of the Tory leaders, and to obtain a passage for them through the Upper House. The Lords, it is said, took advantage of this concessionary spirit, and instead of meeting it with reciprocal courtesy, were encouraged to go on rejecting every reform measure of importance, without, in some cases, deigning to bestow upon them even the formality of discussion.

That Ministers might have manifested more *zeal, and have pressed several measures to a more determined struggle, is easily admitted. But* would they, by this course, have borne down the obstacles they had to overcome? Would they, by so proceeding, have baffled the intrigues and disarmed the intriguers? Not they, indeed. Ask the Conservative Chief in the House of Commons, if the resistance of his party would have been less incessant? Ask the Conservative Grand Master in the House of Lords, if his faction would have been less mutinous? They would laugh, both of them, at the question, and chorus the same answer.

But there is another question that we, the Reformers, might ask, and it is this: Is not the strongest proof of the efficacy and value of the measures of reform introduced during the past session, to be found in the resolute and successful opposition made to them in the House of Peers? Had they been on the level of Tory patriotism;—had they, with a treacherous show of remedy, struck out the letter of the abuse, but kept alive its spirit;—had they been so framed as to provide in appearance for the security of popular freedom, while, in reality, they left its protection as insecure as ever;—had the bills been of this Conservative character, would they have been counteracted, or cast adrift? Would they have met with the fate of the Irish Municipal Bill, and

the Voters' Registration Bill, and the Charitable Trustees Bill, and the long list of bills swept away in the train of them?—No. Their lordships would have been but too happy to give them effect. They would have been most graciously received, and would have passed without the slightest offer of amendment.

The Bills adverted to were cast aside, because they openly recognised and gave effect to the principles which should be inherent in all political institutions. They went straight onward and at once, to the redress of abuses. They did not curtail an excrescent shoot or two, and leave the root of the evil to flourish under ground. Their aim was to give a practical fulfilment to the promise of the Reform Act. Was it the fault of ministers that they did not succeed? To this question all candid minds will return the same answer. Well then, what better criterion can we have of the character of public men, than the class of principles which they advocate, and the honest exertions which they make to carry those principles into effect? That they have been discomfited by an over-ruling majority in the Upper House is no ground for reproach. If we disavow and reprobate our real friends, because their efforts are for a time unsuccessful, we shall soon give our enemies full possession of the field. To estimate fairly the worth of those who would serve us, we must take into account the resistance

they have to contend against. If they obtain for us—not all that we want—but all that for the present is attainable, they have done their best. If, having so done, we reject their exertions, as of little account, we may depend upon it that our best well-wishers will soon tire in our service.

The great question we have to ask ourselves, with reference to the character and conduct of Ministers is this—Have they disappointed the fair expectations of the people? Have they, in the measures they have brought forward, justified the confidence reposed in them, or have they abused their power and fled from their trust? The reply to these questions is to be found in the ground of dissatisfaction alleged by the more sanguine of the Radical party. It is objected to them, that they have permitted the most important even of the bills which they did eventually pass, to be in part shorn of their strength, by adopting alterations that materially impaired their good effect. But does not the very objection admit that they were originally meant to be more effective than the aristocratic branch of the Legislature would permit them to be? Does it not admit that the government has been faithful to its trust; and that, if the Tory peers have looked exclusively to their own interest, Ministers have regarded the interests of the people? If they have not been supported by majorities strong enough to cope with the power, and influence, and autho-

ity of the Upper House, is the fault with them? You complain that they have yielded to the tyrant, but have you given them the means of destroying the tyranny? Before we denounce the government as guilty of shrinking from its duty, let us take our own conduct to task, and inquire, whether, looking to the votes of our elected representatives, we are not ourselves accessories before the fact.

The present Ministers stand in a position in which no ministry was ever before placed. Their support is derived from two parties, upon neither of which can they have any sure and permanent reliance. Both props are liable suddenly to slip from under them: The one party consisting of wary, diffident, calculating Reformers; the other, of Reformers of a different class: intrepid, enterprising, and fearless of consequences. The former are perpetually watching them, lest they should proceed too rapidly; the other, keeping the spur always in their flank. The moderate party are for looking before and behind, and pruning away the off-shoots of corruption one by one. The Radicals are for getting rid of abuses, root and branch, and making, once for all, an effectual clearance. The ministry have to make head against their Tory adversaries, and, at the same time, to keep in favour with both these parties. If the measure proposed is bold and decisive, the timid begin to waver, and to warn

them against a precipitate decision. The consequence is, that every step they take, they must avoid giving cause of offence on the ground of the measures being too strong, or too comprehensive, or entered upon with too little deliberation, or some other circumstance at which their circumspection takes alarm. On the other hand, if the measure is not bold and decisive; or if they stop to discuss consequences and calculate probabilities; their radical adherents insist that there is a long arrear of tribute to collect—that they must not be slow or scrupulous in their demand, but that much must be attempted where any thing is to be gained. The situation of the prime Minister reminds us of that of the Man of Letters, as described by Voltaire :—“ *Il ressemble aux poissons volans ; s’il s’élève un peu, les oiseaux le dévorent ; s’il plonge, les poissons le mangent.*”

It adds greatly to the embarrassment of a ministry thus singularly circumstanced, that the united support of *both* parties is necessary to ensure them a majority. One object they have in common, the accommodating the system of government to the advanced state of society. But the same desirable end may be pursued by very different means. The rich capitalist proposes one mode; the speculative philosopher, another; the course that presents itself to the statesman may differ from both. How in such

a case is the latter to act? He has manifestly no choice. He must do the best with the materials he has to work with; if he so applies them as to produce ~~all~~ the good of which they are capable, he deserves well of his country. Such men at the best of times are rare; we mistake, in fancying that we can afford to treat their services lightly.

Taking the constituent body to represent the country, the chance is, that this mixture of moderate and ultra opinions pervades the great mass of the community. Both parties are agreed as to the necessity of good government. Both are indignant, that the Tories should scoff at their privileges and trample upon their rights; but they do not both agree upon the best means of preserving the one, or asserting the other. All this is no light hindrance to those whose office it is to carry on the work of Reformation.

Ministers then, it is obvious, in every measure of importance which they bring forward, must be more or less acted upon by all these influences. Whoever has followed those measures with an attentive eye, must have perceived how strongly they were controlled, and how much was necessarily sacrificed to preserve that effective support and assistance, essential to the carrying on, the Government. Time was, no doubt, when a party in power acted on all great occasions with promptitude and vigour. It is not difficult to contrast

the tardy and deliberative progress of the present ministry, with the promptitude and decision exhibited by their predecessors in the days that are past. But to what cause is this difference to be traced? To this—that in those days, and up to the passing of the Reform Bill, the King, the Lords and the Commons, acted with one impulse. They were virtually one and indivisible. How so? Because about half a dozen leading members of the aristocracy, by means of their enormous borough influence, coerced, and in effect ruled, both the King and the Commons. The King had nominally the right to choose his own ministers, but he had not the power to retain them when chosen. They must take the direction of the *Lords of Parliament*, or be contented to retire from office. They alone, by means of their nominees in the Lower House, could give a majority, or withhold it, and the Minister had no choice but to drive in the track they had marked out, or to throw up the reins.

The Government, controlled by this predominant influence, carried all its measures, as well it might, peremptorily, and with expedition. But having got rid of this aristocratic impetus, do we wish it restored? We have broken the spirit of this patrician despotism—do we wish it revived? If we do not, why call for the inflexibility and decision that belongs to an absolute government, from a government that has the wishes of

the people to consult, and the conflicting opinions of its own adherents to reconcile? Within the few short years that have elapsed since the passing of the Reform Bill, the people have assumed a station, of which twelve months previously, they could scarcely have conceived a hope. The public virtue of the men at present in power is closely connected with this attainment, and, hitherto, our gratitude has certainly not repaid them beyond their claims.

If the position in which the Government is placed, as regards their own adherents, is embarrassing, infinitely more so is it, as it respects the House of Lords. That portion of the aristocracy, of which LORD LYNTHURST is the leader, act as if they really believed there were no heads but upon *their* shoulders. They appear utterly to disregard the ties which bind the consciences of ordinary men. They have no habits, no feelings, no sentiments in common with the great body of the people. Lord Lyndhurst is the advocate of himself and his own interests. He has no stake in the consequences of those counsels to which the Tory Peers so foolishly, and so fatally, listen. Can these misguided Nobles really imagine that the people will be brought eventually to acquiesce in their irresponsible jurisdiction, if they continue to act—as during the past session they have acted,—as instruments to work out their own will, and no

other? Can they be imbecile enough to suppose that the popular indignation will die away, and leave them in the quiet enjoyment of their triumph? They are ill read indeed, in the history of governments, if they have not remarked that the vices of a party, like the vices of individual men, have their day of retribution; a truth which,—if they go on to outrage the great principles of public duty,—may be forced upon their conviction when it may be too late to profit by it.

We have not to deal with an occasional difference of opinion between the two branches of the Legislature, but with one branch, carrying on an incessant and systematic warfare, against the other. We have not to contend against an occasionally overstrained authority on the part of the Lords; but with their steady, unrelaxing, irreconcilable enmity to the spirit of reform, and to the deliberate will of the people.

The State exhibits the singular spectacle of the two Houses acting on directly opposite systems; the one, having for its object to extend the principles of Reform to all those institutions which essentially and visibly require it,—the other, applying its dictatorial majority, to frustrate that object, and endeavouring to regain their lost power by a bold and direct—instead of an influential and indirect—opposition to the interests of the people. That this state of things cannot long continue, is evident. Either the reformed House

of Commons must throw up the public cause, and abandon the principle which gives the ultimate power of controul to the people; or the Lords must withdraw their opposition, and confine themselves to the exercise of their valid and constitutional authority.

But we hear it asked, how is this obstinacy on the part of their Lordships to be overcome? By what process, known to the Constitution, can they be brought to obey the popular voice, and yield themselves to the national will? The answer is, that there are certain questions—and these are among them—which admit of no definite solution. They are not within the range of regular discussion. The resistance we complain of, may linger on as long as public forbearance can be made to last—when *that* is exhausted, the remedy will not be far to seek.

The principle of *hereditary* legislation is already in bad odour. It is borne with, and that is all. All the inferences of reasoning are against it. If the assailant aristocracy persist in their course, the chances are in favour of their fall. Invulnerable as they suppose themselves to be, the arrow may be in their heel before they are aware.

Did ever the titled few strip to combat with the million, and come off conquerors? Can this class, “rich in ribbonry and stars,” call to remembrance the tremendous convulsions of the

last half century, and not profit by the awful warning they convey? But for the example before us, we should say it was not possible. The Conservative Lords would have Freedom perish, but would give to Corruption eternal life. The attempt is hopeless.

It is in the nature of all great evils to work out their own remedy: sometimes by an overwhelming movement, but oftener by unexpected, and apparently feeble, instruments. Look at the descendants of the fallen noblesse of France. Look at her priesthood, once "towering in their pride of place," and then ask, whence came "the mousing owl" by which, in the fulness of their fancied security, they were "hawked at and killed?"

One of the most important lessons which the revolution of France, and of America before it, have read to the aristocracy of wealth and title, is this—that the plebeian mould is "the mould that throws out heroes." That although rich and decorative ornaments may, here and there, be made of the finer tempered clay, it is in the common earth that the best seed is most plentifully sown, and ripens the hardest and best productions.

A high-spirited Peer may resolve to stand by his order; but the resolve in the moment of danger, is worth nothing. Let the Lords discharge faithfully the duties which belong to their

high and honorable station ; let them lend their strength to the cause of *the people*, and the people will stand by their order. Let it have its root in *their affections*, and it is in no danger. If, disdaining this course, they determine to be no other than "*les classes à privilège*," their tenure is not worth two years purchase. This subject is pregnant with reflections of the deepest interest. We shall give our thoughts upon it freely, and without reserve ; but it will be first necessary to touch on certain topics, which, in their order, should precede the discussion of it.

If the aristocracy have not profited by the teachings of the past, the people have. Never were the elementary lessons of liberty more extensively studied, or more thoroughly understood. The seed is in the ground, and the soil is fitted to it. Sanguinary struggles—in this kingdom at least,—are at an end. The people have discovered moral weapons of a finer temper, and more formidable edge, than any to be found in the armoury of insurrection. The working classes have profited by experience. They have found out that it is the union of strength, and the co-operative energy, of that intelligence which belongs to the mass, that alone ensures them an audience with those in authority. Add to this the reasonableness and moral justice of their claims, and their suit is irresistible.

A corrupt government is never alarmed by an

attempt to win reform at the sword's point. On the contrary, it is well pleased to have a pretext for meeting the patriot leaders with an armed force. It is a free press, aiding the progress of peaceful improvement, that is formidable. It is when the steady and strong-minded few think for the unreflective and headlong many, who—yielding to *their* guidance—speak with one voice, and act with one will—this it is which astounds them.

O'CONNELL furnishes a striking example of what is here meant. There are a million of his oppressed countrymen that would rush to arms at the stamp of his foot—who frown, or smile, as he frowns or smiles. In their most wrathful mood, a word from him can calm the fierce remembrance of their wrongs, and make them tractable and tranquil. Whence comes this mighty influence? It comes from their adoration of his talents, and their confidence in his fidelity to their cause. They feel that the trust of their country's welfare is safe in his hands. Thus through him, *mind*—if we may so express it—becomes the representative of *matter*. And thus will he obtain, ultimately, without civil strife, and without bloodshed, all his legitimate claims on behalf of that devoted country, the conquest of which, has been succeeded by centuries of reckless plunder, and of frightful oppression.

The name of O'Connell brings us to the subject of Ireland.

The recommendation from the throne at the opening of the session, that the Irish Municipal Corporations should be put upon the same footing with those of England and Scotland, excited a strong sensation throughout the whole Tory camp. They felt how severely their influence had been shaken by the English Corporation Act, and that to extend the same principle to the Corporations of the sister kingdom, would be putting the axe to the root. They foresaw that corruption would have no sphere for the exercise of its functions, if Reform was to be proceeded in at this rate. They accordingly fenced their ears against all reason and argument in favour of the Bill, from the first hour of its discussion to the last. It was contended by SIR ROBERT PEEL, that the regulations applicable to the Corporations of England were inapplicable on the other side the channel: he affected not to comprehend the principle which ministers meant to recognise. The CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER, to remove all misconception, stated it in language too explicit to be mistaken:—

“ When we speak of the principle of the English Bill, we mean *the active principle of popular control*; the principle, that those who administer the functions of the Municipal Community shall be responsible to those who elect them for that purpose*.” This is the manly

* *Mirror of Parliament*, April 9, p. 619.

tone of one who, pursuing his object with sincerity, takes care to be clearly understood. Equally straight-forward were the words of LORD MORPETH —“ We ask you to entrust the management of the
 “ local concerns in towns, not to irresponsible,
 “ self-elected, exclusive bodies, as heretofore, but
 “ to bodies responsible to those—open to those,
 “ —chosen by those—who are most interested
 “ in their good conduct, and who must profit or
 “ suffer by their conduct*.” Can we put our finger on any page of our parliamentary history which records language such as this from the mouth of a minister of the crown ?

When the Attorney-General for Ireland, in a most animated and impressive speech, moved the second reading of the Bill, Sir Robert Peel announced his intention to move an instruction to the Committee, the effect of which would be to substitute for the provisions of the Bill, as they at present stood, a general enactment, EXTINGUISHING THE IRISH MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ALTOGETHER†. This extraordinary announcement revealed all that was to follow ! The Irish Corporators must be the sheep of his pasture, or they must go to the slaughter-house. From that moment, it was manifest that all the power, and

* *Mirror of Parliament*, March 7, p. 504.

† Their abolition was moved on the 7th of March, by Lord Francis Egerton, and lost by a minority of 64.

influence, and intrigue of the Conservative party were to be put in action to annihilate the Bill.

The comment which this extraordinary conduct of the Tory party extorted from Lord John Russell, was forcible and pointed. "In former times, the doctrine maintained by those who now sit on the other side of the House was, that it was incumbent to Reform, not to destroy; to repair, not to pull down; and that every endeavour should be studiously made to bring back our Institutions to their original form. Those are doctrines which I myself entertain. Wonderful, to say however, I now find that the opinions which prevail in the reform of Parliament, in the reform of the Church of England, in the reform of the Municipal Corporations of England and Scotland, are opposed by those who style themselves 'Conservatives*.'"

Lost as the party may be to shame, they must have smarted under this home truth. It conveys a true notion of their character. They are most tenacious of an instrument when it is useful for their own purpose, but trample upon it when it is made to favour the purpose of others.

A reverence for Old institutions has ever been inculcated by the Tories, as the great principle to which all change was to be subservient. They

* *Mirror of Parliament*, March 8, p. 546.

affected to tremble at the slightest departure from it. The ground upon which they resisted all Reform was, their fear for the safety of every thing that was dear to us as a people ~~if we laid~~ our hands rudely on establishments which had existed in the days of our fathers, and in the old time before them—" You seek to destroy, under " the pretence of amending," was the accusation always on their lips. No sooner was a defect in the law or usages of the country sought to be corrected, than the crimes of the French Revolution were conjured up, to deter us from the hazard of innovation. " Just so at the beginning of " the French Revolution," said Mr. CANNING, in the speech to ~~the~~ Liverpool Constituents, when a wish for Reform had begun to spread itself—" Just so at the beginning of the French Revolution: the " first work of the Reformers was to loosen every " established political relation, every legal holding " of man to man—TO DESTROY EVERY CORPORA- " TION—to dissolve every subsisting class of " society—and to reduce the nation into indivi- " duals, in order, afterwards, to congregate them " into mobs." The same people that *now* would whistle at all this, *then* stood aghast! It is, nevertheless, after this pattern that the Tories still continue to work." So long as the system of borough magistracy in Ireland brought in a harvest of abuses—so long as they fattened the corruptionists, and fed the influence of the ruling

power, all was, as it should be, and they were ranked among the institutions which time had made sacred; and "to destroy Corporations," was ranked among the horrors of revolutionary excess. But no sooner are they to be purified from the stain of their vices; no sooner are they to be made subservient to the interests of the people, and protective of their rights, than the CONSERVATIVES vote for destroying them, root and branch!

Look at the scheme of power they were secretly contriving. The Conservative Peers proposed that the Municipal Corporations in Ireland should be abolished, and their corporate funds vested in commissioners appointed by the Crown. Looking forward to their return to power, these funds would thus have been circuitously under their management. In the interval, through their influence with the Court, Tory trustees would have been appointed. Thus, in either event—in power or out—these funds would be in the hands of their legitimate offspring, and be effectually under their parental patronage and control!

This sample of *conservative* principles is a key to their whole history. There is nothing honest or trustworthy about them.

It may be worth while, by the way, for the Conservative Lords to look well to the principle which they so strongly advocate, of annihilating

the Irish Corporation, as *incapable of amendment*, and examine how far it may be made applicable to the extinction of their own body. The arguments brought forward for the destruction of ancient institutions of one class, may be used against another. Should the Radicals be hereafter brought to favour such sweeping correctives, and, resorting to those arguments, should prove—as they may easily do—that there are no monuments of the English Constitution older than Municipal Corporations, it would require more logic than their Lordships are masters of, to get rid of the inferences that follow.

There are certain subjects upon which common sense brings all minds to the same conclusion. The report of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the Municipal Corporations of Ireland, detailed such a system of corruption, as nothing but its actual existence could have made credible. Not only are the Catholics deprived of their acknowledged political rights, but they are insultingly shut out of every institution through which those rights might be protected. In the city of Dublin, says the Report—“ Since the year
 “ 1793, the freedom of the corporation and guilds
 “ has been by law open to Roman Catholics, yet
 “ there is not known to have been, to the present
 “ time, a single individual of that persuasion
 “ admitted to the Common Council. The
 “ exclusion is not confined to Catholics; the

“ being known or suspected to be friendly to their
 “ claims previously to the Emancipation Act,
 “ was equally effective to disqualify the applicant,
 “ though a Protestant; and the advocacy of what
 “ are called liberal or popular opinions has formed,
 “ and still forms, a strong ground of objection.
 “ In short, the proceedings of the Corporation, as
 “ to the admission of freemen, have been, and
 “ avowedly are, conducted on *the most extreme*
 “ *principles of exclusion, religious and political;*
 “ the freedom is consequently limited to a class
 “ which, though considerable in numbers and
 “ property, exclude a large portion of the
 “ trading and industrious classes of the com-
 “ munity.”

This is the degraded and degrading state, not
 of the corporation of Dublin alone, but of every
 corporation throughout Ireland. “In far the
 “ greater number,” says the Report, “of the close
 “ corporations, the persons composing them are
 “ the mere nominees of the patron or proprietor
 “ of the borough, while in those apparently
 “ more enlarged, they are admitted and asso-
 “ ciated, in support of some particular political
 “ interest, most frequently at variance with the
 “ majority of the resident inhabitancy.”

When the Attorney-General for Ireland unfolded
 these corporate systems of monopoly and oppres-
 sion, and stated, in detail, the fraud and plunder
 that pervaded them, from beginning to end, what

said Sir Robert Peel? Did he deplore this vicious system of misgovernment, and express his readiness to unite in its amendment? No such thing: after listening, unmoved, to the detail, he, with the utmost self-complacency, puts the following question: "What remedy, I ask, does the proposed Bill give for a more pure and proper system than at present exists?" These are his notions of purity and perfection, and this is the man who took office as a reform minister, and entreated that the public would afford him an opportunity of opening the vivifying stream of his liberality, over all the decayed and dry institutions of the state!

The veil of patriotism has been worn so thoroughly threadbare, that the Tories have thrown it into the rag-bag. They now put forth the most barefaced opinions, and leave them to make their own way. The Right Hon. Baronet, formerly so guarded in his show of respect for the people, does not hesitate to speak of their influence, as worth nothing in the way of political regeneration. "Is it to be inferred," he asks—speaking with reference to the patron or proprietor of the borough nominating whom he pleases in the close corporations, the others being kept by the self-elected burgesses in their own hands—"Is it to be inferred, that in towns

* *Mirror of Parliament*, Feb. 29, p. 385.

“ to which the present Bill has supplied new
 “ elements of discord—in towns divided by
 “ party, and convulsed by repeated elections—
 “ the administration of justice will be more
 “ satisfactory, from the *simple reason* that the
 “ parties charged with its dispensation, are
 “ subject to *popular control*?” He presently
 repeats his inquiry, as if to force from his
 auditors a solution of his doubts. “ In what
 “ respect is a system of *popular election*, accom-
 “ panied by the excitement of party feelings,
 “ a security against the perversion of justice?”
 Just as well might he have asked, in what
 respect is the principle of popular *representation*,
 accompanied by party excitement, a security
 for good government? Excitement necessarily
 arises out of whatever is deeply interesting in
 the object sought to be obtained. Would the
 worthy baronet have the people contend for
 the maintenance of their political rights with
 the same indifference which the Tories manifest
 in their violation?

No axiom is more self-evident than that
 institutions are valuable only in proportion
 as they tend to promote the general welfare.
 How comes it that their operation is directly
 the reverse in Ireland? How happens it that,
 instead of advancing the general welfare, they

are constantly and diametrically opposed to it? It is because the voice of the great body of the people of Ireland, has been a voice in the wilderness, for which their rulers cared nothing.

The high Sheriff, whose duty it is to summon juries—on whose decision life and property are suspended—is obliged to declare, in advance, what are his political opinions, and to pledge himself to give certain party-toasts at every public dinner. The municipal magistracy, in every city and town, are the creatures of power and patronage; self-elected, irresponsible, and, consequently, corrupt. Whence has this mischievous, this permanently mischievous, state of things proceeded? The answer is, there is not a single Institution in Ireland based upon *popular principles*. For centuries she has been governed on the maxim of absolute power, and placed in a state of outlawry, with reference to the real benefits and blessings of the British constitution. In both England and Scotland, the municipal magistracy has been made *elective*. Has any evil followed from that excitement which the Tories affect to dread?—Quite the reverse. The whole system was reformed, and popular election was the effervescent principle which clarified, and made it pure. And is there any fear but that it would have the same effect in Ireland?—No. The great fear of the Tory faction is, that it *would* have the same effect. It is the dread

of this, that lies at the bottom of all their resistance. If the elective principle would leave every thing as it is—if the constituency of every town in Ireland would trust the management of their local concerns to the same Protestant corporators—if they would suffer the same abuses of the charity property, and the same misapplication of the corporate funds; in a word, would they but adhere to the system of the hitherto dominant party—let the Catholic population but pledge themselves to *this*, and all the power of self-government they can ask, the Conservatives would grant them without a word.

The real ground of their fear is, that if the principles of the Municipal Act of England and Scotland were extended to the borough magistracy of Ireland, all its salutary accompaniments will go along with it. The family influence of the dominant few would gradually weaken, and waste away—the inhabitants of the different districts would elect only those individuals to the Common Council, on whose liberality and uprightness they could confide—the efficient and impartial administration of justice will be secured—the corporate bodies would be no longer exclusively Protestant—the middling classes, partaking the influence of an enlightened public opinion, would aid in giving it effect; and that effect would be, to control the hitherto overwhelming preponderance of an oppressive and

unprincipled faction. The equal right of Protestants and Catholics would be recognised, and acted upon—the Protestant clergy of Ireland, moreover, would lose their weight, as political agitators; they must be content to exhort their followers to “*trust in God,*” without adding the blasphemous precaution to “*keep their powder dry.*”

From the moment the Union with Ireland was solemnly established, Great Britain became security for the fulfilment of all the obligations which that union implied. She became guarantee to the sister kingdom that her political rights and immunities should be co-extensive and co-equal.

The *United Kingdom* of Great Britain and Ireland is either a form of phrase, and nothing more, or it implies a people associated by the same interests—cemented by the same ties—sharing, in common, the security of the same laws, and the protection of the same government. Without all which a UNION cannot only have no stability, but can have no valid and real existence. It is contended, that if the principles of English corporate reform were extended to Ireland, sectarian bitterness would increase, and all the great towns would be so many schools for political agitation. The reverse is the truth, intestine dissensions would cease, because the causes which chiefly engender them would be at

an end. We talk of sectarian bitterness, what is it, that creates and keeps alive the spleen of the Catholic majority, but the harsh and exclusive spirit in which they are ruled by an ascendant faction? The fear of agitation is a mere pretext for withholding the remedy. The local interests of the Protestant and Catholic population are the same. A PROTESTANT constituency are as desirous to have their local concerns managed honestly, and with economy, as a CATHOLIC one can be. If their town funds are wasted, and its revenue mis-spent, the earnings of *both* must be taxed, to make good the deficiency, and to supply the current expenditure. Both, therefore, must be alike anxious to have a vote in the choice of their official magistrates, and a voice in the administration of their own affairs. The same local arrangement that protects the property of the one, secures that of the other. Be a man's religious faith what it may, he is not the less interested in having the local authorities responsible and well appointed. A believer in transubstantiation is no more disposed to be plundered by a profligate town-council, than he has in whose creed that doctrine has no place. From whence then is *its agitation* to be apprehended? Great concern is expressed for the safety of the Protestant interest—the landed interest—the interests of the Church: let those in

power attend well to the interests of *the people*, and all the rest may sail without convoy.

Never could the English Municipal Reform Bill have passed the Lords, but that the Conservative majority conceived they had so mutilated it that it would never pass the Commons. Had they not so imagined, they would have made greater alterations; but their wish was to keep in as many of the provisions as would serve to keep them in credit with the public, while they introduced such *amendments* as they thought would secure its rejection. Happily they were foiled by the tact and foresight of Lord John Russell, and to their extreme disappointment the bill became a law.

One of the brightest links in the chain of improvement, was the English Municipal Reform Act. To appreciate it truly, we must look to what county meetings formerly were — called together in a season of discontent, and consisting, in the far greater part, of a turbulent multitude, the dupes of unprincipled and reckless leaders, who sought to profit by the disaffection they excited. This Bill supplied a centre round which men of all opinions might rally. The sentiments and wishes of the most substantial inhabitants have a legitimate channel of communication through a town council chosen by themselves. The most influential householders, will be

those whose integrity and good sense are most known. When public opinion is thus collected, and thus conveyed, look at the safety, as well as the certainty of its operation! It is the influence of this power on the measures of those in authority, that the Tory party are striving against. They know that it is a municipal system such as this, that furnishes the best and readiest materials of a popular government; and this it is, that makes them resist so strenuously the extension of it to Ireland. A body, publicly chosen, could not divert the trust funds and charity property to election and party purposes—the germ of corruption could not be kept alive*.

* In the *London and Westminster Review* for April last, the reader will find an article admirably drawn up, on the Municipal Reform called for by the local government of the metropolis. The following official returns are contrasted by the writer, with a most impressive effect.

Official Returns, presented by Mr. Williams, of Sums annually paid under various pretences, to TWELVE officers of the London Corporation.

Lord Mayor	£.7904 1s. 3d., and including his household, with other expenses of the Mayor.	£.
alty	- - - - -	25,034
Recorder	- - - - -	3,161
Common Serjeant	- - - - -	1,048
Chamberlain	- - - - -	5,467
Town Clerk	- - - - -	3,586
Carried forward	- - - - -	£.29,091

But, is it likely, that the inveteracy of the Tory members against Irish Municipal Reform will give way, and their resistance come to an end? Yes,

Brought forward	- - - - -	£.29,891
Comptroller	- - - - -	3,599
Remembrancer	- - - - - 1845l.	} 2,506
Ditto, as Deputy Register of the Lord Mayor's Court	- - - - - 661l.	
Solicitor	- - - - -	3,000
Clerk of the Works	- - - - -	2,058
Master and Assistant	- - - - -	2,914
Comptroller of Bridge House	- - - - -	1,662
		<u>£.54,830</u>

Return of the Salaries of the CABINET MINISTERS, as fixed by a Committee of the House of Commons in 1830.

Prime Minister, or First Lord of the Treasury	-	£. 5,000
Chancellor of the Exchequer	- - - - -	5,000
Secretary of State for the Home Department	- -	5,000
Ditto for the Colonies	- - - - -	5,000
Ditto for Foreign Affairs	- - - - -	5,000
President of the Council	- - - - -	2,000
President of the Board of Control	- - - - -	3,000
Secretary at War	- - - - -	2,480
First Lord of the Admiralty	- - - - -	4,500
Lord Privy Seal, and First Commissioner of Woods and Forests	- - - - -	4,000
President of the Board of Trade	- - - - -	2,000
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster	- - - - -	2,000
		<u>£.45,480</u>

the Conservative chiefs *will* give way—their hostility *will* subside—their patriotism, which has been so long in abeyance, *will* revive—they *will* assist to pass the Bill, and all will be well. What, we shall be asked, will cause this happy revolution of sentiment, and when will the time arrive? SIR ROBERT PEEL will himself expound the secret. Attend to the declaration which dropped from him last session, while contending for the abolition of the Irish Corporations. These are his words:—“ I am very far from
 “ regretting the course which I have taken in
 “ assisting to effect the removal of Catholic dis-
 “ abilities. . . Notwithstanding the experience I
 “ have since acquired, and the disappointment I
 “ have since sustained, yet I am still of opinion
 “ that in 1829, *the time had arrived*, when it was
 “ no longer SAFE to withhold the claims of His
 “ Majesty’s Catholic subjects in Ireland*.”—No doubt it had; and when the men of Ireland are

Annual Cost of twelve City Officers, professedly employed in managing the local interests of	£.
122,000 persons - - - - -	54,830
Annual Cost of the twelve principal Officers of State, employed in governing the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland - - - - -	45,480
Difference in favour of the dignity of the City	<u>£9,650</u>

* *Mirror of Parliament*, March 8, p. 551.

again roused, by oppression and insult, to assume an attitude too formidable to be withstood—when they are again driven to retaliate, in a manner that would bring the best interests of the United Kingdom into immediate jeopardy—when the most frightful consequences are to be again feared, from persisting to treat them as “aliens in blood, and language, and religion,” then will Municipal Reform be conceded to Ireland, as to England and Scotland, and in reply to the taunt of apostacy, and change of principle, the plea will be—“*The time had arrived when it was NO LONGER SAFE to withhold the MUNICIPAL claims of His Majesty’s Catholic subjects in Ireland.*”—The Conservatives never expostulate so amicably as on the eve of an explosion.

✓ In like manner will the Conservative peers go on disregarding the remonstrances of the Commons, and defying the resentment of the people. But the time will arrive, when they will find that their entrenchments are giving way;—that they are unable to bear up against the excitement they have provoked, and that *it is no longer safe to conflict with the representatives of a free people.* Then—and not till then—their policy of *amendments* will be abandoned, and the march of reform, *sub auspice Teucro*, will be suffered to take its course.

Political privileges are matter of arrangement; they may be, and for the most part are, regu-

lated on principles of public policy, and measured out as expediency and the wisdom of government may dictate. But it is otherwise with *social rights*. These are not conferred on Irishmen by the Union; they are not created by any Constitutional Charter. Equal laws, equal protection, equal justice, equal claims to the blessings of civil freedom—all these have nothing to do with sects or classes, religious or political; they have nothing to do with Catholics or Protestants, Churchmen or Dissenters. *They belong to man as man*, and no government, however constituted, has any valid power to withhold them.

On what ground, then, does the Anglican Church descend into the arena to fight the battle of tithes with the Catholic Christians of Ireland? The complaint of the people of Ireland is, not that this or that engagement is broken, but that the laws of equal justice are violated, and the scanty fruits of their hard labour taken from them at the point of the bayonet, to swell the enormous revenues of a church from which they receive no benefit, and derive no protection.

It was the object of the **IRISH CHURCH BILL** to apply the best relief that, for the present, and under all circumstances, could be applied to these well-justified complaints. Its most strenuously-contested principle—the *surplus appropriation*—was, of all others, the most simple and the most just. **LORD MORPETH**, the framer of the bill,

avowed at the outset that there was no intention on the part of the government to depart from that principle.—“ I will state,” says the noble secretary for Ireland, “ frankly and without disguise, “ the motives and principles on which we are “ prepared to proceed. His Majesty’s govern- “ ment feel that they cannot abandon the decla- “ ration of principles with which they entered on “ office—they feel that they cannot shake off “ the engagements under which they conceive “ themselves to stand, of doing justice to the Irish “ people—and the tenor of that virtual, and to “ them I contend most honourable contract, I “ conceive to be, that if in the future disposition “ of the revenues of the Irish Church any portion “ of them should, in their view, be superfluous “ for the legitimate and becoming uses of the “ members of the community, it shall, *after the “ satisfaction of all existing interests*, be applied “ to the moral and religious instruction of the “ whole of the Irish people*.”—No sooner had this declaration gone forth, than the *tocsin* was again sounded.

Against this principle of appropriation, the old outcry of *the Church is in danger*, was renewed loudly and lustily. In the language of our faith, the church is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: but in the belief of the bishops, it rests on the richness and security

* *Mirror of Parliament*, April 1836, p. 1154.

of its resources. Diminish these, however slightly, and you dig away the foundation. Curtail the sinecures—apportion the incomes, however ample, to the duties—apply the surplus, however small, to the moral education of the poor, and you are charged with robbing the altar. But absentee ministers, with incomes of 800*l.*, 900*l.*, and 1000*l.*, a-year, who pay 75*l.* annually to a curate to take the souls of their parishioners into his holy keeping, *this* is not robbing the altar! *this* brings the church into no peril! In the name of Heaven, how much longer is all this illusion to be played off before the world's eye? Both the English and Irish public are getting awfully weary of it.

The dignified ecclesiastics affirm that they must make a stand at the threshold! They affect to be alarmed at the introduction of the wedge, and insist that the intention is, eventually, to split the key-stone. This pretended fear has always been put forth at the beginning of every reformation, whether in church or state. Concede, say they, the first claim, and the second will be extorted. Is it a colourable pretext for refusing a just demand, that the next may be an illegal one? If we consent to pay what we owe, we shall next be asked to pay what we do *not* owe. Can any reasoning be more preposterous? And yet it is on this ground that the heads of the Protestant faith make their stand.

MR. SERJEANT WILDE, in a speech delivered

by him in the preceding session, has placed the futility as well as the fallacy of this style of reasoning in the strongest light. "It has been said that this step must be opposed; because it is the first of a series. But who," asks the learned Serjeant, "is to decide upon what step the next shall be—the Catholics of Ireland? No, but the British Parliament. Will the Catholics acquire any addition of physical force by the success of this resolution—will they acquire any accession of moral force? The success of the next proposition they may make (though indeed it is not they who make the present one), must depend upon the nature of that proposition. If it be one which they may in justice ask, and which we as a Christian Legislature ought to grant, I trust the education they will receive will indeed give them that moral force successfully to press their claims upon this House. If they ask what is not consistent with the safety of the Protestant Church, and of the country; I hope the noble Lord, and the Right Hon. Baronet opposite, or their children, will be here to join in opposing it. Surely the next Parliament may be supposed to have discretion sufficient to judge of the propriety of any proposition submitted to them. What practical statesman has ever said, 'before I grant you this request, I must know what will be your next demand.' Will acting

“ unjustly, unwisely, and irreligiously by this
 “ Motion, enable us the better to resist the next,
 “ if it be a proper one? Let us recollect what
 “ was said when the Catholic Emancipation and
 “ Reform were brought forward. These measures
 “ were to have led to the most extravagant de-
 “ mands—demands which we were to have found
 “ it wholly incompatible to refuse, yet how com-
 “ pletely have those predictions failed of being
 “ realised *!”—No reasoning can be more forcibly
 “ conclusive than this. It is impossible to listen to
 “ the opposite arguments, without perceiving that
 “ the Church and Common Sense are at daggers
 “ drawn.

The surgical maxim embodies the principle that should govern all Reform. Go to the quick, but do not wantonly make any wound larger than is necessary. That surgeon is a *radical reformer*, who removes whatever, if suffered to remain, would fester in the system, and bring back the disease. That statesman is a *radical reformer*, who would extirpate abuses without suffering the roots to remain buried in the ground, to shoot up at intervals, till they again cover the surface with their entangled growth. The church rulers revolt at this. Their exhortation to the patient

* “ Speech of Mr. Serjeant Wilde, M.P., on the Motion for appropriating a portion of the revenues of the Irish Church to purposes of general education.—HOOPER, Pall-mall, 1835.”

is—"Don't be alarmed by the prospect of mortification; while you suffer, you are safe. If you permit the surgeon to amputate the *diseased* limb, his next operation will be, to *cut off the sound one!*"

This is the real essence of that *caution* in which the Conservatives pride themselves; and which makes them thank God, from the hollow of their hearts, that they are not as other men are,—*Radicals and Destructives!*

We come next to the IRISH TITHE SYSTEM!! what frightful recollections does that single sentence bring with it! What a page will that be in the ecclesiastical history of Ireland, which shall record the proceedings of that society, calling itself the "LAY ASSOCIATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROTECTING THE PROPERTY OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH." *Six hundred and nineteen* bills filed for the recovery of tithes within the short space of six months, most of the cases under 10*l.* some of them as low as 2*s.* 9*d.**!!

"This Lay Association," says Mr. Sheil, to

* In the case of the *Reverend Gilbert Holmes v. Hodges*, the law agent of this Lay Association wrote a letter on the 4th of January to the defendant, calling upon him to pay his tithes, amounting to 22*l.* This letter was put into the post office on the 5th; the very next day, he called to pay the amount demanded; but the Lay Association insisted on his paying, in *addition*, the sum of 19*l.* 9*s.* 6*d.*, being *the amount of Costs!* though the demand was only made on the 6th,

whose affecting eloquence the wrongs of his countrymen give such ample scope—"This Lay Association, with Lord Rodeſſ and the other trustees I have mentioned at its head, has nothing to do but to file a bill for a few shillings in any part of the country, obtain a commission of rebellion, and invest commissioners of their own choosing, with power over the whole police force of the country. I know not whether the name of Borrisokane has struck upon the ear of the members of this House, with that melancholy effect that it strikes upon the hearts of a number of those around me, who remember that it is the spot where a violent collision having taken place between the people of the country and the soldiery; a number of the former were slain. I remember that the slain were buried in the dead of the night, with every funeral solemnity that could be adopted*."

While men holding the sacred station of teachers of righteousness, exemplify, in their own practice, all the selfishness and all the worldliness of spirit, that can taint the worst

and the defendant tendered to pay on the 7th! The particulars of this case and the case still more important, of *Knox v. Gower*, will be found in Mr. Sheil's Speech, on the 4th of February last.—See *Mirror of Parliament*, No. IV., p. 209, session 1836.

* *Mirror of Parliament*, No. IV., page 211.

souls of which they have the cure, how are the Irish people to be trained to habits of morality and respect for the law?—What communion hath the temple of God with tithe proprietors—tithe proctors—exchequer process, and writs of rebellion? What a contrast with the early and faithful teachers of the christian faith! “*When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye any thing?*” and they said, NOTHING*.” What a commentary on this simple text, is the scene of tithe slaughter at Rathcormac and Newton-Barry!!

THE CHURCH IS IN DANGER!! No doubt it is, and in very imminent danger. And this it is that astonishes all reasonable and reflective men, that, in the face of this danger, and, as it were, in contempt of it, the Irish Tithe Bill, last session, was thrown out in the House of Lords! Lord Lyndhurst is proud of his triumph. Never had his mischievous vanity less cause for boasting. He may succeed in changing that House from a deliberative assembly into an organ of counter-reform—he may parade it before the House of Commons and the country, as the depository of an irresponsible power, defying the one, and caring nothing for the other—but in what will his triumph terminate? In hurrying on that crisis of popular indignation, which will fall upon that power when

* Luke xxii. 35.

once the conviction has gone forth, that it cannot exist with safety to the freedom, of the people and the legitimate authority of the State.

• Is the Protestant establishment in Ireland to be upheld by making a stand against *the appropriation clause*? The sympathies of the majority, both in England and Scotland, are with the Irish Catholic, not with his creed—for with that they have nothing to do—but with his oppression as a fellow-subject, in whose fate they have a deep interest.

Why did not Lord Lyndhurst—taking, as he does, so prominent a lead in the Irish Church question in the Upper House—why did he not meet the subject, as it behoved him to do, honestly and openly? Alarmed, or pretending to be alarmed, for the safety of the church, it was his duty, as a statesman, to inquire whether such apprehension is well justified? If it is, what is the nature of the danger—from what cause does it proceed—and what is the course to be pursued for its removal? These are the vital questions. To inveigh against the Appropriation Clause, as an alienation of church property, is quite beside the subject. If *that* was the point under discussion, it would be impossible to reason it thoroughly, without arriving at this conclusion—that the most indefensible *alienation* of church property, is the portion withheld from the working clergy—and that, consequently,

the strongest and worst example, in this way, emanates from the heads of the church themselves!—His lordship would do well to whisper this truth in their ear. If they are timely wise, they will profit by it.

It is in the great body of the parochial clergy, that the people every where take an interest. No nation can produce a class of men more worthy of their high calling than our own; and in no nation are their labours so poorly remunerated. Compare their pittance of an income, with the mass of public wealth engrossed by the several orders of the establishment in Ireland, from the archbishops and bishops, down to the minor canons and vicars choral! The Irish bishops, besides their enormous salaries, have an immense annual rental in landed estates, and possess a patronage greater in value than that of all the English bishops and the chancellor united!

It were well, when this subject comes on for discussion, in the next session of parliament, if LORD, LYNTHURST would explain, for our edification, on what principle of spiritual justice, so large a portion of the public wealth is ALIENATED from the NATION. Let him calculate the gross amount of the Irish ecclesiastical revenues, and then place beside it the paltry fifty thousand pounds, destined to the purposes of moral education—let him show in what proportions, and

between whom, that sum total is distributed—let him compute the still greater amount which the territorial estates of the Bishops would produce, if out of lease; and, if his eloquence shall require any additional inspiration, let him call to mind the more than five hundred rich livings, in the gift of *four* patrons only, the Archbishop of Dublin, the Bishop of Ferns, the Bishop of Cloyne, and the Bishop of Kildare. Having done this, let him boast his victory over Ministers on the *appropriation principle*, and let the Irish soil be again soaked with blood in battles with the peasantry for the tithe of their potatoes.

It is in vain that the Tory saints clamour about the prospective overthrow of the establishment, and the downfall of Christ's kingdom. The people are not now frightened at their shadows, as formerly. "*Aujourd'hui*," as was well said by a French political writer, "*le monde raisonne, chacun sait compter ses doigts*." It is not the fault of the people, if the Church totters to its fall: the warning is not to *them*, nor are its consequences; nor, while things remain as *they* are, will they stretch forth their arm to save it. They will look calmly on, and leave the AGNEWS and the PERCIVALS to say prayers, and sing litanies, for the safety of the hierarchy.

No religious order—it is a truth confirmed by all human experience, and by the ecclesiastical history of all ages—no religious order ever

excited the popular odium, that did not deserve it. When the Dignitaries of the establishment exclaim that *the Church is in danger*, they pass sentence of condemnation on themselves. The people well know that it is not for the church, but for its splendid *revenues*, that all the fear is; it is from *them* they would keep off the unhallowed hand. While the happiness of seven millions of people are slighted and set at nought, *these* are guarded with a watchfulness that never winks.

In the same spirit has every reform measure of the session been dealt with by the Tories. The inquiry has not been, whether they improved the condition, and advanced the prosperity, of the United Kingdom, but whether they weakened the Conservative interests, and worked unfavourably for the party. If those interests were not materially interfered with, the bill was allowed to pass; if they were in any manner endangered, it was tossed out, as a lesson to the people not to set their plebeian rights in opposition to lordly privileges and hereditary claims.

We hear it made a ground of objection to Ministers, that the appropriation of such a sum as 50,000*l.* for educational purposes was not worth contending for, at the risk of losing a bill of so much importance to Ireland. If it were a question of pounds, shillings, and pence, the objection would have some weight; but it is far

otherwise. It is a question involving a great and important *principle*, and to which Ministers had distinctly and firmly pledged themselves. It is the practical consequences which flow from this principle, that the Tory Lords, lay and spiritual, resist with such desperate obstinacy. The question is national. Is the property and possessions of the Church a sacred patrimony, over which the State has no dominion, and of which it can, under no circumstances, lawfully avail itself? or, has Parliament a rightful power to regulate its application, and to apply any portion, which they may deem excessive, to the moral exigencies of the country? The House of Commons say they *have*; the Bishops say they *have not*—and upon this, issued is joined.

If Ministers abandon the principle, they give up the cause, as far as *their* support of it goes. The claim of the nation is disannulled—the pretensions of the church to hold by *divine right*, is admitted—and the Tory peers are triumphant.

The 50,000*l.* surplus, is the pepper-corn rent. It is the acknowledgment that, the fee is in the state, not in the priesthood. This admission is no slight matter, when the fact is known—which is true, and capable of proof—that *the annual revenues of the Established Church of England and Ireland exceed the united revenues of the whole Christian world!* It is not, therefore, a question of arithmetic, that Ministers have to deal with, but

a great question of public policy, which they are bound, by compact and by moral duty, not to desert.

As to the application of any surplus, be its amount what it may, towards the instruction of the Irish multitude, there is nothing that should make us very sanguine as to the result. Their present condition of rags and wretchedness must first be improved, or we are turning forth the plough on a barren sand. The Irish peasantry, engaged in a perpetual struggle to keep poverty at arm's length, have little concern for any thing beyond giving bread to their children, and getting it for themselves. Hunger is a pressing applicant, and must be satisfied, before the Schoolmaster can have any chance of being listened to*.

In any event, the instruction to be given them, must be, as LORD JOHN RUSSELL emphatically expressed 'it, *moral* instruction! It must be so, simply and exclusively. *Doctrinal* instruction may make a bitter sectarian, or a foolish enthusiast, but it never yet made a useful citizen, or a practically honest man. It may generate party strife and personal hatred—I am of Paul, and I of Cephas—but its tendency is to paralyze the

* In the third Report of the Commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poor in Ireland, the earnings of an agricultural labourer are stated to average only from 2s. to 2s. 6d. a week, if spread over the year. This is the common rate of living of about two-thirds of the whole population!

heart, and deaden the activity of every Christian feeling. "Benevolence"—it is the beautiful sentiment, if I recollect rightly; of Bishop Hall, "Benevolence is the silver thread that runs through the pearl chain of all the virtues." To cultivate this principle mutually between man and man—to make every one desirous of increasing the sum of happiness within his own sphere—*this* is the great end to which the Gospel was preached; to advance this end is the aim of all moral teaching, and the object of all Christian truth.

Would SIR ANDREW AGNEW, and those of his *caste*, look round upon the world of real life in the spirit of this conviction, infinitely more good would be gained than by any "Bill for the better observance of the Sabbath" that the most zealous among them could frame. It was truly said, by LORD BYRON, that this is the age of cant*. The efforts of SIR Andrew failed in the last session, as in the former. His bill made no way, because, amidst all the cant that prevails, there is a ground-

* "The truth is, that in these days, the grand *primum mobile* of England is *cant*—cant political, cant poetical, cant religious, cant moral; but always *cant* multiplied through all the varieties of life. It is the fashion, and, while it lasts, will be too powerful for those who only exist by taking the tone of the time."—*Letter on the Rev. W. P. Bowles's Strictures on the Life and Writings of Pope.* By the Right Hon. Lord Byron.

work of strong common sense in the great body of the people, which cannot be wrested to the purpose of fanaticism. Petitions without number were got up by the sallow monks of Exeter Hall, but with no effect. The time is gone by for the legislation of maudlin and weak-minded devotees. It is enough—and more than enough—that we have the Bible expounded at tea meetings, at a charge of a shilling a-head, and spiritual trips by Margate and Gravesend steam packets, with the joyful sounds of *election* and *reprobation* filling up the intervals of sea-sickness. All this savours of trade, and the voyage may be gainful. But let them not attempt to enforce piety by Act of Parliament. It is a silly undertaking, and something worse. Let them leave the poor their Sunday bakings—let them leave to the working classes their refreshment and pure air, and permit them to

“ Wander, not unseen,
By hedge-row elms, and hillocks green”—

without being threatened with “JEHOVAH’S
“wrath,” for preferring the “high arch of
“heaven” to the steam of a conventicle.

Let those who lament the repeated loss of the Sabbath Bill, put against it the passing of the Bill, by which the public will be an incalculably greater gainer, “*For registering births, deaths, and marriages, in England,*”—a measure for which Ministers deserve, and have received unqualified praise.

The want of a more correct and comprehensive plan of registration had been long complained of. We had a baptismal registry, and a registry of burials; but none of births or deaths: a system of registration that embodied the latter was wanting, and this Act supplied it. The system is no longer exclusive, but national. The defect which had, previously, precluded the legal establishment of many a disputed title, is removed. In a state of property, in which the claims of persons of all religious persuasions are so frequently intermixed, the introduction of an uniform system, by compelling the registration of births, deaths, and marriages from each, cannot fail to be extensively serviceable to all.

En suite with the above, and equally remedial, is the “*Act for Marriages in England.*” This Act is not more important, with reference to the grievance it removes, than for the enlightened principle which it recognises—that the State has no concern with marriage but as a *civil contract*—that its only duty is to take care that the parties to the contract are legally competent to enter into it, and that the engagement is ratified by such public forms as are necessary to give it notoriety, and to secure its validity. It accordingly provides, that marriages may be solemnized in the presence of the registrar of the district, and of two witnesses, in any building devoted to

religious worship, whether of churchmen or dissenters. The right is reserved to those who may prefer the church ceremony to adopt it, but it is not made compulsory; and any person who shall object to being married in a registered building, may contract marriage at the office of the registrar. At this *latter* permission, the Member for the University of Oxford,—the Member for Cambridge,—and all the members of the high church party, took alarm. “With the single exception of the “period of the great rebellion,” said SIR ROBERT INGLIS, “this is the first time that an attempt “has been made to separate the legal contract “from the religious rite. With respect to marriages, it is the first time that it has been “proposed to render the marriage ceremony a “purely civil contract*.” The answer to this is very simple. This is “*the first time*” since the period of the great rebellion that we have had a Reform Parliament. The present ministry is the first that has been bold enough to combat that exclusive, illiberal, sectarian system of clerical jurisprudence that has so long disgraced the statute-book. We would hint to the University of Oxford, and its High Church representative, that if, before “the period of the great rebellion,” the King’s Government had proceeded in the

enlightened course which Ministers have here pursued, that rebellion would never have happened.

“The main object of the Bill,” said Lord John Russell, “is, to allow all persons, of all religious persuasions, to contract marriage in that way which may be least objectionable to their religious scruples, if any such they may have*.”

The Registry and Marriage Acts have removed many grievances, of which the dissenters of every class had great reason to complain. Under the former deficient and exclusive system, estates were often lost to the legal claimant, when proof of a marriage became essential to the establishment of a title, the ancestors not having been members of the establishment. So in all cases where it was necessary to deduce the pedigree of a distant relative, the want of such a national registry of births, deaths, and marriages, as is now established, rendered it a very difficult, expensive, and, in many cases, an utterly hopeless task. Both Bills were impaired in their progress through the Upper House; but, taken as they are, they are a substantive improvement of the Statute Book.

In no instance during the Session was their Lordships' hostility to Reform more flagrantly manifested than in their defeat of the **BILL FOR THE AMENDMENT OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION**

* *Mirror of Parliament*, June 13, p. 1880.

ACT. In the Conference between the two Houses, the arguments adduced by the managers for the Commons were not answered with even a decent show of plausibility. This Conference so fully reveals the spirit which governs the Conservative Peers, and exhibits the workings of that spirit so clearly, as to become a feature in the Session, and one which merits that our attention should be strongly drawn to it.

It will be remembered, that the Municipal Corporation Bill, as originally introduced, provided against the continuance of that shameless system of abuse, which had been proved, on full evidence, to exist in the administration of the Charity Funds vested in the various local Corporations. Those funds which—the better to conceal their misapplication,—had hitherto been mixed with the funds of the Corporation, were, hereafter, to be kept separate. The council, having themselves been previously elected by the burgesses, were to nominate from the latter not less than fifteen persons to be charitable trustees for such borough; and certain provisions were introduced by which the Charitable Trusts were effectually protected against misappropriation, and could no longer be squandered as before, in election contests—in public feasting—in party jobs—in private speculations—or in any other of the various modes by which the vast aggregate amount of bequests, donations, and endowments, had been

perverted and made away with. When the Bill reached the Upper House, the Tory Lords forthwith set about to *amend* it. Did they, for this purpose, suggest any thing which might facilitate its operation, or offer any additional security against the recurrence of the abuses to be remedied?—No; they deliberately struck out the entire enactment, and all the clauses which gave effect to it; and in lieu thereof, inserted a provision *continuing the Charity Trusts in the old Corporations* until the 1st of August, 1836.

Now, by this *amendment*, it was contrived to keep all the charity estates of the kingdom in the hands of those persons who no longer existed as a corporate body, and who were officially extinct for every purpose but that of prostituting the income of those estates to the purposes of Tory influence, and making them still available to the local politics of the party opposed to all reform.

The members of His Majesty's Government—in common with all the liberal portion of the House of Commons—could not but feel sore at the maimed condition in which their Bill was returned. They felt how valuable a part had been torn away from it. But, at a meeting specially called to deliberate on the course to be pursued, it was prudently resolved not to reject it. Shattered as it was, the seminal principle it involved was worth preserving. It gave the popular power a constitutional organization. This

was a great point gained; and, in the spirit of sound policy, Ministers consented to receive the Bill as returned.

The Conservative Lords had predicted no such concurrence. Had they so done, they would have altered many other enactments, which, looking forward to the loss of the Bill, they left untouched. Having mangled their intended victim, and left it for dead, it was to their utter consternation that, after being hacked, disfigured, and emasculated, as it had been in their *abattoir*, they saw it abroad in the world—living, and likely to live—to their great discomfiture and annoyance.

On the 11th of August a conference was held. LORD JOHN RUSSELL adverted to the Bill of the former session, which had provided for the permanent administration of the Charity Trusts, and stated, that the Commons, communicating as they did with their constituents in various parts of the country, were made daily aware of the serious consequences occasioned by the misapplication of those trusts. He lamented that the Lords had not enabled the Commons to secure the administration of them “from the profligate and base purposes to which it had been often perverted.” That, by the clauses introduced by the Lords, and those under consideration, they would be further liable to misapplication for another year. “The Commons, therefore,” said his Lordship,

“ will be deeply disappointed at hearing that the
 “ Lords cannot consent to the exclusion of their
 “ clause from the Bill ; and I cannot,” he added,
 “ but still express, in the name of the Managers
 “ of the Commons, their hope that, your Lord-
 “ ships may be instructed with respect to that
 “ part of the Bill, at least to come to some
 “ accommodation on a point upon which the
 “ Commons are very earnestly bent *.”

The reply of LORD LYNTHURST deserves espe-
 cial notice. Having fully made up his mind to
 abate nothing of the spirit of dictation on the part
 of the Conservative Peers, and being manifestly
 quite indifferent about coming to a rupture, his
 Lordship thus gravely begins—

“ The Lords *are, and ever must be,* desirous
 “ of maintaining a good understanding. They
 “ would, upon a point which they did not con-
 “ sider of essential importance to the interests of
 “ the country, be disposed to accede to the wishes
 “ of the Commons, but they have maturely con-
 “ sidered this question, and find it *impossible to*
 “ *give way* with respect to it †.”

After this exordium, it was to be expected that
 his Lordship would have proceeded to show in
 what respect *the interests of the country*, were
 benefited by continuing the Charity Trusts in the

* *Vide* Supplement to the Votes and Proceedings of the
 House of Commons, 11th August, 1836, p. 1891.

† *Ibid.* p. 1892.

hands of the displaced and extinct Corporations. If the Lords had, as he avets, *maturely considered the question*; there could have been no difficulty in unfolding the ill consequences that would follow from placing the corporate funds under the management of parishioners openly and impartially nominated. His Lordship was bound, in fairness to the Commons, and in justice to the public, to have supported his averment. But he never attempted it—it was a mockery beyond his daring. He puts his hostility on quite a different ground.—“The Lords,” says he, “have thought that they were acting in accordance with the arrangement of the *last session*, in proposing that the time should be extended for another session, in order to afford an opportunity for maturing a measure so important to the interests of the public. It is with this view, and this view only, that they have thought it their duty to insert a clause for extending the time.”—We have here an assertion so flagrantly untrue, that the extremity to which his Lordship was driven can alone furnish an excuse for it. The proposed delay, instead of being *in accordance with the arrangement of last session*, is absolutely in the teeth of it. But a lawyer takes up with any reason that the exigency of the moment presses into his service, and we have here a sample of it. The measure was matured in the Bill of last session. It was not for

the purpose of *maturing it*, as his Lordship well knows, that it was extended to another session. The Tory Peers cancelled it, not because it was ill-digested, but because it was *too well digested*. They had succeeded in staving it off last year. They now inserted a clause that might stave it off for a *second* year. They looked to the chance of a dissolution of Parliament in the interval, when they might avail themselves of the votes of the old Tory Corporations, if their trusteeship could by any management be continued*. It was "with *this* view, and *this* view only," that their clause of delay was introduced.

"It has been suggested," said his Lordship, "that the parties now invested with the character of trustees, have misconducted themselves. On the part of the Lords, I beg to state, that those persons were appointed by the Act, and must be considered as selected by both Houses of

* "Under the stat. 2 Will. IV., c. 45, a party must have been in actual possession, or in receipt of rents and profits for his own use. This seems to me not to have been intended to apply to trustees who, manifestly, cannot receive profit to their own use. In the northern division of Essex a claim was made by trustees of estates in the parish of Much Totham, for the benefit of Saint Paul, Covent Garden. They received the rents, and exercised complete control over the estates. Being at that time under the Bar, I was present at the arguing of this case before Mr. Richmond, the revising barrister, who allowed the claim."—*Wordsworth on Election*, p. 57, Note 3.

“ Parliament — both Houses, of Parliament as-
 “ sented to their nomination.”

• Nothing but that high courtesy which distinguishes enlightened and well-bred men, could have made the Managers for the Commons listen with patience to such a course of reasoning ; it has nothing in it of the dexterity of the advocate, or the skill of the logician ; it is misrepresentation in its rudest shape. It is worth while to recall to our minds the position in which the case really stood. The Commons, with a view to rescue the charity property throughout England from the nefarious system under which it has been so long administered, determined that it should be no longer invested in *bodies corporate*, but should be transferred to a body of fifteen burgesses, to be nominated by the council of the different boroughs respectively, subject to such superintendence as might ensure responsible and good management in the trustees to be appointed.

This remedial enactment was, last session, cancelled in the Lords, and replaced by a clause which kept alive the abuses for another year, by continuing the trusts in the disbanded Corporations. The Commons, as we before remarked, judging it better that the Bill should be passed with even this heavy drawback, than be wholly lost, assented, though sorely against their will, to the alteration. In August last, however, the period of the protracted power of the old managers was at an end ; their lease for a year had

expired ; when, behold ! Lord Lyndhurst, in the face of all this, turns short round upon the Commons, and, *on the part of the Lords, begs leave to state*, “ that *those persons were appointed by the* “ Act, and must be considered as *selected by both* “ Houses of Parliament,” leaving it, of course, to be inferred that the Commons ought not, in justice, to charge with misconduct the creatures of their own choice, nor attempt to disturb an arrangement they had *themselves* confirmed. If an advocate were endeavouring to bamboozle a country jury, this sort of quibbling might succeed ; but addressed by an ex-Chancellor to the managers of the Commons of England, it is sadly out of place.

“ The Lords,” continues the noble and learned Cotinse! for the ex-Corporators, “ are not aware, “ from any evidence which has been laid before “ them, nor from the result of the inquiries which “ they have made, that those individuals have in “ the slightest degree misconducted themselves “ since their appointment. If their appointment “ was sanctioned by the Lords and Commons, “ it seems necessary, before any reasonable ob- “ jection can be urged against them, that the “ Lords should be satisfied that, since their “ appointment, they have abused their trust. “ The Lords have no evidence of that descrip- “ tion. *They have inquired into the subject*, and “ the result has been, that no abuse has, since

of the people, must be presumed, to be better informed than the Lords, it is the defective and irregular administration of the funds bequeathed, from time to time, for charitable purposes, in which all the inhabitants have a common interest. Why the Commons must be more peculiarly conversant with this subject, is manifest. Since it had been taken up by Parliament, the different members—as Lord John Russell well remarked—were always more or less in communication with their constituents.

The Lords are not identified with the people as the Commons are—they have no such communication—no such correspondence; all intercourse of this sort is quite out of their way. They cannot, therefore, but be ignorant of those details with which the other House is familiar. *They* know the Borough Corporations only in their political capabilities—they know how serviceably to election purposes, the trust funds may be employed—they well know to what an extent the great mass of Charity property may be made subservient to local ascendancy, and party influence. With all this detail, the Tory Lords are well versed; and hence it is, that they are struggling to prolong those means of service to the last hour.

The public have a right to expect that a valid and a sufficient reason should have been given by the Lords to warrant the hostile attitude which

they thus assumed towards the representatives of the nation. They have a right to ask.—Why is every measure of sound policy to be mangled or destroyed by alterations, which—as if in mockery—are termed *amendments*? Why is the public mind to be kept in a state of morbid excitement with reference to that organic change which this persevering opposition must ultimately make imperative? It may flatter the vanity of LORD LYNTHURST to lead his troop of Conservative Peers into the field, while the warrior Duke keeps in the back-ground; but the people are tired of looking forward to the commencement of every session, as to the opening of a new campaign, which, after a six-months conflict, is to leave every abuse where it found it; or—what is worse—to force forward those desperate remedies which grow out of disappointed hope, and an impatience no longer to be controlled.

If we wish for an example of the latter evil, we have only to look to the result of rejecting the IRISH TITHE BILL. The determination to discontinue the payment of Tithes altogether is fast spreading itself over Ireland. Upwards of £.10,000 have been already subscribed in Queen's County alone, towards a fund for reimbursing those who may suffer by prosecution; subscriptions for the same purpose are carrying on in the neighbouring counties; and an organized system of resistance is fast extending itself, which the Church will in vain attempt to cope with. ;

The Lords have done more during the last session to deaden every genuine feeling of respect for their order, than its worst enemies could have effected in half a century. Never, surely, was a time more ill chosen for setting public opinion at defiance, as was done by Lord Lyndhurst at the above conference. We have been led—among other reasons—to dwell upon it for the light it throws on those high pretensions which he put forth in his speech at the close of the Session, on the pretext of moving for a return of the rejected Bills.

The majority of the Peers have shown themselves so inflexibly opposed to every principle of sound and salutary legislation, that when any Bill is received with favour, the public immediately suspect that there is something wrong about it. This was the case with the *English Tithe Bill*. There is, perhaps, no subject more difficult to deal with in its details, than the subject of *Tithes*. None but the class immediately interested in their adjustment, can appreciate the difficulty of adjusting the conflicting claims which arise out of it. The Bill of Lord John Russell was among the most valuable measures of the last session; but its smooth passage through the Upper House excited a strong apprehension that its operation would be in favour of the Church, and against the tithe payers; the impression was, that had it been otherwise, it would have been stifled in its transit. Nothing can show more

strongly the prevailing want of confidence throughout the nation in the legislation of the Lords. Do they foresee the consequences of this? It would seem not.

How came it that the IMPRISONMENT-FOR-DEBT BILL did not meet with the same countenance as the Tithe Bill? Why was the one chosen, and the other numbered with the reprobates? Because it empowered the sheriff to deliver execution of *lands* to judgment creditors? It touched the privileged freeholds of the Aristocracy. This alone was sufficient to decide its fate. This Bill, had it been permitted to pass, would have redressed a grievance of great magnitude. It involved a principle of national justice. Observing men,—looking steadily at the effect which laws have upon society,—have long lamented the cruel ill consequences of imprisonment for debt, to which thousands of families annually become victims.

In a great commercial empire like ours, the money engagements of men are intertwined in a countless variety of ways, and the chain of mutual dependance has such innumerable links, that no man's solvency can be said to depend upon *himself*. Individuals of the best intentions, and the highest integrity, may, by some most unexpected failure, be rendered utterly incapable of meeting a demand to-day, which yesterday they were amply prepared to discharge. Our law of civil imprison-

ment is a remnant of that law of the strongest, by which the weak and the defenceless have been so long made to suffer. It is defensible on no one ground of moral right or of public utility. It gives scope to malice, oppression, resentment, and all the worst feelings of our nature, without one redeeming benefit, which, as a great trading people, we can place to the contra side of the account. It applies to deliberate fraud, and to unavoidable misfortune, the same common punishment, and is at war alike with the instinct of reason and the spirit of Christianity. And yet was the Bill for its abolition thrown out, because it touched the exclusive privilege of the Aristocracy, by giving, to judgment creditors, more effectual remedies against the *real* and personal estate of their debtors, than they are entitled to under the existing law.

When **SERVIUS**, anxious for the rights of humanity, endeavoured to mitigate the cruelty of the law towards the Roman debtors, he was opposed, says **LIVY**, by the whole faction of the nobles, "*omnis factio nobilium.*" The spirit of this class of Conservatives has undergone no modification up to the present hour.

A lamentable proof of the bigotry of the Tory Peers was exhibited in their rejection of the Bill which had for its object to remove those civil disabilities and privations affecting the **Jews**, which have so long disgraced the Statute Law of

England. It is sad to think that, in the nineteenth century, the Imperial Parliament of Great Britain should not have discovered that civil rights have no connection with a sectarian theology. Surely we have sufficiently extended our fame for intolerance in times past, to allow us, at least, to be at peace, at this time of day, with the Children of Israel!

The residence of Jews in England is as old as the Saxons. Under that government they chaunted their *oremus* on their own Sabbath without being held to give offence to God or man. But from the Norman conquest, downwards, our history is thickly studded with details of their massacre and persecution. If they were left for awhile in quiet, it was only that they might obtain wealth; and no sooner had they amassed enough to tempt the rapacity of the reigning Monarch, than they were subjected to the most unbridled extortion; and after being robbed from time to time, till they were no longer worth plundering, they were at last sent out of the kingdom by their royal master under the charge of grinding his subjects by their usurious dealings!—In the year 1290 all the Jews in England were banished by royal proclamation; and so strong was their terror of imprisonment and of extorted ransom, that they did not re-appear till the reign of Charles II. Since that period we have ceased to treat them as *perpetui inimici*,

and though their memory—as it would seem—is not held in honour, we have ceased to persecute their descendants.

When the Chancellor of the Exchequer, towards the close of the session, moved the order of the day for the second reading of the JEWISH CIVIL DISABILITIES BILL, not only were the Tories disquieted as to the safety of the Church, but they trembled for Christianity itself, if a Jew could by any possibility be returned to Parliament. SIR ROBERT INGLIS was in an agony of fright. “*It has practically the effect of UNCHRISTIANIZING us**,” said the bewildered baronet, in that wild language which excessive fear is often heard to inspire. As if Christianity could not stand upon its own basis! As if the foundation of his own faith was so unsure, that the admission of a Jew to a seat in the House would upset it! Why, moreover, should he be alarmed lest the introduction of a Hebrew among them should *un-christianize* his Tory brethren? They have sat for years with Liberals without being *liberalized*; they have sat for years with the Radicals, with O’Connell, and Hume, and Grote, and Lushington, and Molesworth, *cum multis aliis*, without being at all infected by the principles of *freedom*! If so surrounded, their Toryism has stood its ground, why fear that, on the sight of a Jewish member, their *Christianity* would evaporate?

* *Mirror of Parliament*, August 3, p. 2695.

The worthy Member's apprehensions are the more extraordinary, because hardly had the echo of the sentence died away, than he proceeds thus :
 " I have never suffered myself, in discussing this subject, to speak of the Jews, individually, with disrespect; notwithstanding the popular prejudices against them. Their *moral* character, I have no doubt, is as good as that of other classes. I regard them with awe. They are a standing miracle, and as such I speak of them, not only with respect, but with AWE*." How is this compliment to their moral character to be reconciled with the charge that the presence of any one of them, as a member of the House, would unchristianize it? To speak of the Jews, "not only with respect, but with awe," and in the same breath to vote for their disability and degradation, bespeaks a mind rather curiously constituted. They reasoned as wisely as this in the days of the witches and wizards. Listening to such language from a legislator of the present age, we should disbelieve our ears, if the bigotry of the Tories had not made us familiar with it.
 " I hope," exclaims another member †, " the day will never arrive, when we shall see the Constitution any other than a Christian Constitution." This hope is so oddly worded, that

Mirror of Parliament, Aug. 3.

C. S. Foster. *Mirror of Parliament.*

it is not easy to get at its meaning. Is it meant to affirm that a Jew, though a fit candidate for Heaven, is not a fit candidate for a seat in Parliament? Are we to understand that if a Goldsmid or a Rothschild, in virtue of his rights as a British subject, were a member of the House of Commons, our *Constitution* would be no longer *Christian*? But we will not press for an explanation. It must be forgiven to one who speaks without understanding *himself*, that he does not make himself understood by his hearers.

The member for Stamford* took up a different position:—"The right honourable gentleman, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, has said that a Jew adores the same God as we do—that *I deny*." What! does the Jew not worship his MAKER? If so, whereon does his adoration differ from that of the Christian? This is, truly, a singular sort of charge to apply to the *chosen people*!

With regard to the eligibility of a Jew, or a Catholic, or the member of any other sect, to a seat in Parliament, there is no moral proposition that can more safely guide our opinion than this—that *religious opinions form no just ground of exclusion from civil rights*. Why this principle has not been acted upon is manifest. In every age of the world, and in all countries, Power has always been orthodox, be its creed what it may. The Bigot,—if he had the broadest shoulders, and the stoutest calves to his legs,—never failed to

* G. Finch, Esq.

prove himself the true Believer. The Christian buffeted the Jew, and the Mahometan smote the Protestant scorner to the ground. Our modern defenders of the faith are more civilized, but not more enlightened. They refuse to a particular class of subject the enjoyment of their civil rights, not on the score of their character, but of their religious belief, and this too, while they profess to take, as the guide of their actions, that Gospel which bids us do to others as we would they should do unto us—which gives the parable of the good Samaritan as the rule of our duty—and which enjoins us to live in charity with all men.

As a man and a citizen, a Jew is not necessarily better, or worse, than a Christian. The moment we represent the religion of the Gospel in any other light than *the perfection of moral truth*, it becomes unintelligible. The moment we represent it as leading—or as intended to lead—to any other end than the purity of moral conduct, we change its essence, and destroy its effect. If this important truth had been recognised in our pulpits from the beginning, there would have been at this day, no refusal of *church rates*.

We cannot conclude our remarks on the Bills nullified, or rejected, by the Lords, without noticing the Prisoners' Counsel Bill.

In the earlier ages of our history, the Law and the Judges were the most prominent engines of despotism. If proof of this is called for, we will

produce the STATE TRIALS in evidence. The blackest records of judicial tyranny brighten by the side of them. If we wish to see absolute power in all the ghastliness of its features—if we wish to see the frightful workings of political crime, and party violence when at their height—there we shall find them.

If there was no shadow of ground for the charges against the accused, the Crown was as sure of its victim as if the proof of his guilt was irresistible. So iniquitous was our system of criminal law, that it was not until the reign of Elizabeth that the accused was allowed to call witnesses in proof of his innocence*.

This concession to the claims of justice was no doubt considered as a grant of quite as much as ought in reason to be asked; for though on a criminal trial, which involved the life of the accused, he was admitted to produce his witnesses, they were not allowed to be examined upon oath; the consequence was, that on every prosecution in which it was desirable to procure a conviction, if the evidence was in favour of the prisoner, it was contended that a preference was to be given to the credibility of the witnesses produced on the

* When the embezzlement of military stores was made felony, by the Stat. 31 Eliz. c. 4, it was provided that any person prosecuted for such felony, "should be received and admitted to make any lawful proof that he could, by lawful witness, or otherwise, for his discharge and defence."

part of the Crown, inasmuch as they were sworn to the truth of their testimony while the prisoner's witnesses were *not upon oath*. With a packed jury—and the jury were always packed when the occasion called for it—this argument was conclusive, and never failed to procure a verdict of *guilty*. Scandalously oppressive and unjust as this system was, it was not until upwards of a hundred years after the reign of Elizabeth, that the further concession was made, of permitting the prisoner's witnesses to be sworn*.

This improvement, slow as it was, did not proceed from a more cultivated sense of justice on the part of those who administered the law, but from a gradual change in the condition of the great body of the people. The great pains taken to ensure a conviction in every case of treason and felony, by withholding from the party accused the means of disproving the charge by the production of witnesses, arose from the *law of Forfeiture*, the proceeds of which produced a most ample revenue to the Crown. A nobleman, whose extensive possessions tempted the cupidity of the reigning monarch, and whose notions of government might chance to be in advance of the age, was easily charged with the

* It was first enacted by the 1st Anne, c. 9, that in *all cases of treason and felony*, all witnesses for the prisoner shall be examined upon oath, in like manner as the witnesses against him.

equivocal and undefined offence of *treason*; and not being allowed to produce witnesses to refute the accusation brought against him, there was no difficulty for the King's Attorney-General to bring him *constructively* within the law. On his attainder, he was adjudged to suffer death, and "to lose and forfeit all his goods and chattels, *lands* and tenements, *to the King*." This judicial murder was perpetrated to get possession of the estate of inheritance! This is the essence and perfection of tyranny.

The true criterion of felony—we have it on the authority of Lord Coke—is *forfeiture*; for on all felonies which are punishable by *death*,—the offender loses all his lands in fee-simple, and *also* his goods and chattels; in such as are *not so punishable*, he loses his goods and chattels *only*.*

This explains why counsel was allowed in cases of *misdemeanor*, but not admitted in indictments for treason or felony. *No forfeiture followed conviction for a misdemeanor*; and consequently the Crown had no interest in refusing the accused the full means of defence.

Future historians will record, that it was not until we approached the middle of the nineteenth century, that this reproach upon the criminal law of England was removed. That before that period, counsel were allowed to make two speeches

against a prisoner charged with a capital offence, to neither of which was he permitted, by counsel, to reply! When this blot upon our legal system was remarked upon, the plea in extenuation has always been that “the Judge is always counsel for the prisoner.” There is no foundation in reason, or fact, for this assertion. That he should be so, presumes the accusation false; it infers that the Counsel for the prosecution is urging a charge so manifestly unfounded, as to call upon the Judge *to take up the prisoner’s defence*, lest the life of an innocent man should be sacrificed. He must watch him as an adversary. He must dissect his reasoning, and resist his conclusions. This is his task as *counsel* for the prisoner, and if he fails to discharge it, he abandons the province professedly assigned to him.

This point has been set at rest by the Act of last session, which gives the right to be heard by counsel in cases of felony. One very important clause of the Bill, that which gave the *concluding speech* to the prisoner’s counsel, was struck out by the Lords. On what principle of justice or utility this *amendment* was deemed expedient, we are not enabled, from the arguments of any one of its opponents, to perceive. It is in direct variance with the opinion contained in the Report of the Commissioners*, and confirmed by

* In their recapitulation, the Commissioners say—“It

lawyers of the highest authority at the Bar. The Member for HUNTINGDON*, whose classical and polished mind will keep him pure whatever party he espouses, strongly opposed the omission of the clause. “ I am of opinion that the amendments which the Lords have introduced into the Bill, have not by any means improved it. I almost think, that it would be better to leave the law as it stands, giving a prisoner the benefit of the sympathy of the jury in the hardship of his case, than to pass the Bill as it has been amended by the Lords.—Why, when we are altering the law, should we not remove every error, and redress every grievance? I am of opinion, that neither in cases of misdemeanor nor felony will justice be done, unless the prisoner have the last word †.”

LORD WHARNCLIFFE commenced a long speech in the Upper House against the Bill, by declaring that “ he conceived it was utterly uncalled for.”—Why? because the system,

“ appears to us that, as a general position, the right of the party accused to be heard previously to condemnation, is founded on principles of reason, humanity, and justice, recognised by the law of England.”

They conclude in the following terms:—

“ The prisoner’s counsel should, in all cases, be entitled to the concluding address; and the same practice should, in this respect, be extended to trials for misdemeanors.”

* SIR FREDERICK POLLOCK.

† *Mirror of Parliament*, No. XXXV. p. 2557.

under which it was refused, was *more than a hundred years old!* “ We ought not,” said the noble and learned Conservative—“ We ought not, Sir, upon light and inefficient grounds, at once to condemn a practice of the Courts of this country, which has been in existence for upwards of a century*.” *Upwards of a century!* Why, it is upwards of *ten centuries!* When, since the SAXON HEPTARCHY, or before it, did the practice of allowing counsel in capital cases ever prevail in the Courts of this country? How many hundred years was it the practice of the Courts to deny to a prisoner, on trial for life or death, to produce witnesses to establish his innocence? If we were now about to grant *this* privilege for the first time, the refusal would have an additional two hundred years added to its antiquity! How greatly would this have strengthened the argument of our legislative Philosopher against innovation?

That the law ought not *now* to be protective of human life, because for ages past it never has been so, is a reason which could never be urged but by a purblind and superficial thinker. A man, even of moderate understanding, far from uttering such a sentiment, would disdain to listen to it†. The proposition insisted upon by the

* *Mirror of Parliament*, No. XXXII. p. 2361.

† Lord Wharnclyffe rose again at the close of the debate to make the following speech:—“ I was anxious not to let the

Tory Lords, that a prisoner who has to acquit himself of a charge in which his life is involved, ought not to have the concluding appeal to the jury, is at variance with the right interpretation of all the rules of criminal justice. As a subject of England—if the constitution is to be of any practical value to him—he has a claim to every advantage which may assist him in proving his innocence.

The difficulties which beset a prisoner on trial for his life, are of a kind which those whose minds have never been turned to the subject, can have no conception.

The evidence which the witnesses are enabled to give, must be collected from them *before* the trial; but it scarcely ever happens, that their statement will exactly correspond, in time and circumstances, with the evidence they give *at* the trial. The variance is not intentional, but the circumstance of being publicly examined before a crowded court, tends to confuse their memory, and this is increased by the facts being presented to them in a different order, by the questions put to them, than that which they would observe in a detail emanating from themselves. Hence an apparent diversity arises,—and, sometimes, appa-

“ Bill pass without expressing my opinion upon it. I now leave the motion in the hands of your Lordships.”—Why all this anxiety to express an opinion so preposterous as to be neutralized by its own absurdity?

rent contradictions—between the present testimony, and the evidence as opened by the Counsel. In truth, few men in common life, when professing to give an account of a transaction, relate it in the same order and form, or give precisely the same particulars : and these again will be found to vary according to the greater or less distance from the period at which they occurred*.

It is the daily and universal experience of advocates, that witnesses of all classes, from the highest to the lowest, prove more, or less, than what they have previously prepared the attorney, or the party, to expect ; and that they not unfrequently give evidence of a different complexion. If a prisoner, innocent of the crime charged against him, instruct his attorney as to the circumstances which caused him to be unjustly suspected, the impression produced on the counsel by the attorney's second-hand statement will, in most cases, be different from the impression he would have received had he heard it from the

* An anecdote, well-known on the Home Circuit, is a striking illustration of this. Three eminent Counsel, one of whom is now upon the bench, were proceeding on the circuit at a quick pace, when the carriage broke down, by which accident they were exposed to considerable danger. When relating the circumstance after dinner, at the circuit table, their statement differed in so many particulars, that it was good-humouredly agreed by the barristers present, that *neither of the three were worthy of credit.*

mouth of the party. This circumstance, unimportant as it may appear, is of great consequence to the accused, since a very slight departure from the literal statement of a fact, *will vary the conclusions to be drawn from it.*

The circumstances are infinite, which place a person accused in peculiar jeopardy when put upon his trial. Transactions, which, at the time they occurred, appeared of no moment, become material as connected with the crime unexpectedly charged against him. They would tend strongly to disprove it, but they are almost gone from his memory. He endeavours to prove them by witnesses, but their recollection of them is as inaccurate as his own; and being called upon to review them for the purpose of giving evidence, they give that evidence under circumstances so very different from that of the prisoner, and their association of the facts will occasion such considerable difference in the detail, as to throw a most undeserved suspicion over the whole defence.

Applying these remarks to the investigation of legal truth, the result is, that in criminal trials there is, in nine cases out of ten, a want of perfect correspondence between the statement of the counsel for the prisoner, and the evidence adduced to confirm that statement. Those discrepancies are so well known at the bar to be of perpetual occurrence, that it is a common practice for

counsel to forbear calling witnesses whom they have reason to believe can prove facts material to their case, rather than encounter the effect of a reply, fearful that the collating, and commenting upon these apparent inconsistencies may influence the minds of the jury to the prejudice of the facts incontrovertibly in proof. This might be obviated, if the prisoner's counsel had the final reply.

We are the more surprised to find LORD ABINGER opposing this concession, as his tact and discretion as an Advocate—and he was amongst the most able—was never more strikingly manifested than in forbearing to expose his clients to this disadvantage by incautiously calling witnesses.

- The truth which we are desirous to impress is this, that the evidence of witnesses may not accord, or may even be contradictory, in many particulars, without at all affecting the credibility of the main facts; but in the hands of the opponent counsel, this discordancy may be made deeply to affect the fate of the prisoner, his counsel ought, therefore, to be allowed to reply, to enable him to show to the jury that the inconsistencies which have been so urgently dwelt upon, are inconsistencies in appearance, not in reality, that they do not affect the general correctness of the testimony, but are perfectly compatible with those leading facts which constitute the true

ground of his defence. Is it unreasonable to require this? Can it be refused without the most manifest injustice*?

The peroration of LORD WHARNCLIFFE'S narrow minded and illiberal speech against the Prisoners' Counsel Bill is not a little remarkable. "I entreat your Lordships not to be led away by pretended representations of what are said to be the impressions of people out of doors. We are bound to guard and maintain the due execution of the laws, and, as guardians of the executive department of the laws, we are also

* In the case of *Elizabeth Canning*, eight persons ordered for execution, were, in consequence of some observations inserted by a Mr. RAMSAY, in the daily papers, reprieved, the inquiries to which these observations led, established their innocence, and *Elizabeth Canning* was transported as an impostor. Could those men's lives have been thus put in jeopardy, had they been allowed to defend themselves by counsel, and had the opportunity of *reply*? Would the unfortunate *Eliza Fenning*—to whose innocence the very evidence against her bears testimony—have been executed? Would the life of *Eugene Aram* have been forfeited? Would the many other convictions and *executions* of individuals afterwards discovered to have been innocent, stained the history of our criminal jurisprudence, had the accused been protected, as by law, and in justice, they ought to have been? And yet at this enlightened period of our Constitution, the Bill which gave, in capital cases, an accused prisoner a right to be defended by counsel was strongly debated in the House of Lords, and the clause entitling them to the concluding reply was rejected!

“ bound to *disregard everything but the result of*
 “ *our own well-founded and honest convictions.*
 “ Attempts have been made, my Lords, to turn us
 “ aside from our duty. We should not be intimi-
 “ dated on this occasion, however, any more than
 “ we have been on any other. If a measure
 “ come up from the other House, which we
 “ think dangerous, let us not be intimidated from
 “ rejecting it. We owe it to *ourselves*, to our
 “ characters, to the character of this House, to
 “ *the character of the times, to STAND firm, and*
 “ *TO STAND TOGETHER*.*” This is on a par
 with his oratory at the Halifax dinner a few
 weeks ago. How discreet to telegraph such
 sentiments as these at this juncture! Let the
 doctrines of Toryism rise, as they will, in extra-
 vāgance and absurdity, his Lordship is always
 sure to be above high-water mark.

Common sense is going the round of Europe.
 The weight derived from personal character, and
 talent, and public service, is fast exceeding the
 factitious influence of rank and title. Every hour
 brings fresh confirmation of this truth. The
 Conservatives affect a dread of revolution, while
 an *internal* revolution has been silently going on
 throughout the whole christian world for this
 half century, without their adopting any rational
 measures to prepare for, or provide against it.

* *Mirror of Parliament*, No. XXXII.

Government in its origin was established to control, and keep down, the ferocious instincts of barbarism and brutè force. Its principles were, therefore, necessarily adapted to that state of society. As the better faculties of our social nature were developed, moral instruments of restraint were introduced, and as mankind grew enlightened, the ascendancy of arbitrary power became no longer either politic or expedient. It is the error of the Tories that they act in the present advanced state of the wealth and intelligence of the country, in a spirit united to an age of darkness, when laws were inoperative, and the passions of men at their height. Utterly disregarding the progress of free institutions, they mistake the *principles* of the *first* stage of government, for the *first principles* of government. To those they adhere, and commend them as the simplest and the best.

The principle that all legitimate power is a delegation from *the people*, is the principle which of all others they most reprobate. The Liverpool speech of Mr. CANNING, which we quoted at the outset, develops on this, as on other topics, the unmodified opinions of the party. That the great body of the nation should preside over its own interests—that the House of Commons should emanate *from*, and act *for* the people, is a doctrine which according to him was not to be endured.—“ All that I am now contending for,” said

this anti-Reformer, who, in his day, was one of the high-priests of the order; “all that I am now contending for is, that whatever reformation is proposed, should be considered with some reference to the established constitution of the country. That point being conceded to me, I have no difficulty in saying that I cannot conceive a constitution of which *one-third part* shall be an assembly delegated by the people, not to consult for the good of the nation, but to *speak*, day by day, *the people’s will*, which must not, in a few days sitting, sweep away every other branch of the constitution that might attempt to alter or control it.” This is exactly the sort of language suited to the purposes of fallacy. If you had asked the orator, for what purpose an assembly was *delegated by the people*, unless to speak *the will* of the people? He would have had no answer to give. If you had inquired what he meant by the *good of the nation*, as distinguished from the good of *the people*? You would have reduced him to silence. And yet, speaking in the character of a *representative*, he gravely tells his constituents that he cannot conceive an assembly that shall be delegated by the people to be the organ of their will, without sweeping away the other branches of the Constitution!

He thus proceeds:—“I cannot conceive how, in fair reasoning, any other branch of the

“ Constitution should pretend to stand against
 “ it. If government be a matter of will, all that
 “ we have to do is to collect the will of the
 “ nation ; and having collected it by an adequate
 “ organ, that will is paramount and supreme.”

That the subjects of a great and populous kingdom should not submit to be ruled in whatever way it may please those in power to rule them, and that the supreme authority resided in the people, appeared, to the idolater of *Old Sarum*, to be a solecism in political science. It is the practice of the Tories always to treat the people as having no capacity to discern their own interest, and as being wholly incompetent to judge of the measures fitted to promote them. “ We are bound to disregard every-
 “ thing but the result of *our own* well-founded
 “ and honest convictions.” It follows that every measure which it may suit their interest to carry, however adverse it may be to the interest of the community at large, is always the measure, which in their *honest* and *well-founded convictions* OUGHT to be carried, and of course entitles them to disregard all opinions but *their own*. “ It is
 “ the constant aim of the nobles,” says Machiavel,
 “ to oppress—the only aim of the commonalty is,
 “ to avoid oppression.” The Tories have great respect for the authority of the subtle Florentine, but this is one among his many texts which they never care to preach from.

“ By what shadow of argument,” continues Mr. Canning, “ could the House of Lords be maintained in equal authority with the House of Commons, when once that House of Commons should become a mere deputation, speaking *the people’s will*, and *that will* the will of the government? In one way or other, the House of Lords must act, if it be to remain a concurrent branch of the legislature. Either it must uniformly affirm the measures which come from the Commons, or it must occasionally take the liberty to reject them. If it uniformly affirms, it is without the pretence of authority. But to presume to reject an act of the deputies of the whole nation—by what assumption of right could three or four hundred great proprietors, set themselves against the national will? Grant the Reformers, then, what they ask, on the principles on which they ask it, and it is impossible that, after such a reform, the Constitution should long consist of more than one body, and that one body a popular assembly.”

We have here the same sneer of irony at the House of Commons as the organ of *the public will*, and the same contemptuous curl of the lip, as when the same “ political jester” was descanting on the infirmities of “ the *revered* and *ruptured* OGDEN.” His political rectitude was on a par with his humanity.

This speech of MR. CANNING’S is the text-book

of the Tory faction. Every part of it bears upon the great question now before the public. Whether the will of the great body of the people is to be binding on the government, or whether the will of the "three or four hundred great proprietors," is to be recognised as the supreme law?

The causes which must lead to the settlement of this question, one way or the other, are growing stronger every day. In an enlightened country like ours, it is clear the Lords can have no hope of struggling successfully with the combined strength of the people. They are not—they cannot be—so weak as to entertain any such hope. Their conduct shows, that what they disregard is, the smallness of the majority by which Ministers are supported in the House of Commons; they avail themselves of this as a pretence for asserting that the opinions of the majority of the country are changed, and that government is by no means strong in the public favour. As regards their influence in the House of Lords, the tone of LORD LYNDHURST is quite triumphant; "in *this* House they are utterly powerless—they can effect nothing. (*hear!*) " We on this side of the House are obliged to perform the duties of government for them. "*(hear *!)*"

* *Speech of Lord Lyndhurst*, p. 18. Published by J. Fraser, Regent Street.

A curious representation this! The Conservative peers—the CARYATIDES of Corruption—held up as the sole supporters of a Reform government! The present Parliament is barely two years old; it was elected under a Tory ministry; it displaced that ministry, and succeeded to it amidst the shouts and acclamations of the people, and yet the Tory Lords insist that the country is grateful to them for their opposition to the measures of government!

The fact is, that the Tory aristocracy have so little sympathy with the people, that they cannot be induced to legislate upon liberal principles without being constantly acted upon *from without*. Look at the Catholic Emancipation Bill—the Reform Bill—the English Municipal Corporation Bill—would they have been carried without it? We all know they would *not*. And the same pressure from without, which gained those measures, is necessary to enable the public to obtain the fruits of them. Whether the government shall occupy a position sufficiently powerful to discharge their duty with effect, depends upon the people. That they have not taken that deep, steady, active interest, in many of the great questions that have come before Parliament, is certain. It is this *apparent* indifference—for it is not real—that has tended to bring their popularity into doubt, and their power into jeopardy. It was *this* that emboldened the Lords to smother and stifle the best measures of the session.

Will the public submit to this exercise of arbitrary and irresponsible power? This is the question which the Lords are now trying, and they are conducting the experiment on an extensive scale. They had hoped that, with a majority at their command, and aided by a resolute and well combined opposition, they should have constrained LORD MELBOURNE to resign; but in despite of all their machinations, his lordship stands firm. He even openly avowed his determination not to abandon his post, so long as he had the support of the House of Commons. This it is that enrage§ them. "In former times," says LORD LYNDHURST, in his memorable speech at the termination of the session: "In former times, amid such defeats, and unable to carry those measures which he considered essential, a minister would have thought that he had only one course to pursue. But these are antiquated notions—every thing has changed."—Yes, "*Et nos mutamur cum illis.*" How changed are the principles and politics of LORD LYNDHURST from those of Mr. COPLEY "of former times*." But as

* His lordship is an adept in the science of special pleading. When his apostacy is charged upon him, he asks, with an air of logical triumph— "What inconsistency can be pointed out in my opinions since I became a public man?" Certainly none. But the question, may it please your lordship, is, what were your political opinions *before* the patronage and favour of government made you, to use your own phrase, a *public man*. It is well known to all your former associates upon the

regards ministerial resignation, things remain pretty much as they were. True it is, that a minister has given in his resignation when "unable to carry" "those measures which he considered useful;" but this happened only in cases when he was in such a *minority* in the House of Commons, as to make it impossible for him to carry on the government. There is no instance on record of a ministry having resigned,—having the nation with them and a *majority* in that House,—because a spirit of *absolutism* had shown itself in the House of Lords, which opposed itself to all corrective and honest legislation.

His lordship's language amounts to this :

circuit, that no one went beyond you in the violence, or let us call, if you will, the honest enthusiasm of your *radical* politics. How often, in the society of the late honest member for Warwick, and a choice circle of *the elect*, were you distinguished as the heartiest of believers in the republican creed. Lord Liverpool found out the value of your high and varied talents, and he opened a more inviting prospect to your ambition than was to be found in the perspective then before you. He brought you into Parliament, and from the date of your first appearance there to the present hour, your consistency cannot be impeached. You have turned it to good account. The Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel's sudden change of opinion on the Catholic question was matter of surprise to their party; but to find the Protestant Master of the Rolls become a "Catholic Chancellor," as Sir Charles Wetherell expressed it, surprised no one; unless, indeed, we except poor Mr. Toms.

“ We have almost paralysed your force; we have
 “ defeated you in all your leading measures of
 “ reform; we have so embarrassed your progress,
 “ that you find it next to impossible to get on,
 “ and yet we cannot force the reins of govern-
 “ ment out of your hands.” No doubt, it is ex-
 tremely provoking, that LORD MELBOURNE, cannot
 be made to see that “ he has only one course to
 “ pursue,” and resolve to tender his resignation.
 “ This fastidious delicacy,” says LORD LYNTHURST
 “ forms no part of the character of the noble
 “ Viscount. He has told us, and his acts corre-
 “ spond with his assertions, that notwithstanding
 “ the insubordination that prevails around him,
 “ in spite of the mutinous and sullen temper of
 “ his crew, he will stick to the vessel while a
 “ single plank remains afloat. Let me, however,
 “ as a friendly adviser of the noble Viscount,
 “ recommend him to get her as speedily as
 “ possible into still water.” How is this to be
 done? “ Why,”—the *friendly adviser* would say,
 “ give up the helm to the DUKE, all will then go
 “ on smoothly.” No doubt it would. ARISTOTLE
 tells us—and the preceptor of Alexander is no
 slight authority—that “ Those who command the
 “ arms in a country, are *masters of the state*, and
 “ have it in their power to make what revolu-
 “ tions they please*.” Taking care, as he would

* *Polit.* VII. 9.

do, to have his Tory crew well officered, the great Captain would soon bring the vessel of reform into "still water."

The coroneted class ought to know, better than they appear to do, the danger of forcing out the discussion of *first principles*. The bringing the representative principle into debate lost us America. Startling inquiries are generated, which, but for the ill-advised and obstinate proceedings which gave birth to them, would never have been thought of.

It is thus with the Conservative majority in the House of Lords. Blackstone, whose Commentaries are in every library, had taught the people to believe that the English Constitution, consisting of King, Lords, and Commons, presented a finely-balanced system of government that all nations might envy. Judges on the bench, and lawgivers in the senate, showed with what a watchful attention to the freedom of the people the three Estates had been contrived, and they quoted the testimony of the Commentaries in proof of the fact. If either Estate arrogated to itself a greater authority than it could legitimately claim, the other two were at hand to resist the encroachment; on no occasion, therefore, had public liberty anything to fear. This doctrine was echoed, and re-echoed, from every seat of authority, legal and legislative, and the million were not disposed to quarrel with it. It is true,

that some persons—not lawyers, but men of discernment nevertheless—smiled at this fanciful theory of finely-balanced power, and pronounced it to be a mere illusion. They contended that, without a predominant pressure somewhere, no machinery, whether of government or any other, can be kept in motion; that to have the springs of equal force, is in effect to have no spring at all.

The determination manifested by the SUPREME JUNTA in the Upper House to rule with a strong hand, has led to inquiries—spread by the public press into every quarter of the kingdom—as to the remedy for the abuse of their unconstitutional power. Their utility as an order in the legislature has been brought into question. The compatibility of an hereditary and irresponsible dominion with good government is canvassed, and all the prejudices which upheld the ancient order of things begins to loosen, and give way. Those who strive to meliorate the condition of their fellow men are made to see and feel where the grand resistance to improvement comes from, and to act accordingly. All this would not have been, had the Lords adopted a tone of moderation and justice.

There is no part of the policy of Ministers that deserves more to be commended, than the carefulness with which they avoided coming to extremities with the other House. It was not possible that, as considerate and enlightened

statesmen, they could shut their eyes to the perilous consequences that might follow from it. We would strongly and sincerely advocate such a reform as would make our hereditary class of legislators other than what they are; but it is one thing to desire *the end*, and another to approve *the means*. The first great care—the care that ought ever to be present in the mind of those to whose watchfulness for the interests of a great commercial kingdom are confided,—should be, on no account to put those interests in jeopardy, unless they are fully prepared before-hand to effect the object they seek; nor unless that object, if gained, would justify the sacrifice of all that may be lost in obtaining it. •

That a practical reformation in this branch of the parliament is necessary, we are quite disposed to admit. But we would fain pause to inquire, whether it would be wise to *suspend* the prosecution of that system of practical reform which is now going on, for the purpose of *first* effecting an organic change in the House of Lords? The conclusion to which we are brought by this inquiry, is this: that by so doing we should risk the loss of all that we have gained. Our counsel would be, let Ministers pursue steadily the work that is before them. Let their leading endeavour be to strengthen and consolidate their power in the House of Commons. If, in any ill-fated moment, they should turn aside from this policy,

and occupy themselves with organising anew the three estates of the realm, and should proceed to reconstruct the constitution—as in this case they must do—upon a new corner stone, the injury to the cause of reform would be irreparable. The House of Lords would become the object of all-absorbing interest. Every great public measure would have reference to it. All the great improvements—meditated, or in progress,—whether in our laws and institutions, in the church, or in the state, in England or in Ireland—would be postponed to the one engrossing object of national interest—the Peers. PEERAGE REFORM once commenced would be the great question on which the nation would be divided. The interests, the fears, the passions, the prejudices of the great mass of the population, would be wrought into that fierceness of excitement which, in a great trading nation like this, is fraught with evils innumerable. Public credit—hanging, as it does, on threads so apt to get entangled and out of order—would not fail to be affected by the disturbed state of the public mind.—The possible consequences of such a crisis, ought not to be lightly risked.

When the work of *abolition* is once begun, who can tell in what civil convulsion we may be involved before its close? Are not the Tories resorting to every conceivable device, to discredit the cause of reform? Are they not perpetually

striving to alarm the public mind as to its ultimate danger? Look, then, at the new division of party which you would create. Look to the consequence of withdrawing the attention of the public from the reform of admitted grievances, to the more abstract and speculative question—which comparatively few would understand—of remodelling the Upper House, and bending an old and inherent branch of the Constitution into a new shape. Assuredly there is neither wisdom nor safety in such a course.

Examine well what are the vices which belong to the character of the House of Lords. If they are the vices of a day, the subject would admit of a very different view; but they are not so. The majority of the present peers were selected from the most wealthy and influential of the *borough-holding* commoners. Though a new race, as regards the honours of nobility, they are old in the trammels of corruption. They were born and bred at a period when those in power studied every interest but the interest of the people; and when the authority of the public voice was overawed and kept down by the law of libel and an armed force. They were educated in principles exactly opposite to those which now govern the public mind. But to be so educated, is not necessarily the consequence of being born to a title. The younger branches of the aristocracy will have lived in times when the principles of

reform have taken deep root. They will see the influence of those principles in the prosperity of the country and the security of the government. This cannot fail to operate a gradual reform in the character and constitution of the House of Lords. In the mean time the general improvement of our institutions is going on, and the ascendancy of public opinion is gaining ground. New bills will from time to time be brought in, all of them more or less remedial; while the Lords, disciplined in the school of experience, will find that—in the phrase of SIR ROBERT PEEL—“the time is arrived when it is *no longer safe*” to trifle with the indignation of the people.

To prepare for battle with the Lords, would be to go on with the work of reform at the wrong end. There is nothing the Conservatives would desire more anxiously, than that it should take this direction. They would have their emissaries in all quarters, stirring up the conflict—all the evils arising out of it, they would represent as the fruits of *Reform*. Their language every where would be, “We foresaw and predicted from the first, to what the REFORM BILL would lead—we warned the country that it would end in a revolution that would not leave one stone upon another. They are about to cut away one great branch of the constitution, and with it will go the Monarchy, the Church, and all those noble and ancient insti-

“tutions which have made us, what till now we
 “ever have been, a great, a prosperous, and a
 “powerful people.” Harangues such as these,
 delusive as they might be, would not fail of their
 effect. The monied interest would take alarm—
 the well-meaning but more timid Reformers
 would join the Conservative standard—advantage
 would be taken of the general consternation to
 remove the Ministers, the Tories would succeed
 to power, and the cause of Reform would be
 thrown back for half a century.

In the meanwhile, what would become of that
 contest with despotism, that is going on, more
 or less actively, through the whole range of
 continental Europe? The eye of every foreign
 state is upon England—if the struggle for Reform
 is suspended here, it is suspended every where.
 If the attention of the people of this country is
 turned aside from the pursuit of it, the people of
 every other country are discouraged; their spirit
 flags, and they become dejected and inert.
 Were all the offices of the State, and all the
 power and patronage of the Cabinet, in the
 hands of a Tory Government, the great obstacle
 to the ascendancy of arbitrary power would be
 removed, and the Holy Alliance would be once
 more in its element.

These reflections do not proceed from any
 predilection for the Conservative Peers; they are
 meant to be addressed to those who blame His

Majesty's Ministers for the conciliatory policy adopted towards the Lords, and their reluctance to assume anything like a correspondent attitude of hostility. There are those who would counsel the opposite course, as the one which their honour, and the emergency of the time demands ; but those who give this advice, are not those who would incur the deep responsibility that would fall on those who should adopt it.

In the mean time, the Lords would do well, not to trust to the fancied security of their position, from the consequences above adverted to ; the collective will of the people can never be opposed with impunity, under any system of government. If corruption cannot be rooted out without convulsion, convulsion will come, but, " woe to those through whom it comes."

When Lepelletier, President of the Parliament of Paris, advised the recal of Necker, it is with this striking and memorable exclamation—" *Re-présentons le peuple, de peur qu'il ne se représente lui-même!*" Let the Conservative Lords weigh the value of this sentence ; in its application it bears a warning of awful import to themselves, and to their order. *They* are growing weaker and weaker, while *the people* are growing stronger and stronger. Their present contest with the Representatives of the nation, *must* come to an end ; what that end may be, we will not prophesy. In the present enlightened state of this

country, there are means more effectual than physical force, for obtaining *any* change that may be called for, whenever the crisis shall arrive, that makes that change indispensable.

At present, in what character do the Lords present themselves to the country? Not as a part of the people, legislating *for* the people, but as a separate body legislating *against* the people! The House of Commons has shown itself desirous that the spirit of religious animosity should be extinguished in Ireland, and that the Catholics should be treated as fellow-subjects, bound by the same tie of allegiance to their sovereign, and to the laws and institutions of their country. LORD LYNDHURST would keep them—and has done his best to keep them—in a state of rancorous alienation. He even takes praise to himself, and to his party, for the success of their efforts. The aim of the Commons has been to put an end to the vicious system which for ages has pervaded the local government of the cities and towns in that section of the united empire, and to give them a new and improved existence, fitted to the wealth and intelligence, as well as to the well-warranted demands of the Irish people. LORD LYNDHURST keeps watch and ward over the abuses, execrable and flagrant as they are, of the Corporate bodies, and not one will he part with. They must exist as the means of Orange patronage and election influence, or

they must not exist at all. Fortunately for the peace of the country, LORD MULGRAVE has conducted the affairs of Ireland with the temper and the talents of an enlightened statesman. He has introduced harmony and order where all was disturbance and crime. He has effected this great change by governing in the spirit of equity. What a country would Ireland be at this moment, had she been so governed for the last half century*.

The country sustained a real loss from the absence of one of the most distinguished members

* "The present cant," says an excellent Periodical, when discussing the Irish Question,—“the present false name, is the ‘Church of Ireland,’ and the ‘Protestant Constitution.’ Our king is Protestant,—our spiritual peers are Protestant,—the majority of the temporal, *item*.—The great mass of the Commons, *item*.;—but there is no longer any such thing as a Protestant Constitution. The Constitution is British, a Protestant-Presbyterian-Catholic Constitution. We might as well talk of Protestant statutes, Protestant tribunals, or Protestant rail-roads. The day the Catholic obtained the elective franchise, that day the Constitution, in ceasing to be exclusive, ceased to be Protestant. So also with the anti-Irish Church, mis-named the Church of Ireland. Ireland is not Protestant in any one sense or particular. She is thoroughly and permanently Catholic. In the sense of things, of realities, and not of shadows, and names, and cants, ought Ireland to be governed—as Catholic, as the people, and not as Protestant, not as the Oligarchy.”—*British and Foreign Review*, No. V., July 1836.—The whole article is powerfully written.

of the Upper House during the entire session. Not that his presence would have given another direction to the conduct of the Tory aristocracy, but it would not have been without its influence on their Leader. It would have been a task fitted to the severe and searching eloquence of LORD BROUGHAM, to have shown the danger of that factious opposition to measures, which were calculated not only to win the affection of the people to their sovereign, but to give strength and stability to the throne. We trust that in the coming session he will succeed in persuading the conservative Peers to remove from themselves that cloud of disfavour which at present covers them—to redeem their character with the country, and no longer to disfigure that Constitution of which they ought to be the lustre and the ornament.

There remains only one other subject of remark. The Tories, conscious that the *re-action* which they so eagerly look forward to has no impulsive force, do not scruple to resort to the most unjustifiable means of creating it. It is with this view, that in every district in which the provisions of the Poor-Law Act are obnoxious or ill-received, they have represented them as arising from the severe and arbitrary principles of that Act, and thence take occasion to bring odium on the Reform Ministry as its authors. When a feeling of discontent is to be practised upon, any delusion will

pass. The Tories well know this, and in many of the Town Council elections the Tories have turned it to account.

The introduction of the new Poor-Law system by LORD ALTHORP, was among the greatest services which his administration rendered to the country. There is no system, however actively beneficial, to which objections may not be made, and which will not be attended with occasional hardship. But consider the enormous system of abuse which ministers had to encounter, and the mass of difficulties they had to deal with! They had before them a radically vicious system viciously administered! They had to content with the practical mismanagement of three centuries! It was a reform which former Governments had regarded as beyond all legislative effort. They no sooner took it up, than they threw it down again, as too mighty for their grasp. Nothing could have braced the nerves of any ministry to the task, but the direful consequences that they saw must follow, from leaving things as they were. That causes of discontent should here and there arise, is nothing wonderful; the wonder is, that, under the new system, opposed as it is, to so many selfish interests, and having such a mass of prejudices to overcome, it has worked so favourably, and has met throughout the country, with such cordial and extensive approval.

It was not a crude and hasty measure of legislation; on the contrary, it was preceded by two

years of diligent and well-directed inquiry. The Bill was thoroughly discussed in its progress through Parliament, and was supported by the majority of the Tories, to their credit be it spoken, notwithstanding the adverse use which they *now* make of it.

It is worthy of note, that when the Irish Corporation Bill was before Parliament, the member for Tamworth was always on his legs; he had something to say upon it in every stage of its progress; but pending the Poor-Law Amendment Bill—a measure affecting, beyond any other, the interests of the country, and the morals of the people—the Honourable Baronet took no part in it. On general questions, and when a deference to popular opinion costs nothing, Sir Robert is the most plausible of speakers; but when those opinions are to be practically enforced, the harshness of Toryism betrays itself:—the voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hand is the hand of Esau.

The public look forward to the approaching Session with intense interest. The Tory legions are every where on the alert. In the flush of the spring, and in the fall of the leaf, they are alike active. We, the Reformers, on the contrary, are confiding, circumspect, and busied about many things. This being our character, it is not fair in us to expect more from Ministers than we give them the power to accomplish. We must

strengthen their position if we would make their efforts effectual. In military tactics, skill and courage will sometimes supply the place of numbers; but in a parliamentary conflict, numbers are every thing. The numerical majority upon whose support any secure dependance can be placed, was shown in the division upon the Appropriation Clause. That majority was 26 members only out of 354. While the constitutional aspirations of the liberal party are equivocal and fluctuating, it is vain to expect substantive measures of improvement to be carried through. While they thus lag behind, they give strength and ascendancy to the opposite camp.

It is in the measures that have been frustrated that we shall find the great objects of Reform to which the views of Ministers were directed, but the failure of which was caused by the counteraction of the Court—of the Conservative peers—of the Conservative press—and of a Tory party in the Commons, three hundred strong. Having constantly to row against wind and tide, all the way, they made was made by the labour of the oar. If, then, the people wish to have the institution of the country efficiently improved—if they wish that the Government should be administered on the principle of Reform as an operative and vital principle—their support of Ministers must be strenuous and constant—they must never take their shoulders from the wheel. If the Lords

persist in their hostility, there must be meetings—there must be petitions—in a word, there must be “peaceful agitation.” The vessel will never steer to her destined port without it. It may be brought—as Lord Lyndhurst would wish it—into *still water*; but there it will remain.

FINIS.

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Plain Reading for Plain People!

BEING AN ACCOUNT

OF THE

English Constitution;

AND

THE KING'S

REFORM-BILL.

LONDON:

JAMES RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY.

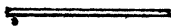
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1831.

THE.

REFORM BILL,

&c. &c.



EVERY body knows, by this time, of the **REFORM BILL**; all have heard of the **CONSTITUTION**. The enemies of the King and of his Ministers tell us, this Reform Bill is to *destroy* the Constitution, and produce **SPEEDY REVOLUTION**. Now, there are many who have not, perhaps, a very clear notion either of the Reform Bill or of the Constitution, or even of what is a Revolution; a few plain observations may be of service to those who seek for information on these heads. What is called the **CONSTITUTION**, is the set of rules appointed for the government of the Nation — these rules have been laid down by the united

voice of the People—and not a few of them have been fought and struggled for during centuries past. By *the Constitution*, the people are to be governed by three different Estates or Parties: first, the King; second, the Lords; third, the Commons, or Members of the Commons House of Parliament; the King makes the Peers, and their dignities descend from father to son. The Commons, according to the Constitution, are to be chosen by the People. The main object of these observations is, to shew that the people do not now choose the Members of Parliament—and this is what is sought to be amended by the Reform Bill.

The Lords represent their own interests, and that of those connected with them. They are not chosen by the people, they are appointed, as has been before said, by the King—they are considered as a sort of check to prevent the people from demanding too much from the King, or pressing too hard upon the great, or what is termed the Aristocracy. The King himself is neither appointed nor chosen. Before any new Law is made, the King, the Lords, and the Commons, must altogether consent to it; but it is with that part of the Constitution which relates to the House of Commons that we have principally to

deal. Now the veriest boroughmonger that crawls does not pretend to deny, that according to the spirit of the Constitution, it was always intended that a *portion* of the people, at least, were to chuse the Members of the House of Commons. The King and the Peers were to take care of their own rights, and the House of Commons of those of the People—whom they were called on to represent. The right of choosing Members of the House of Commons was given to every Freeholder who had Forty Shillings a-year, these elected the Members for Counties. Then the right of voting was given to many others besides the Freeholders, who represented other species of property; it was given to a great number of large Towns—sometimes to every person having a freehold house in a Town—sometimes to any body who paid taxes, or inhabited a house, or boiled a pot; sometimes to any person who was a Freeman of a City. Now, these rights were given some hundreds of years ago, and circumstances have since altered; towns which were rich have dwindled into villages—in one, Old Sarum (once flourishing), there is now nothing left but an old wall; the right of voting belongs to the owner of this old Wall, and he returns two Members of Parliament. It is clear, that according to what must be considered the Constitution, it never was in-

tended that all should have a right to vote: whether it should have been so or should not, is not now the question to be here discussed. But though this is admitted, it must also be admitted, that it never really formed part of the Constitution of this Country, nor anything like the Constitution, that the Proprietor of an old Wall should send two Members of Parliament, and then, in mockery, call them the Representatives of the People. For, bear in mind, the House of Commons even now are called, or call themselves, the Representatives of the People. Again, it must be borne in mind, that when the right of voting was given to the Members of a Corporation, they were, at the time of the grant, generally the only independent and substantial persons in the town—things, since this, have changed; and you now see a Town with four or five thousand Inhabitants returning Members to Parliament; but they are chosen, not by the four or five thousand, but by ten, or twelve, or twenty only, who are Members of the Corporation, whilst the Inhabitants know nothing about the matter, till they see their Members names in the London Gazette.

ALL things are subject to change, some grow worse—some better—all must admit that there has been a change from what was the Constitution,

that is, the right of voting is not now in those to whom it was originally designed to be given.—The question is, whether this change is for the better, or for the worse; and next, if the change is for the worse, whether it is not a wise measure which proposes to return to what *was* the Constitution—that is, to allow the people really to choose the Members of Parliament as it was always intended they should do. This, in truth, is the whole question at issue, the very beginning and the ending of this Reform Bill.—But there is a large and a rich party in the Country who call this REVOLUTION—and say that it is destroying the Constitution, and turning every thing topsy-turvy.—We shall presently consider how far they are justified in this, and what are their motives—a very little common-sense only is necessary, to consider, whether what is proposed is any thing more than, in fact, going back to what the Constitution was, and what it ought to be—for the Reform Bill only ensures that the Members of Parliament should be elected by the People.

To get at the truth, let us consider what are the evils which have arisen from this change in the Constitution, which allows the Members of Parliament (whom it is pretended are elected by the people, and who falsely call themselves their

representatives) to be elected, not in fact by the people, but by what are called Boroughmongers—that is, sellers and buyers of Boroughs and seats in Parliament.

What is the duty of a House of Commons?—The House of Commons alone can grant any money to the King for the purpose of carrying on his government; the House of Commons (as representing the people who are taxed) determines—what taxes shall be raised for the King, for his own state and living—what shall be raised for his Ministers or himself to give away in Pensions—what for his great officers of state—what for paying the army and navy,—in short, for all the expenses of governing the country. The reason of this is, that the Constitution says, the people are only to be taxed by themselves, that is, by the Representatives that they elect. Thus, the House of Commons hold the purse-strings of the State, and alone can check a profuse or corrupt minister: without the consent of Parliament, the ministers of the King can get no money, and the members are to judge whether they spend the money raised in taxes properly and fairly. Under these circumstances, the people who pay the taxes (and who, of course, do not wish to pay more than is necessary for the

‘good government of the country’) elect those whom they think will act best for their interests, and who, when they find a minister squandering the public money, either in unjust wars, or profligate pensions and jobs, will at once check his career.

By this time, you begin to see the value and importance of a Member of Parliament; the value and importance to the People of one who is found fit for his duty, to those who elect him, and who pay the taxes he consents to have imposed—the value and importance to the Minister who can command him, and make him vote just as much money as he craves for, without inquiring how it is to be applied. Here is the complete key to the Question, why ministers attach so much importance to getting members on their side; and why those who have no constituents to call them to account, are the most valued, as they can vote as they please, without the fear before their eyes of losing their seat at the next election;—here, also, is a key to the value and importance to the people of a member being really elected by themselves, not by an old wall or a Boroughmonger. Take the case of Sir Robert Wilson; he was elected by the populous borough of Southwark, he was pledged to those who elected him to support Reform and Retrenchment with all his might, such had been

the opinions which he had been most profuse in professing, till almost his own friends, who thought with him, were tired of hearing them. Something came across him ;—possibly he considered that the gracious Sovereign who had restored him to his rank, was not in earnest ; that he only pretended to give his people Reform ; and possibly he might think so ill of him, as to suppose he might be best pleased with his voting contrary to his apparent wishes ; but be the cause what it may, Sir Robert followed up his red-hot flaming pledges, by a cold performance ; he began by voting against economy and retrenchment, and concluded, by voting against Reform ; with this vote, he finished his parliamentary career ! Now here he had *real constituents*, no tumble-down houses, no old walls ; no venal patron sent him to the House of Commons ; his constituents were some thousand electors of Southwark ; they shouted at him in derision and scorn, and he dared not even shew his face to make his apology. Whereas, had he been one of those representatives who were returned by an Old Wall and a rich Patron, he might have broken every pledge he ever made, and might have turned about and about, from one side of the House to the other, till he was giddy, and have had nobody but the old wall and his patron to call him to account.

This one instance is as good as a thousand, to prove the different values of a member with constituents, and one without.

Every thing has its market value : every thing finds its price : and therefore, ever since the change in the constitution, which has been mentioned, — that is, ever since the right to elect members of Parliament has in any place ceased to belong to the people, and has become vested in one or more persons as private property, every one has sought to get hold of this privilege for his own benefit. Now the right to elect two members of Parliament is vested in whoever owns a bit of an old wall at Old Sarum ; and therefore, this is a thing of some value ; not the wall — but its right appendant ; it is a rich jewel in a poor setting ; the owners, therefore, of these rights, put them up to sale just as other old walls or old houses are sold ; the only variance is in the different prices of the two articles ; the old walls at Old Sarum, and other property with like privileges, is worth about from forty to fifty thousand pounds to the seller ; these are called *close boroughs*. All right of the people to vote at the elections is *closely* shut out and vested in the owner ; the owners and dealers in these Boroughs are called *Boroughmongers* ; if they sell a seat for the whole Parliament, this fetches from four to five thousand

pounds. There are many things, however, taken into the estimation of the price ; the right of being elected, without even going down, is a luxury. This enhances the price, as luxuries must be paid for : the life of the king is calculated by an actuary : the strength or weakness of a minister, also comes into the account. Seats are also let by the session ; this costs from one thousand to fifteen hundred a year, according to the season and demand. Another way is, that the owner brings in a relative or friend who votes with the minister ; and this is worst of all for the country ; for, as the nominee gives to the minister what is worth four or five thousand pounds, the minister very complaisantly gives him in return, some good fat share of those taxes which he has kindly helped the minister to put on the people ;—and mind, he was enabled to do this with perfect safety, for the *old wall* elected him ; he has no troublesome prying constituents, to ask how or why he voted. All these are not imaginary cases or of rare occurrence. A man with a large family often buys a borough and puts in as members his sons and nephews one after another : after a time, each is provided for : by looking at the Red-Book list of different places, you may trace whole families who are now feeding on the produce of one of these boroughs. When the family is full, then the prudent parent sells this golden talisman

to some other speculator,—and for the same purpose.

Notwithstanding the excellence of our Constitution, as it now stands, all this is lawful, all this selling of seats, and buying of Boroughs is correct: though, to be sure, there are some very odd forms, and very odd phrases, still kept up. If you were to say half of what has been here printed, when Parliament is sitting, you might be sent to Newgate; yet, with a little caution, you may put an advertisement in the Papers, offering to buy a Borough, or you may deal for a seat with any one who has one to sell. The House of Commons once, in a fit of virtue, or at least some of its Members, declared, that seats in the House were sold like stalls at Smithfield; but yet the great organ of the House of Commons, the Speaker, said his hair stood on end, when somebody dared even to hint that such a thing was done,—though, perhaps, even he had paid the usual price for his own seat: one Member of Parliament openly stated in the House, that he had trucked away a seat with Lord Castlereagh for a place of some sort.

You must now begin to see the value of a close Borough to a Minister, and its value to

a Member who has no constituents to find fault with him; and also to feel the value to the People, of unrooting such a system; the upshot has been, that this sort of property has been bought by all sorts of people. Why, if a native Prince of India thinks he has been ill used, or has a claim to urge, he sends over to his commission-broker here, to buy him a *few members*, and they are (in consideration of his case being well attended to) to be for all other purposes at the beck and call of the Minister who commands. This was actually the case with the Nabob of Arcot, who long had his members in the House of Commons. If the Slave-owners in the West Indies find the current of opinion running against them rather stronger than before, if the general burst of execration at their cruelty is so loud that it reaches across the broad waters of the Atlantic, straight, some retired officer of their Colonies, some one who has pleaded before their own juries of Slave-owners, in extenuation of their floggings and their murders, is retained in their cause; and that provision of the Constitution, which has said that the people are to be represented, is perverted to such evil purposes as the sending hired pleaders in such an unrighteous cause, to mix with and contaminate those who have been *really* elected by the people. The late Lord Camelford, if he

had lived, meant to have returned his black footman for Old Sarum, and nobody could have prevented him. There are few people, however, who would throw away the price of a seat for such a whim. Lord Camelford, however, wished to expose a system which he detested. If he lived now, this additional proof would not have been necessary. The system has been already well and for ever exposed by the King himself, and those ministers in whom he has put his whole trust. Some noblemen in this country have as many as four or five of these Boroughs. The late Duke of Northumberland, who was a wholesale Boroughmonger in his time, as his Grandson is now, had about five; that is, he returned *ten Members* to Parliament, not one of whom had a single constituent to whom he was really responsible. Now this Duke did not sell these seats; that is, he did not sell them by retail, except on some particular occasion, or to some favoured customer; he used to keep them for his own use. He returned his lawyers, agents, relations and dependants; and it is a fact well known, and admitted by the Members themselves, that they used to call at his great house in the Strand, on their way down to the House of Commons, for orders as to how they were to vote, when any very particular question was coming on; and as he

ordered—so they voted, AYE! or NO! with the Minister or against him; just as he, the Minister, granted or refused, what he, the Duke, demanded. The Duke and the Ministers balanced their accounts afterwards. His Members may be likened to stage-players, they ranted their parts on the stage, but the price of the show was received by the check-taker at the door. The Duke had his places, his pensions, and his patronage, all dealt out (in right of his ten actors) to his relations, favourites, and friends. And if report be true, he used to drive hard bargains when the Minister was at a pinch, as well he might, seeing what a host of votes he could command.

Now you must not consider that all this has been just found out. The evil has been felt ever since the great Revolution in 1688, many wise and good men have from that time to this struggled against it, and have tried in vain to alter it; the abuse has been pointed out often and often, but without success. A little consideration will shew you how and why this success was wanting. King, Lords, and Commons, as has been said, are to make the laws; now the Lords, not contented with their power as Peers, soon found out the value of playing at representing the people in the Commons, and therefore became the great holders

of borough-property. Indeed the possession of one or more boroughs was one of the secret means of obtaining a peerage from a Minister. As more than one third of the Members of the House of Commons were returned for close boroughs or by corporations which were under the control of some person who had bought them, or who served them by his influence, how was it to be expected that the House would be induced to pass a law which would have the effect of destroying the power of one third of those who voted for it. Besides a Parliament really elected by the people would take good care that no Minister should throw away the people's money either in bribes, pensions, cruel or unjust wars; and though year after year many great and good men have advocated a Reform in the mode of Election, still the Lords and the Boroughmongers have joined forces with the Ministry, and laughed the Reformers to scorn. Amongst the most unbending, the most unflinching of them who have always called for Reform, through good report and through bad report, has been LORD GREY. LORD GREY, both when a Member of the House of Commons and since he has been a Peer, has always held out for this great object, he has over and over again refused all offers, rejected all honours, as vain and worthless without the gaining of this one

dron is poured the contributions of these, in order to purchase at any price, every seat that is to be sold, to bribe every vote that is to be bought, that they in this their last battle may conquer. If the people are but firm, and if they are but half as watchful and as eager as are their enemies, this unholy alliance will fail, and they will lose both their money and their hopes. Those who read this, must know that there is something worth fighting for, and though the struggle may be hard, the victory will be glorious! What has been written has been to shew that the giving back to the people the right of electing those who are to represent them, is not REVOLUTION, and that neither is it likely to produce any evil to the country, but on the contrary, great and lasting good: that the taking away from a few Lords and rich men, the right of sending non-responsible agents to Parliament to vote as they or the ministers think fit, will not ruin the country.

Now let us consider how this change is proposed to be effected; for there is another class of enemies to meet, and these perhaps are more insidious and more really dangerous than the open bawling boroughmonger who is against all change, who, could he have his wishes, would, like the greedy boy, like to have his pudding all plums:—that is, to have the

whole House of Commons composed of close-borough members. This other class say, "we admit your principle, there certainly is great need of change, we are, we own, rather too hard upon the people, they begin to find this out, let us soothe them, it is really, we are ready to admit, too much of a humbug to have Old Sarum and Gatton returning its four members, and Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds, and their millions of population, return none. No, let us keep these close-boroughs safe, but let us give a few representatives to the great towns, let Birmingham, and Manchester, aye, and Leeds too, have their members; thus we will give this reform bit by bit, and this will shut their mouths, they will be grateful, we shall hear no more of their bawling for a time, we shall get all the credit, and yet not bate an inch in reality."

This style is a great favourite with two classes of anti-reformers, with the cunning, and with the timid, the GULLS as Lord John Russell called them, with those who fear to trust to the people,—that people of whom they are utterly and entirely ignorant. Much of their terror arises from what they have seen the people express under feelings of anger and disgust, whilst suffering from having their rights so long withheld from them.

They have never considered what effect this system of injustice has had on the people. What, in fact, ever induced the people of Preston to return such a person as Mr. Hunt to Parliament, but feelings of despair and vengeance, and the hope that even his violence might gain for them that, which neither remonstrance, patience, nor persuasion, had ever been able to obtain?

But the Gulls are too poor judges of what the people really are; they are like timid riders, who dread to give the rein to a generous steed; and by their own bad horsemanship only irritate and chafe him, through fear and want of confidence.

The KING, however, had no such want of confidence. The Gulls may be afraid of the people; the King knows them and TRUSTS them. Lord Grey had no such want of confidence: and he, sanctioned by his Sovereign, together with all those who acted with him, wisely determined to give back to the people that which was their right—or fall in the attempt. Lord Grey and his Colleagues determined on their plan,—that plan shall be described to you,—and by that plan he and his colleagues have pledged themselves to stand or fall. They will stand or fall with the people: *let the people* return to Parliament members who are pledged to the bill, and you will have

your own : falter one step, swerve but an inch for the sake of interest—let any soft persuasion, or any harsh threat of a Boroughmonger, deter you from the right course, and you will fall back, for perhaps a century ; or what is even worse, you run the imminent danger by your cowardice of involving your country in a struggle which may shake its institutions to their very foundations, to gain that which might now without King's help, be won at no other cost than the firmness of the electors who are still free.

Let us consider in detail the measures which have been proposed, the *Revolutionary Measures, &c.* First every 40s. freeholder had a vote : now when the constitution gave him this right, in respect of his property, the copyholder was little better than a slave ; he was a real holder at will, he was worse than one of the Duke of Newcastle's voters at Newark, and perhaps was sometimes as hardly dealt with. He was bound to do suit and service to his Lord in reality, therefore he was in no wise an independent person. He, in fact, had no real property in the land he occupied, and at the same period such a thing as a leaseholder was scarcely known, the law classed his interest, whatever it might be, as a mere chattel, it was ranged with his chairs and tables. Times are now changed, both the copyholder and leaseholder are now real and substantial holders, and in all re-

spects as independent as the freeholders, and these therefore the Reform Bill puts in most cases, on a level with the freeholder, and says they shall have a voice in the election of county members. Now will you believe, that this is a limb, that it is part and parcel of what is called the GRAND REVOLUTION. That is, whereas freeholders only, might formerly vote, now all persons who have certain interests in land, be they freeholders, copyholders, or leaseholders of a certain value, are to vote. But the real grievance, the real sore place, is the total and absolute destruction of close-boroughs, that is, of those boroughs which were bought and sold, those boroughs where an old wall, or a few imaginary tenants returned members to Parliament, and which might be bought by, and sold to, the best bidder, those are swept off, all—without mercy, exception, or regard—and in the venom, and the spite of the anti-reformers; you hear their last moan, and see their last struggle.* After these again, there

* Instances by the hundred, might be told you, of the eagerness with which the Boroughmongers cling to their hold; of the cruelty and injustice they practise to all who oppose them. Take the following as a specimen:—

Alexander Baring, a Boroughmonger, who for some good reason did not get a peerage that he wanted, has actually driven from Parliament his son, and his kin, because they had the honesty to vote for Reform! The stern Brutus condemned to

is another class of boroughs where the population is small, and from those the right of returning one member is taken away: again all the rights of the corporations as regards the future, are done away with, and the power of election is given to the inhabitants holding houses at ten pounds value though the vote of no elector now alive is interfered with, except as to the out-voters, to be after noticed. This is another part and parcel of the reform, which is called REVOLUTION! The next point was, how were the rights of voting of those small decayed towns, the old walls, and the tumble-down houses to be disposed of? Why they are given, where they were originally designed for; to the largest, the richest, and the most populous towns; who, by this *new revolution*, will be called on for the first time to return members to represent them in Parliament, to consent to the taxes which the inhabitants have so long paid without having had any one to say for them, whether they were or were not justly imposed. You are perhaps waiting still for the dreadful sign—the real, the true character of this revolution, you must still think something is kept back. You must doubt, you can-

death his sons because they betrayed the state—the would-be peer, and the Boroughmonger, condemns his children, because they have been traitors to the close boroughs.

not but doubt, there must be something concealed, some just cause for all the clamours of such men as the Rt. Hon. Sir R. Peel, and their Graces the Dukes of Newcastle, Northumberland, Wellington, Mr. Horace Twiss, &c. &c. &c. but the whole has been faithfully and truly stated,—the story is all told, and the fair and only character of this revolution is, whereas, according to what the Constitution really is in what is termed theory or imagination, the people are to elect their representatives:—according to what it is in practice, the people scarcely elect half of them, and the other half are elected by the Boroughmongers, and this is the whole of the matter. How many are there who read this and who have heard all the fury and abuse against the King and his Ministers, but must have thought there was something more at the bottom, and who could not have supposed that the enemies to Reform would have dared to call out **REVOLUTION!** when in fact they were only wailing after that unjust power which enabled them to control a Minister, or to tax the people without their consent, and which is about to be wrested from them once and for ever! they are in fact grieving after that power which enabled the Ministers of the Crown to impose taxes which have borne down a rich, prosperous and industrious country, and which have pledged the future resources and industry of

the people for a debt of eight hundred millions. Can any man who reads this or who thinks at all for one minute (and it is a point worth thinking on) conceive that such a debt could have been incurred if the people had been really represented, that is if those who put on the taxes had been actually responsible to the people for their actions ?

How could Lord Grey, holding, as he does, the principles with which he began life, how could he, if he proposed *any*, have proposed any other Reform than this ? How could he have selected amongst the Boroughs to be swept away, seeing they were all in the like predicament ? How could he have effectually given a fair share of the Representation to the great Towns, but by taking away one Member from the smaller ones ? How could he have denied to the Copyholder and Leaseholder the right of voting in respect of their property, when the freeholder already enjoyed the right in respect of his property ? Who is there, even most opposed to this Minister and those who act with and support him, who would venture even to suspect, he or they would have lent themselves to so shallow, and so base a fraud, as to attempt to palm off a mock and unreal Reform, in the place of a searching and real renovation. There is, however, yet one branch of this great measure, which has not been

noticed. It was said, that the right of voting was enjoyed by freemen of some Towns, and this right passed to their children, sometimes to the husbands of daughters of freemen, &c. &c.* wheresoever residing. This freedom is obtained in different manners in different Corporations; now by the Reform this right is taken away from those who are not resident in the Towns. And here is what at first sight may appear a hardship to many; but it can scarcely happen in any case that a general rule for the good of all can be established without some particular hardships being inflicted. One of the greatest evils of Elections is the expense they fix on the Candidate. This expense deters many an honest and upright man from offering himself to the people. He well knows he shall not sell his vote, and his circumstances do not allow him to ruin his family for the honour of a Seat in Parliament, though he might be willing to devote his Time to his country. The Elections of Counties, such as York, have cost as much as £200,000, and of Boroughs as much as £20,000. Now at Maldon, whoever wishes to represent the Borough must be prepared to carry down, at his own cost, from London, some two or three thousand voters. All experience has shewn, that there are no places in fact so corrupt as those Boroughs, where there are many out-voters; for the

* Take Maldon, in Essex, for an instance.

general good, therefore, in order to abolish this crying evil of expense to the candidate, and to remove this source of corruption amongst the electors, the franchises of the out-voters have been taken away, and this without any real injustice. For by far the greater majority of all these out-voters have ceased to have any connection whatever with the Borough which conferred their freedom on them; and, in fact, in nine cases out of ten, when Members have been returned by out-voters, those are returned who have paid the highest carriage-money to the voter. The same evil, of a ruinous expense, applied to the elections of large Counties. In some places the voters came forty miles for the poll; and too frequently the qualifications of the candidates were only gauged by the length and breadth of their purse. Here, again, a crying evil has been remedied: the poll will be taken at several places at once: the cost of carrying voters will be comparatively trifling: Counties will be no longer disturbed by sixteen days of riot and excitement; and poor honest candidates will not be driven out of the field by rich knaves.

If what has been said has tended to explain this great measure of Reform to the Electors of Britain, the object of those who publish this will be answered: it is the Electors own cause, though many who

are powerful (and who, in any other cause but one in which their own interests are so deeply concerned, ought to have due credit) will tell you the contrary.

In coming to a conclusion on the subject, consider for a minute who are the people who propose this to you. See whether they are not likely to be pretty good judges of its effect. See if they are likely to recommend revolution or anarchy, or if they are so weak as to be unable to judge rightly. You will find they are persons who, as well as the Dukes of Northumberland, Wellington, Newcastle, and Sir Robert Peel, have a stake in the country. Aye, there are amongst them persons who have spent even millions in their own defence, in buying these very Boroughs, and which they nobly come forward to throw up for the public good. First, there is the King—the PATRIOT KING—is he likely to encourage revolution? But are such men as the Dukes of Devonshire, Norfolk, and Richmond; the Marquesses of Cleveland and Lansdowne, Earls Grosvenor, Grey, Lords Holland, Yarborough, &c. &c. &c., likely to be deceived as to the effect, or wilfully to forward what in their hearts they consider would tend to any thing but the maintenance of the Constitution, the happiness of the people, the honour and power of the country?

One word more, if you are convinced of the goodness of your cause, you must not neglect it. You must not tarry, nor fold your arms in sleep; the stake is too great to let any means remain untried. You must subscribe. You must unite, and you must only vote for those who pledge themselves unflinchingly for

THE BILL!
THE WHOLE BILL!!
AND NOTHING BUT
THE BILL!!!

Plain Reading for Plain People.

PARLIAMENTARY
CANDIDATE SOCIETY,

INSTITUTED TO

SUPPORT

REFORM

BY PROMOTING

THE

Return of Fit and Proper Members

TO

PARLIAMENT

London :

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1831.

ADDRESS.

The misunderstanding of some, and the misrepresentations of others, respecting the intentions of this SOCIETY, have induced the COMMITTEE again to address the Public.

The choice of representatives for Parliament is a matter of unspeakable importance. And, when the manly, honest measures proposed by the ministers, and sanctioned by the king, shall become the law of the land, and restore to the people the power of REALLY choosing their own representatives—on the choice made by the people will depend the safety of the country. To these real representatives must we look for defence against revolution, anarchy, and spoliation— from them must we hope for the future impartial administration of justice, for the means of freely obtaining and circulating useful knowledge, and the consequent safety, ease, and comfort of all classes. By them, in short, we may not only be saved from the dreadful evils with which we are now threatened, but also be raised to a degree of wealth, power, and happiness, unknown to any other age or nation.

The Committee appeals to the understanding of every man, and confidently demands his assent to this statement.

To aid the electors then, in correctly making a choice on

Which so much depends, is the *sole* object of this Society; and for this, its purpose, it will endeavour—

1. To make known the political conduct of public men.

2. To promulgate information respecting the political aptitude of others not at present members of the House of Commons, who may become candidates for seats.

The Society will not in any other way interfere in the business of choosing representatives—it will dictate to none—it will take no part in the details of any election contest; but will strictly confine its endeavours to the promulgation of the above-mentioned information; and it will continue to act, until a new House of Commons have been elected under the ministerial plan of reform—and will then dissolve.

The utility of this Society must depend upon the extent of its knowledge—its disinterestedness—its judgment—its honesty—and its diligence; and in no one of these particulars is it likely to be deficient, if it be as adequately supported for the future, as it has already been during the hitherto short period of its existence.

For the accomplishment of its honest, useful purpose, plain dealing is requisite: it has therefore resolved, without loss of time, to analyze the minority on the second reading of the well-drawn, clear, and in all respects excellent bill, introduced by the present administration. By this analysis, all may judge of the intentions of the Society, and no one be either misled or deceived.

The three first names on the printed list of the minority are taken as an example; the others will follow in due time.

[1] EDWARD HENRY A'COURT,

*M. P. for Heytesbury,**

Has sat in two previous Parliaments.

CONNECTIONS.

Brother to the Earl of Heytesbury, Ambassador at the Court of St. Petersburg.

Lord Heytesbury is the proprietor of this pocket borough, and returns both the members. The whole number of houses assessed to the house-duty, is twenty-one.

The number of electors is nominally — 50.

The real number is 1.

No poll has been taken within the last 30 years.

PROFESSION.

Post-Captain in the Navy.

POLITICS.

High Tory; a very constant attendant in the House of Commons, and a stedfast supporter of all ministers, except the present reforming ministers.

PUBLISHED WORKS.

PUBLIC ACTS.

Speeches in Parliament.—None; or if any, too brief to be reported.

VOTES.

In favour of the popular interest — None.

The following are a specimen of his votes *against the popular interest*—

1826. April.—Against Reform in the representation of Edinburgh.

1830. Feb. 23.—Against giving the elective franchise to Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham.

* This is one of the Boroughs to be disfranchised by the Ministerial Reform Bill.

May 28. — Against Mr. O'Connell's motion for Reform of Parliament.

June 14. — Against Reform of the Court of Chancery.

Nov. 15. — Against Sir Henry Parnell's motion respecting the Civil List.

March 22. — Against the second reading of Lord John Russell's Parliamentary Reform Bill.

[2] JAMES ALEXANDER,
*M. P. for Old Sarum,**
Has sat in five previous Parliaments.

CONNECTIONS.

Related to the Earl of Caledon, and the Bishop of Meath. Has a brother and nephew Directors of the East-India Company.

Is, with his brother, Josias Du Pré Alexander, and Lord Caledon, a proprietor of this pocket borough for which he sits.

The whole number of houses in the borough is — NONE.

The greatest number of electors polled within the last 30 years is—EIGHT.

The actual number of electors is — the proprietors.

PROFESSION.

A merchant; partner in a house in London, and in another in Calcutta. Has 4 stars, or £20,000 value of stock, in the East-India Company.

POLITICS.

High Tory; has constantly supported every administration but the present one; and is an advocate for the renewal of the East-India Company's charter.

PUBLISHED WORKS.

• PUBLIC ACTS.

Speeches in Parliament—None; or if any, so brief as not to have been reported.

* This is also one of the Boroughs to be disfranchised.

VOTES.

In favour of the popular interest—

1829. March. — With the Wellington administration, for the committee on the Catholic Relief Bill. *

Against the popular interest—

1826. April. — Against Reform in the representation of Edinburgh.

1828. June. — Against abolishing the office of lieutenant-general of the ordnance.

1830. Feb. 11. — Against transferring the franchise from the corrupt borough of East Retford to Birmingham.

Feb. 23. — Against giving the elective franchise to Birmingham, Manchester, and Leeds.

June 7. — Against abolishing the punishment of death for forgery.

June 24. — Against Reform in the Court of Chancery.

Nov. 15. — Against Sir H. Parnell's motion respecting the Civil List.

March 22. — Against the second reading of Lord John Russell's Parliamentary Reform Bill.

[S] JOSIAS DU PRE' ALEXANDER,

The other M. P. for Old Sarum.

Has sat in two previous Parliaments.

CONNECTIONS.

The same as his brother James Alexander. A Director of the East-India Company; he has 4 stars, or £.20,000 value of stock, and the family and partners about £.70,000. Exclusive of law and marine appointments in India, and the nominations to the Establishment of the India House, with the patronage connected with shipping and trade, the East-India Company disposes of yearly appointments to India, which appear, by returns laid before Parliament, to have been on an average as follow: —

An appointment to China, worth say	£.10,000	.
68 civil appointments to India, worth say £.5000 each	• 340,000	
460 military, clerical, and medical ap- pointments, worth say £.500 each	230,000	
	<u>£.580,000</u>	

This patronage is divided as follows; namely, the President of the Board of Controul, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Court of Directors, each two shares; and the Directors generally, one share each; making altogether 28 shares. Each Director's share may thus be estimated at £.23,000 a year, or thereabouts.

PROFESSION.

A merchant, as his brother.

POLITICS.

High Tory; a silent supporter of all administrations except the present. Friendly to monopolies.*

PUBLISHED WORKS.

PUBLIC ACTS.

Parliamentary speeches—None.

VOTES.*

1830. Nov. 15 —Against Sir H. Parnell's motion respecting the Civil List.

1831. March 22.—Against the Ministerial Reform Bill.

The requisite information respecting persons who have sat in the House of Commons, is to be obtained only by a diligent attention to the proceedings of that House, or by a careful perusal of the various works in which the debates of the Legislature are preserved: whilst the

* It is of great importance to the community that the attendance or non-attendance of every member should be known, and especially that the votes he gives should be published. It is only in a few cases that any such publication is made, and then it is generally confined to the minority. A member may therefore sit in the house during his life, and vote for every measure obnoxious to the general welfare, without having his votes recorded. This evil will, we may hope, be remedied by a reformed parliament.

part taken by candidates, who have not been members, at vestries and public meetings, can be learned only from those who have local means of information. The Society therefore claims the assistance of every friend of reform, who has information to contribute, and solicits correspondence with reformers in all parts of the empire.

The following schedule points out the kind of information required.

Name of the Candidate.	
Name of the Place for which he proposes himself.	
Connections.	
Profession.	
Politics.	
Published Works.	
Public Acts ; such as Speeches, Votes, &c.	
Miscellaneous Remarks	

Any person may become a member of this Society, on entering his name, address, and designation, in one of the Society's books, or by forwarding the same to the Secretary by letter; and on the payment of a subscription of not less than Five Shillings to the funds of the Society for the current year.

March 31, 1831.

ROBERT GOUGER, Hon. Sec.

Books have been opened at the Houses of Messrs. Ransom and Co. Pall Mall East; Messrs. Marten, Call, & Co. Old Bond Street; Messrs. Grote, Prescott, and Co. Threadneedle Street; Mr. Alderman Scales, Aldgate; Mr. Agassiz, 223, Piccadilly; Mr. Charles Fox Smith, Blackman Street, Borough; Mr. De Veary 44, Lisle Street, Leicester Square; the Office of the Westminster Review, Wellington Street, Strand; Mr. Franks, Red Cross Street; Mr. Juggins, 22, James Street, Covent Garden; Mr. Whitaker, Prince of Wales' Tavern, Brixton; and at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand, where the Secretary attends from 11 till 4 daily.

RADICAL REFORM,

THE ONLY REMEDY

FOR THE

DISORDERS OF OUR COUNTRY ;

OR,

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE CHANGES NECESSARY

BOTH IN

CHURCH AND STATE.

BY

BRITANNICUS.

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RADICAL REFORM.

IN those cases of bodily disease which baffle the skill of regular practitioners, a crowd of bold pretenders will generally be found eager to advertise their nostrums; each holding out his own specific as capable of effecting a safe and certain cure. The same thing commonly happens in seasons of national distress. Whilst the best and wisest of mankind confess themselves embarrassed, and feel afraid for a season to offer any thing but palliatives, there seldom are wanting noisy empirics, who promise that, if their countrymen will follow their guidance, they will point out a direct course to the re-moval of their difficulties.

That the present is a season of peculiar trial cannot be disputed. Whether we consider our agricultural, our commercial, or our social condition, we see great present suffering, and much cause of apprehension for

the future; nor has the collected wisdom of the legislature been able to devise any adequate means of relief. In the meantime there have risen up men, from amongst the lowest of the people, who rend the air with clamours in favour of a remedy which they represent to be abundantly competent for the removal of all our evils. This much boasted specific is *Radical Reform*—a thorough change in our whole political system—a complete renovation of our civil and ecclesiastical establishments.

The operation of this remedy has so recently been witnessed in a neighbouring nation, that we have no occasion to resort to conjecture in order to ascertain its probable consequences. We have seen the whole fabric of government, the whole system of ecclesiastical discipline, completely dissolved; the various orders of society have been reduced into one common mass; an abundant fermentation has been excited; and the result has been *moral debasement, political degradation, and universal misery*.

What opinion then can be entertained of a writer who, with this awful spectacle before his eyes, comes forward to make the bold assertion that, as far as words go, our demagogues are in the right, and that *Radical Reform is the only remedy for the dangers of the country?*

Such, whatever estimate may be formed of the senti-

ments or of the arguments that shall be urged in its support, is the firm conviction of him who solicits his countrymen to lay aside prepossession, and silence passion, in order that they may hear the voice of reason and religion.

Our Reformers maintain that they have *Reason* on their side. The best proof of this would be to shew, that they are supported by *Religion* also. Reason, when it rejects the authority of revelation, is always sure to become the slave of passion. Instead of restraining the evil affections of our nature, it seeks for excuses by which they may be justified, and means by which they may be indulged. But when, humbly bowing down to the word of God, it receives light from that word concerning the true happiness as well as duty of man; it is indeed well suited to be the guide of our conduct. Were there no other argument to shew that reason, untaught by revelation, is an insufficient leader, this might perhaps suffice; that unassisted reason can look no further than the *present* life. It must therefore regulate all its plans of action by the supposed interests of this transitory state; whilst enlightened reason, contemplating the boundless prospect of eternity, and looking upon man as a mere sojourner upon earth, in his passage to a better world, will form its judgments and direct its proceedings with an especial view to that higher state of existence. It is obvious that there must be a great dif-

ference in the conduct of men according as it is regulated by the one or the other of these principles.

The writer of these pages does not hesitate to declare, that his arguments are principally addressed to those who profess to believe Christianity, and consequently do not limit their prospects to the present world. Yet he is not wholly without the hope of proving, that the conduct which he desires to recommend would be eminently conducive to our temporal peace and prosperity.

What then is that conduct? It is, *a sincere acknowledgment of God, and a resolute obedience to his will in every act both of public and of private life.* To the neglect of this duty the writer believes that all our national and individual distresses may be traced. A correction of that neglect is therefore the Radical Reform which he considers as the only cure for our national dangers.

In order to prove this assertion, it may be expedient to consider the nature of our dangers, and inquire into the circumstances which have apparently given rise to them. The most pressing subject of apprehension at the present moment is, the overthrow of our civil and ecclesiastical establishments, producing anarchy, licentiousness, impiety, and involving all ranks of the community in ruin. Next to this is the extinction of liberty,

either in consequence of our present rulers feeling it necessary, for their own preservation and the general peace, to curtail those parts of our constitution which secure the freedom of the subject; or by the exaltation of some popular leader to despotic authority, on the ruins of the throne and of the altar. The confusion and the misery which must prevail in either of these cases, and in the steps that lead to them; and the opportunities which they would give our foreign enemies to effect our subjugation, or at least the ruin of our national greatness, need not be described.

These, however, are *prospective* evils. We *already* suffer severely by the increasing distresses of our manufacturers and merchants, by the heavy load of taxation, that cannot be materially lightened, without the robbery of the national creditor; and by the growing amount of our poor rates, which, whilst they multiply the objects on whom they are expended, are likely, at no distant period, to exhaust the sources of supply.

Such are our present grievances—grievances which the most loyal deplore, which our rulers themselves are compelled to acknowledge, and for which none have yet pointed out the means of remedy. To these present grievances our prospective dangers may, in a great measure, be traced. Howsoever speculative men may amuse themselves in their studies, with Utopian projects

of reform; howsoever, political leaders may make them the themes of declamation, for the purpose of gaining a temporary triumph over the present possessors of power; these speculations and declamations would have but little influence on the mass of the community, were it not that the multitude, having their minds soured by actual sufferings, eagerly listen to any who point out causes for their distress to which they have not themselves been accessory, and means of relief which are to be accomplished at the expense of others.

The Reformers assert that our distresses are the result of immoderate taxation—taxation occasioned by extravagant expenditure—extravagant expenditure upheld by political corruption. Their summary method of cure, therefore, is to strike, as they conceive, at the root of corruption, by establishing *Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage*.

Error is never more dangerous than when some portion of truth is mingled with it; for that truth extends its protection to the mass of falsehood, and becomes itself corrupted by the base association. Much of our distress may, perhaps with reason, be ascribed to the load of taxation under which we groan; for by enhancing the price of the necessaries of life, it directly increases the difficulty the lower orders feel of obtaining subsistence, and, by raising the wages of labour, it in-

directly impedes agriculture, and adds to the price of manufactured goods, so that they cannot be brought to market cheap enough to endure competition with the productions of other countries, where labour can be purchased at a lower rate. That our system of representation is not immaculate, and that the strength of government consists in parliamentary influence, are also facts which cannot altogether be disputed. But, neither will all those facts together suffice to account for our present embarrassments, nor are the schemes proposed by our demagogues by any means calculated to remove them.

Let us suppose Annual Parliaments and Universal Suffrage to be adopted—the inevitable result would be universal anarchy. The most noisy and factious persons would be chosen as the representatives of the nation. The first proceeding of this motley legislature would be to pull down all that is established; but, before any new system could be substituted, these favourites of the people would be supplanted by some new adventurers, who would in turn have to yield their place to yet more successful rivals. In a short time, all those landmarks of law and justice which the collective wisdom of ages has established, would be swept away by the torrent of innovation; the voice of popular clamour would, for a season, drown every appeal to the dictates of reason and religion; a paroxysm of feverish agitation

would be succeeded by the lassitude of exhaustion and of terror; and the final issue would be the establishment of despotic power as the only security for life and property.

In the mean time what would the poor have gained? Would they more abundantly enjoy the necessaries of life? Would bread, or clothing, or fuel be cheaper? It is impossible that they should become so under such circumstances. These things cannot be produced without labour, nor sold without profit. But in a season of anarchy, few would be inclined or encouraged to labour: whilst those who possessed a stock of these, or any other commodities, would refuse to sell them except at the highest price; and since insecurity would prevent competition, the price would rise in consequence of a growing demand unchecked by an additional supply. During the revolutionary tumults at Paris, repeated scarcities of bread took place. Maxima and minima of price were fixed in vain: and though the ovens were guarded to prevent them from being plundered, but a small portion of the populace could procure bread for their families. A notion is spreading amongst the lower classes, that they who are in distress have a right to take what they want from their better provided neighbours. To say nothing of the wickedness of such a notion, how soon would the attempt to act upon it defeat itself. All who could would remove their property to places of greater

security. Whatever could not be carried away would be quickly wasted; or if any man accumulated a store by plunder, he would shortly, on the same principle, be plundered in his turn. No resources for subsistence would then be left but those of honest industry, which had much better have been practised in the first place, before the means of obtaining or enjoying the rewards of industry had been destroyed.

That the representation which has thus been given of the probable consequences from revolutionary proceedings is not imaginary, may be proved by the experience of the last thirty years. But unhappily that experience, whilst it alarms the thoughtful persons who have a stake in the community, is altogether lost upon the inconsiderate and hungry multitude, who look only to the supply of their present necessities, and are ready to follow any persons who promise them relief at the expense of their superiors.

There seems but too much cause to fear lest the apostles of confusion should be permitted by Providence to have a momentary triumph. Those who have latterly had much communication with the lower orders of the people, especially in manufacturing districts, must be conscious that a spirit of insubordination has been for a long time diffusing itself amongst them.

How far our manufacturers are justified in the assertion that they have been goaded into associations to compel an increase of wages, by the prior combinations of their masters to reduce them to the lowest pittance on which they could subsist, it may be difficult to determine; but it is certain that there is scarcely any class of manufacturers who are not united together for the purpose of resisting what they deem oppression, and for the support of their common interests. Union has led to a feeling of strength, and a contempt of authority. From despising their immediate superiors, the progress has been easy to contempt for magistrates even of the highest order. In the mean time their minds have been inflamed by the seditious publications which are so widely and cheaply dispersed; and the contempt of Government has been still further increased by the hatred which they have been taught to feel for the ministers of the Established Religion; nay, it may be found in some instances, for religion itself. Even amongst those, who do not despise religion, too many have acquired the strongest prejudices against those of its teachers who belong to the National Church; prejudices, that may in some cases have been increased by instances of individual misconduct, but have been chiefly fostered by the growing spirit of dissent, of which it is not necessary at this time to trace the origin. The efforts made of late years to enlighten

the minds of the lower orders, have been in general dictated by the most benevolent motives; but there is much cause to fear that they have not always been conducted in the wisest manner. These efforts have extended to the communication of the means of knowledge; but not always to the diffusion of sound principles of religion or morality. Knowledge of any kind is power, but power is only valuable as far as it is exercised in a right direction. The faculties of reading and writing which almost all in these days possess, make them susceptible of receiving and communicating excitement; but by no means insure an excitement to wise and virtuous conduct. In former times the lower orders were disposed to look up for guidance to their better educated superiors; they now think that they are sufficiently instructed to judge for themselves, and deem it glorious to discard the ancient prejudices, that taught them to reverence priests and legislators and rulers, on account of the authority which they once believed that God had entrusted to them. Whoever expects that in these days the people can be governed by *prejudice* or respect for constituted authorities, merely because they are constituted, will be found to labour under a most dangerous delusion. No—there seems to be but two means by which the people can be kept in subjection—absolute force, or a conviction that their own interest requires submission to the laws and obedience to the magistrates.

It is much more agreeable to human nature when possessed of power, to think of subduing opposition by the exertion of that power than by exercising a moral influence over the minds of men. Experience, however, shews that nothing but a moral influence can be of permanent duration. When the minds of the majority of a nation are thoroughly alienated from their rulers, they will soon learn to combine their efforts, so that they will be able to oppose, not merely physical force, which may be baffled by skilful counteraction, but such an union of talent with strength as shall at length assert its preponderance.

It is then to *moral influence*, that sound policy, as well as religious wisdom, should induce the rulers of mankind to have recourse. It is by the dissemination of right principles that the pestilence of error is to be counteracted. It is by the exercise of right conduct, and the sincere correction of abuses, that popular dislike is to be overcome, and popular affection to be recovered. However active the teachers of sedition and impiety have been, however their efforts have been favoured by the peculiar distresses of the times; there yet, it may be hoped, remain enough of religious impressions and patriotic feelings amongst the bulk of the population, to be wrought upon by those who hold the chief influence in the nation; if they will seriously and heartily pursue that system of action which prudence and religion com-

bine to recommend, and on which the divine blessing may with reason be expected.

It is with the view of recommending such a system of action that these pages have been composed; and happy indeed will the writer feel himself, if he should be made instrumental in carrying conviction to the minds of those who are capable of weighing the force of his arguments.

Independently of the persuasion which the Scriptures lead us to entertain, that war, and famine, and pestilence, with other calamities of a general nature, are dispensations of Providence by which rebellious nations are chastised, it would be easy to trace most of our present sufferings to causes that would not have existed, if true religion had prevailed amongst us. Until it shall prevail, we can indulge no rational hope of relief; but, if we sincerely yield ourselves up to its influence, the best hopes may be entertained of national and individual prosperity.

This is the true Radical Reform—a Reform of principles leading to an amendment of practice. This is a reform which will cut off oppression from rulers, corruption from the legislature, sedition and disaffection from the populace. Let us return to God whom we have forsaken—let us humble ourselves beneath his

mighty hand—let us 'unfeignedly renounce those things which are displeasing in his sight—let us live as becomes a people favored with the light of his glorious gospel—and then we shall obtain his blessing and protection.

Consider for a moment what would be the effect produced by the sincere adoption of Christian principles by every class of persons amongst us from the highest to the lowest.

Far is it from the intention of the writer to imitate or countenance the base attempts of pretended patriots to blacken the character of him to whom the chief authority in the state is at this time entrusted. Yet, could he have access *in private* to that distinguished personage, and be admitted to the privilege of speaking *with Christian sincerity*, he would endeavour, in respectful but plain language, to urge upon him the wisdom and the duty of treading in the footsteps of his honored Father.* He would say to him—Remember, Sir, that a city set upon a hill cannot be hid. The eyes of

* In the life of Bishop Burnet we find a letter addressed by that excellent man to King Charles II. who consulted him concerning the state of the nation; a letter which, though it failed of its desired effect, will do everlasting honor to the writer, and deserves to be attentively read by all who are entrusted with the government of nations. It is as follows:—

Britain—the eyes of the world, are upon you ;—all your actions are noticed, your occupations, your amusements,

“ 29th January, 1688.

“ May it please your Majesty,

“ I HAVE not presumed to trouble your Majesty for some months, not having any thing worthy your time to offer, and now I choose rather this way, since the infinite duty I owe you puts me under restraints in discourse, which I cannot so easily overcome. What I shall now suggest to your Majesty, I shall do it as in the presence of Almighty God, to whom I know I must give an account of all my actions. I therefore beg you will be graciously pleased to accept this most faithful zeal of your poor subject, who has no other design in it than your good and the discharge of his own conscience.

“ I must then first assure your Majesty, I never discovered any thing like a design of raising rebellion, among all those with whom I converse; but I shall add, on the other hand, that most people grow sullen, and are highly dissatisfied with you, and distrustful of you.

“ Formerly your Ministers, or His Royal Highness, bore the blame of things that were ungrateful, but now it falls upon yourself, and time, which cures most other distempers, increases this. Your last Speech makes many think it will be easy to fetch up petitions from all parts of England. This is now under consultation, and is not yet determined, but I find so many inclined to promote them, that as far as I can judge, it will go that way. If your Majesty calls a new Parliament, it is believed, that those who have promoted the petitions will be generally elected; for the inferior sort of people are much set upon them, and make their judgment of men from their behaviour in that matter. The sober sort of those, who are ill pleased at your conduct, reckon that either the state of your affairs beyond sea, or of your Exchequer at home, will ere long necessitate your meeting your Parliament; and that then things

your expenses, are narrowly observed by those who feel that you have been placed by Providence in your exalted

must be rectified; and therefore they use their utmost endeavours to keep all quiet. If your Majesty has a session in April, for supporting your Allies, I find it is resolved by many that the money necessary to maintain your alliances shall be put into the hands of commissioners, to issue it as they shall answer to the two houses; and these will be so chosen, that as it is likely that the persons will be very unacceptable to you, so they being trusted with the money will be as a council of state to controul all your councils; and as to your Exchequer, I do not find any inclination to consider your necessity, unless many things be done to put them into another disposition than I can observe in them. The things that will be demanded, will not be of so easy a digestion as that I can imagine you will ever be brought to them, or indeed that it will be reasonable or honourable for you to grant them. So that in this disorder of affairs, it is easy to propose difficulties, but not so easy to find out that which may remove them.

“ There is one thing, and indeed the only thing, in which all honest men agree, as that which can easily extricate you out of all your troubles; it is not the change of a minister, or of a council, a new alliance, or a session of parliament, but it is (and suffer me, Sir, to speak it with a more than ordinary earnestness) a change in your own heart, and in your course of life. And now, Sir, if you do not with indignation throw this paper from you, permit me (with all the humility of a subject prostrate at your feet) to tell you, that all the distrust your people have of you, all the necessities you now are under, all the indignation of Heaven that is upon you, and appears in the defeating all your councils, flow from this—that you have not feared nor served God, but have given yourself up to so many sinful pleasures. Your Majesty may perhaps justly think, that many of those that oppose you have no regard for

station, not for your own indulgence, but for the good of the community. But, still more, remember that

religion, but the body of your people consider it more than you can imagine. I do not desire your Majesty to put on a hypocritical shew of religion, as Henry the Third of France did, hoping thereby to have weathered the storm of those times. No! that would be soon seen through; and, as it would provoke God more, so it would increase jealousies. No, Sir, it must be real, and the evidences of it signal. All those about you, who are the occasions of sin, chiefly the women, must be removed, and your court be reformed. Sir, if you will turn you to religion sincerely and seriously, you shall quickly find a serene joy of another nature possess your mind, than what arises from gross pleasures; God would be at peace with you, and direct and bless all your counsels; and all good men would presently turn to you, and ill men would be ashamed, and have a thin party. For I speak it knowingly, there is nothing has so alienated the body of your people from you, as what they have heard of your life, which disposes them to give an easy belief to all other scandalous reports.

“ Sir, this counsel is now almost as necessary for your affairs as it is for your soul; and though you have highly offended that God, who has been infinitely merciful to you, in preserving you at Worcester fight, and during your long exile, and who brought you back so miraculously, yet He is still good and gracious; and will, upon your sincere repentance, and change of life, pardon all your sins, and receive you into his favour; Oh, Sir, what if you should die in the midst of all your sins; at the great Tribunal where you must appear, there will be no regard to the crown you now wear; but it will aggravate your punishment, that being in so eminent a station, you have so much dishonoured God. Sir, I hope you believe there is a God, and a life to come, and that sin shall not pass unpunished.

the eye of God is upon you ; that, though not amenable on earth to any other tribunal than that of public opinion,

If your Majesty will reflect upon your having now been twenty years upon the Throne, and in all that time how little you have glorified God, how much you have provoked Him, and that your ill example has drawn so many after you to sin, that men are not now ashamed of their vices, you cannot but think, that God is offended with you ; and if you consider how ill your councils at home, and your wars abroad have succeeded, and how much you have lost the hearts of your people, you may reasonably conclude, this is of God, who will not turn away his anger from you, till you turn to Him with your whole heart.

“ I am no enthusiast either in opinion or temper ; yet I acknowledge I have been so pressed in my mind to make this address to you, that I could have no ease till I did it. And since you were pleased to direct me to send you, through Mr. Chaffinch's hands, such information as I thought fit to convey to you, I hope your Majesty will not be offended, if I have made this use of that liberty. I am sure I can have no other design in it but your good ; for I know very well this is not the method to serve any ends of my own. I therefore throw myself at your feet, and once more, in the name of God, whose servant I am, do most humbly beseech your Majesty, to consider of what I have written, and not to despise it for the meanness of the person who has sent it, but to apply yourself to religion in earnest. And I dare assure you of many blessings, both Temporal and Spiritual, in this life, and of eternal glory in the life to come. But if you will go on in your sins, the judgments of God will probably pursue you in this life, so that you may be a proverb to after ages ; and after this life, you will be for ever miserable ; and I, your poor subject, that now am, shall be a witness against you in the great day, that I gave you this free and faithful warning.

Sir,

you must ere long stand at the judgment seat of Him by whom kings reign, and who will call to a severe account all those who have abused the authority entrusted to them.

Be persuaded then to act consistently with those professions of religion which you have so often made in public proclamations, and in addresses to your assembled Parliament. Imitate your royal parent in a devout attendance on sacred ordinances; imitate his temperance, his purity of manners, his disposition to lighten the burdens of his people, his studious endeavours to promote their religious and moral improvement. Do this sincerely, do it from Christian principles, and be assured, that you will effectually conciliate the affections of your subjects, and will be certain of obtaining the blessing of the Most High.

In like manner might the other members of that illustrious house be addressed. They might be reminded,

Sir, no person alive knows that I have written to you to this purpose; and I chose this evening, hoping that your exercise to-morrow may put you into a disposition to weigh it more carefully. I hope your Majesty will not be offended with this sincere expression of my duty to you; for I durst not have ventured on it, if I had not thought myself bound to it, both by the duty I owe to God, and that which will ever oblige me to be,

“ May it please your Majesty, &c.”

that it will little avail them to countenance institutions for religious or charitable purposes, unless they scrupulously observe the principles of purity and equity, unless they abstain from vain expenses, and separate from vicious companions. Oh! let them be persuaded to consider how much their influence, decidedly cast into the scale of truth and righteousness, might contribute to its national preponderance.

The lessons, however, which might be humbly suggested to those who are placed at the very summit of rank and power, are full as necessary to be urged on those eminent persons to whom the administration of government is committed. It must with pleasure be acknowledged, that most of them are distinguished for truly respectable and amiable conduct in private life, and some have given reason to believe that they have a sincere regard for religion. But, is there not reason to regret that they have not been able to rise superior to the corrupt maxims of worldly policy—that they have not had the courage to stand forward on the ground of purer principles, and make the experiment, whether it be not possible to govern a nation in strict conformity to the laws of our Almighty Sovereign?

The doctrine of politicians is, that statesmen cannot be expected to confine themselves to the same maxims as morality would prescribe for the regulation of private

life. In consequence, dissimulation, intrigue, corruption under the name of influence, contrivances to render the evil passions and propensities of men subservient to the revenue or the power of the sovereign, these, with other such like proceedings, are considered as lawful and even necessary in the government of a nation such as ours. No truth however can be more certain (though some may be more obvious) than this, that *nothing which is morally wrong, can be politically right*. Whatsoever tends to injure the principles, tends also to subvert the happiness of the community; and, let it be remembered, that governments were instituted not for the sake of the rulers, but of the subjects. Even if it could be shewn that the *ruler* might derive permanent advantage from any conduct which was not strictly just and upright, still he has no right to seek his own advantage at the expense of his people. But, in truth, the interests of rulers and people are so clearly connected, that the one cannot suffer without the other. Will it then admit of a dispute that immorality of any kind is of injurious tendency?—Not to mention for the present that most important consideration that it tends to draw upon a kingdom the displeasure of God, consider its obvious consequences:—Can society prosper without mutual and well founded confidence?—Can intemperance and licentiousness produce any lasting benefit?—Are not uprightness in dealing, purity and sobriety of

manners, industry, frugality, and self-denial, the qualities which increase the wealth and happiness of nations.

What shall we say then to religious ministers of state who not only plunder the subjects, but excite them to plunder one another, and foster their propensity to gaming, by *annual lotteries*?—What shall we say to the encouragement given to the consumption of spiritous liquors, for the sake of the excise duties?—What shall we say to the doctrine that ministers *must* secure a majority in parliament; and therefore, that they must keep at their disposal a certain number of needless offices, and expend a considerable portion of public money in pensions, in order that they may be certain of a sufficient number of supporters in the great council of the nation?—Are Englishmen so thoroughly vicious, so incapable of judging concerning the wisdom of public measures, so blind to the perception of what is done for their advantage, that a wise and virtuous sovereign, having no object but the public good, and employing ministers who were sincerely desirous of promoting that object, would be left without support?—Surely an assertion of this kind would be a libel on the nation. But, if such an assertion be not ventured, where is the necessity of resorting to corrupt influence?—For, whatever name be given to it, that influence must be corrupt which deters men from voting according to their con-

scientious judgment. Will it be said that the best and wisest ministers could not contend against a factious opposition, if they relied only on the power of their arguments to produce conviction?—It may be answered, let it be evident that they are influenced by no selfish motives, let it be evident that they are not seeking to gratify the vain or vicious inclinations of the sovereign or his family, that they are willing to have all their measures fairly canvassed, and to adopt the judgment of their opponents, when that judgment can be proved better than their own; they will then soon acquire such well founded, because well merited, popularity, that the clamours of the factious will not be able to shake their power. It is at least worth while for ministers to make the experiment. Let them look the state of the country fairly in the face; let them be willing to allow a fair investigation and exposure of its condition; let them consent to such reforms as would render our legislative assemblies the real organs for declaring the public voice, and at the same time the instruments of directing the public judgment; let them manfully claim the support of just and virtuous and thinking men: and there can be little reason to doubt that they would obtain such an influence for good purposes, as no rulers of this country ever before enjoyed. If they should really be induced to adopt this conduct by reverence for God and his laws; if they should sincerely apply to *Him* for wisdom to guide their

deliberations, and for his blessing to prosper their measures; that wisdom would doubtless be imparted, that blessing would rest upon them; and then it is impossible to calculate on the elevation of prosperity to which they might be made the instruments of raising their country. Whenever such a course of action has in any degree been adopted, how beneficial have been its effects. Remember how much cause France had to bless the administration of Sully; consider how much reason there is to believe that Neckar's principles, if acted on, might have prevented the downfall of that monarchy.* Recollect the power which the illustrious Chatham maintained, though he for a long time stood alone amongst his colleagues in office, and was known to be by no means a favourite with his royal master. That administration cannot fail to be strong, which enjoys the confidence of the nation; that administration cannot fail to obtain such confidence, which acts with manly candour and integrity, and makes it evident that the public good is the sole object of its labours.

The principles which have been thus recommended respect the conduct of rulers towards their own people; but the same principles should regulate their conduct towards all other nations. To illustrate this position in all its details would lead us into too wide a field; yet it

* See Madame de Staël's Reflections on the French Revolution.

deserves consideration, how far the adoption of a just and liberal policy with respect to territorial possessions and commercial transactions would tend to the national advantage. Suppose that a kingdom like Great Britain should solemnly renounce (and by its actions prove the sincerity of that renunciation,)—should renounce all desire to aggrandise itself at the expense of other countries, should declare that it wished to feel and act as a member of the great family of mankind, and to aim at nothing but the promotion of universal peace and universal happiness: suppose that it were to offer to the surrounding countries a repeal of all those commercial regulations, which had been dictated by the selfish spirit of its own manufacturers and merchants, and to propose that freedom of intercourse and fair reciprocity should form the basis of all its dealings: can we believe that any injury would in the end result from such a system of policy? For a time, it is true, a check might be given to certain classes of manufacturers, who have obtained a monopoly in the home market as to their particular articles of produce; but the whole nation would be benefited by obtaining those articles at a cheaper rate, and by the export of a corresponding value in other commodities, to the production of which the genius of our people, or the nature of our soil, would be more particularly suited. Why should there be a greater rivalry between France, and Spain, and Holland, and

Britain, than between Cornwall, and Kent, and Suffolk, or any other portions of the kingdom? Are we not, indeed, members of one great family; and would not the happiness of each separate member be increased by the prosperity of the whole? Yes, be assured, the renunciation of selfishness, whether by nations or individuals, the adoption of a large and liberal policy, as it would cut off the occasions of contention, would produce a degree of general peace and happiness such as mankind have unhappily never yet experienced.

In order that Ministers, if they were really influenced by such views, should be able to act consistently with them, they must undoubtedly have the support of Parliament; and they would have such support, if its members were determined to make Christianity their rule of conduct. Our senators would then consider themselves as forming, what they are called, the great Council of the Nation, and they would determine that their deliberations should be guided by regard to the public good, and not by any factious or personal considerations. The great object of the members of such a council should be, to give the best advice in their power to the sovereign, to make wise laws, to strengthen the hands of the executive in all right measures, and at the same time to check abuses and correct mistakes whenever they are detected. Is this the usual course of pro-

ceeding in our legislative assemblies? Is there not too much reason for the remark made concerning one of those assemblies, by one of the most justly venerated of its own members, that its character is too often changed from that "of a Christian deliberative assembly into that of a stage for prize-fighters."* It is made the scene of contention for dignity and power, instead of being the place where the best talents of the empire conspire to study for the general good. Surely this would not be so, if those entrusted with the solemn (it might almost be said sacred) character of national legislators devoted themselves unreservedly and entirely to the great objects for which they were appointed. Were this the case, there would be no need for corruption, either in or out of Parliament. Ministers, in order to secure a majority, would only have to shew that their plans deserved support, or to alter them where any defects were pointed out:—and candidates for a seat in Parliament would chiefly have to convince their constituents, that they possessed the talents and the virtues necessary for so important a trust.

All this, it may be said, is Utopian and chimerical;—but why is it so? because we do not deserve the title which we presumptuously assume, of being a Christian nation. If the majority of us were real Christians, we

* See Mr. Wilberforce's Practical View of Christianity, c. iv. sect. 3.

should send such representatives to Parliament as deserved that character, and then the liberties of the people, and the authority of the sovereign would be alike secure in their hands.

This, this only, is the true reform in Parliament. Other plans may be tried to little purpose. Venal boroughs may be disfranchised, populous towns may be admitted to that share which they seem to have reason for claiming in the choice of legislators; but still, if the mass of the people be irreligious, it is but too probable that most of their representatives will be irreligious also; and those who are chosen by the largest number of constituents will probably be the least deserving.

Let our Reformers then turn their attention to *this* point. Instead of inflaming the minds of the populace with clamours for Annual Parliaments and Universal Franchise, let them exhort the people to make a good use of the privileges they already enjoy;—to send to Parliament none but men of sound principle and inestimable conduct in private life. When this beginning is made, every thing else that is really desirable will soon follow, the decayed parts of our constitution, if such there be, will be restored; venality and party-violence will give place to sincere deliberation for the public good; and the members of administration, instead of having their time chiefly occupied in combats to pre-

serve their power, will be able to exert that power in undivided efforts for their country's welfare.

Though it may be right, however, to call our Reformers to such a mode of correcting the abuses they complain of, there is but too little reason for hoping that the appeal will be successful. To whom then must we look as the agents for producing national and individual reformation? To whom ought we to look so earnestly as to those who are intrusted with the sacred character of public teachers and messengers of God?

Through the goodness of Providence, there exists in this country a Christian church, of which the doctrine is eminently pure, the forms of worship spiritual, and the discipline, in all essential points, conformable, as far as we can learn from history, to the apostolic model.— Amongst the members of this church, both clergy and laity, examples of piety can be produced equal to the best that are recorded in any age or in any communion; and, perhaps, there never was a period when it could boast of a larger number of zealous, wise, and learned ministers. Yet there seems much reason to apprehend that, from various causes, this church has gradually declined, rather than advanced, in popularity, and consequently in influence, with the bulk of the community. If we calculate the proportion which the dissenters from our established worship bore to the whole population, at

the beginning and the close of the last century, we shall find that it is very remarkably increased, and that the increase has gone on, within these few years, with vastly accelerated rapidity. Yet it is remarkable, that most of the grounds of difference, which, in former times, were so fiercely contested, are now but slightly insisted on. By far the larger number of dissenters admit, that the doctrine of the church, as maintained in her articles and liturgy, is perfectly sound and orthodox. To what cause then are we to ascribe their separation? Amongst the most prominent, certainly, is the neglect, which has too long continued, of providing sufficiently numerous and convenient places of worship for our growing population. On this subject, the eyes of our civil and ecclesiastical rulers appear to be so completely opened, and their zeal so much awakened, that it is not necessary to enlarge. With respect to any other causes, the writer is anxious to express himself with the utmost tenderness and caution. It would little correspond with his feelings to dwell upon the faulty conduct of any who fill the sacred office, much less of those whose eminent station in the church should be adorned by peculiar sanctity and devotedness to the service of their heavenly Master.— But, without descending to particulars, it may be permitted to lament the divisions existing amongst the clergy themselves. It may be permitted to lament the prevailing practice of branding those who are distinguished by peculiar zeal and diligence with some opprobrious

epithet. It may be permitted to lament that, in some recent instances, a disposition has been shewn to expel from their cures, by an unusual stretch of diocesan authority, men who were obnoxious on no other account than the exemplary discharge of their duties; whilst great toleration has been extended to the teachers of heretical doctrine and to persons of immoral conduct. Surely, wherever such things are witnessed, the minds of the people will be alienated, and a strong temptation will be held out to resistance against power which appears to be so partially exercised. It would be well if those who possess authority of any kind would remember, that the favourable opinion of mankind is its surest bulwark. The people of this country have cast off (in some respects, perhaps, more than is desirable) their ancient prejudices. They canvass without scruple the actions of their superiors, and especially of their religious instructors. If those superiors and instructors therefore would preserve their influence, it must be by such conduct as may command esteem and veneration.

If then the voice of one who loves his country, and especially loves that pure and apostolic church, in whose communion he was educated, and hopes to die, might reach the ears of the Bishops and clergy of this nation, he would humbly but earnestly call upon them to cultivate such union amongst themselves, and shew such assiduity and love towards their people, as may secure

their reverence and engage their affections." Howsoever divided the dissenters are in other respects, they appear to be united in the wish to overturn the predominating influence of the establishment. Let the clergy then unite to support that influence, not by arrogant pretensions or uncharitable attacks on those who differ from them, but by a display of fervent zeal to promote the salvation of mankind. Let party distinctions be laid aside. Let the question no longer be, whether one is a follower of Calvin, or the other of Arminius; but how each may best prove himself a follower of Christ. Let the interests of true religion appear to predominate with them above the secular interests even of the church itself. Let it be seen that, where the instruction of the lower orders, the dissemination of the Scriptures, the conversion of Jews or heathens are concerned, petty jealousies are relinquished, and no other rivalry allowed than a rivalry in well directed zeal and truly Christian bounty. Let those great personages in the state, who have the power of nominating Bishops and filling such benefices as are in the patronage of the crown, remember, that to exercise that power for the sake of commanding political influence, is encouraging simony of the worst kind; is prostituting a most sacred trust, and is ultimately counteracting their own purpose; for thus discredit will be cast on those sacred functions which, rightly exercised, afford the best support to government, by diffusing sound religion and its inseparable adjuncts, loyalty and pa-

triotism. Let Bishops remember well the true design of their high office. "The Holy Ghost has made them overseers to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."* They should therefore take heed unto themselves and to all the flock; they should carefully and kindly superintend the under-shepherds, observing that they fulfil their duty, and encouraging them by their own example and assistance. If any one be justly accused of irregular or imprudent conduct, they should, according to circumstances, admonish or reprove them; but they should not lend an ear to the calumnious reports of those who vilify all who, by their zeal and diligence, put to shame their own supineness. It should be the care of Bishops to obtain an accurate knowledge of the state of every parish in their respective dioceses, not trusting to the imperfect returns made at their visitations, nor even to the surveys of the Archdeacons, but, as much as possible, exercising from time to time a personal inspection.† It is true that, were Bishops to be thus employed, they could spare but little time for attendance at court, or for the exercise of their legislative powers; but surely these are far less important avocations; surely they were appointed to their high office, not so much that they might be Lords of Parliament, as stewards of the mysteries of Christ; and,

* Acts, xx. 28.

† This was the conduct of Bishop Burnet (see his Life) and of several of his worthy contemporaries.

though there may be some occasions where their attendance in the House of Peers may be desirable, there must be many more where their presence in their dioceses is of far higher necessity.

At a moment like the present, it becomes the clergy of every rank to render assiduous attendance at their posts. They should be instant in season and out of season, to counteract the apostles of sedition in their baneful labours; to counteract them not so much by political discussion as by raising the minds of their people from earthly to heavenly objects. They should excite the more opulent of their parishioners to liberal contributions for the relief of the distressed; they should persuade the poor to exercise patience, diligence, temperance, and confidence in God; they should be more than ever assiduous in holding out those exceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel which encouraged believers of old time to support the greatest privations; and amongst which is the assurance that if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, all other things that are needful shall be added unto us. Instead of treating those who separate from our communion with bigotted disdain, they should endeavour to win them back by kind expostulation, and still more by such a devout performance of the Church services as may render them attractive, and such a manifestation of sincerity, and zeal, and love, as may,

through the divine blessing, give efficacy to their instructions. Spending much time in prayer themselves, they should endeavour to excite a spirit of prayer amongst their people, reminding them that God is both able and willing to supply all their need, and that he has promised to bestow both temporal and spiritual blessings in answer to the devout petitions of his servants.

• If, in every parish throughout the kingdom, a pious clergyman were stationed, who would labour thus to make full proof of his ministry; if bishops, priests, and deacons, would thus discharge the duties of their respective offices; the enemies of the Church would soon be silenced, and those of the State would lose a large proportion of their followers. The true Christian *must* be a loyal subject. Let those then whose peculiar charge it is to advocate the cause of Christianity, be studious to do so both by their instructions and their example; they will thus render incalculable service to the cause of loyalty; they will probably be the instruments in God's hand to promote the temporal salvation of their country, as well as the eternal salvation of those intrusted to their care.

In order, however, that the efforts of the Clergy should possess their proper influence, they greatly need to be assisted by the nobility and gentry, the merchants and leading manufacturers, of the kingdom. If those

upon whom the lower orders depend for employment, and consequently subsistence, would set an example of strict attention to religious duties; if they would chiefly countenance those of their servants or workmen who joined in that attention, and strenuously set their faces against all profaneness and immorality; if the magistrates would sedulously endeavour to diminish the number of public houses, and watch over the conduct of all which are allowed to continue open; if the fairs and wakes, and other scenes of temptation that are so frequently presented to the minds of the poor, were suppressed, and premiums given to such of the lower orders as were distinguished for piety, industry, and sobriety:—then would the clergy be delivered from some of the chief counteracting influences which diminish the efficacy of their labours, and feel their hands strengthened for the fulfilment of their duties. What a delightful scene must that parish present, where the opulent landholders unite with the pious pastor in striving to dispel ignorance and vice, to comfort the afflicted, and to encourage the deserving: where the principal gentry lead the train of their children, servants, and tenantry, to the house of God, all uniting to adore their common Father—all delighting to hear of the mercy, and to sing the praises of their adorable Redeemer. Such were the scenes which England often presented in the days of old. May those days speedily return, for then we shall see true radical reformation; then will our country be

once more blessed with liberty, and peace, and comfort.

And, now, having ventured to admonish the higher orders of the community concerning their important duties, it is time that the writer should direct his attention to those whom Providence has placed in a lower station. It would be happy could they be persuaded to believe (what is undoubtedly the truth) that Providence has placed them in the station which they occupy. This conviction would do much to prevent their murmuring against their superiors, and induce them patiently to support the unavoidable evils of their condition. Still it cannot be disputed, that many of the evils which they suffer arise from human errors, and may, by the correction of those errors, be alleviated, if not removed.

It never can be too strongly inculcated, that *sin* is the fruitful parent of all the miseries which afflict mankind. It was this which banished man from Paradise. It is this which prevents him from recovering that measure which, even on earth, might be enjoyed, of his lost felicity. Let us survey the various nations of the globe, and see whether we can find any people who are not happy in proportion as they are moral and religious, and miserable in proportion as they indulge the propensities of their fallen nature. This, however, is a subject to which only allusion can be made. In looking at the condition of mankind, it should

be remembered, that we came into the world feeble and helpless creatures, that the necessaries of life are not furnished to us as the spontaneous productions of nature, but are the fruits both of mental and bodily exertion. The great Lord of the Universe, who enjoined Adam to labour (though probably without fatigue) even in Paradise, said to him after his fall, "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Industry, therefore, of one kind or another, is the duty of every man. The nature of that industry must vary according to the condition of society. Amongst the more savage tribes of men, who subsist on hunting, the most toilsome efforts are often necessary to procure a scanty meal. In the agricultural state of society, a larger population is more easily supported, by the cultivation of the ground; but, when numbers increase, and men assemble in cities, some will naturally betake themselves to mechanical employments, leaving others to produce the food necessary for the general support. In the mean time it becomes needful for the good of the whole, that some should be exempt from manual labour in order that they may fulfil the office of legislators and rulers, and thus promote the peace and order of the community. These have to undergo mental toil, which is often far more severe than any bodily exertion, and which produces also far more beneficial and extensive results. By degrees such accumulations of produce will result from the union of frugality with industry, that some, after spending a portion of their lives in labour, will have

acquired the means of subsisting without it, during the remainder. Others will inherit from their parents or relations a sufficient portion; and thus that diversity of conditions will arise which cannot but exist in every country that has made some progress in civilization, and which the wisdom of Providence renders subservient to very beneficial purposes. In proportion, however, as numbers multiply, the productions of the earth by which they are supported, will become less and less adequate to that purpose; and, when the increase of population begins to exceed the supply of food, a degree of distress must unavoidably arise, which can only be kept under, by later marriages and restraint on those passions that tend to the multiplication of mankind. It is long before such a state of society can exist, and when it is foreseen it would, perhaps, be expedient in rulers to encourage emigration to countries that are less thickly peopled. But, in our country, this state has been hastened both by our growing prosperity, and also by the operation of those laws which, by compelling the more opulent to support the poor, have acted as a bounty on population, at a time when it needed to be restrained. In this manner our poor have multiplied to such a degree, that it is difficult beyond measure to provide them with employment and support. Various circumstances have also concurred at the present period to diminish the exportation of our manufactured produce. The home market is therefore overstocked, and consequently those who used to employ a large proportion of our

needy population are unable to continue that employment. The most severe distress has thus arisen, and that distress is at this time aggravated by the baneful arts of men, who ascribe to the misconduct of the rulers what has in a great measure arisen from the improper conduct of the poor themselves. Without accusing the lower orders of the people of peculiar viciousness, there still is much reason for suspecting that they have in a great measure contributed to the difficulties under which they labour. When, employment being plentiful, wages were at a higher rate, they seem to have taken for granted that the same state of things must always continue. Instead therefore of frugally setting apart a portion of their superfluous earnings, they wasted them in luxurious, too often vicious, indulgence. Most of them married early, far earlier than the generality of their more opulent neighbours. They thus became burthened when young with large families, whom they had not previously secured the power of maintaining; being too commonly, there is reason to believe, upheld by the feeling that, should distress come upon them, they would be sure of relief from the parochial funds. When population was less abundant, and instances of distress were few, those funds were tolerably equal to the burden cast upon them; but as the population has very rapidly increased, (most rapidly amongst the poorest), and instances of distress have from the stagnation of trade been multiplied, the parochial funds have become grievously overcharged, and in some cases

are altogether exhausted. Here then we have a cause of distress which, taken in connexion with the dissolute habits that too commonly prevail amongst a dense population, may account for a large proportion of the sufferings which the lower orders at this time endure, and that without any peculiar fault in the rulers of the state. That these sufferings are increased by the existing load of taxation cannot be denied; but how has that load accumulated? Has it not been very much through the fondness of the bulk of the community for war?—Of the *bulk* of the community, be it repeated; for, unless the wars in which we have during the greater part of the last century been engaged had been popular in their origin, the different administrations which have prevailed would not have ventured into the field. By far the larger proportion of our taxes is raised to defray the interest of the national debt, and if that interest were withheld or diminished, to say nothing of the injustice which would be done to the public creditors, or of their sufferings, how many would be deprived of employment, and therefore of bread, in consequence of the ruin in which the greater part of their creditors would be involved.

In what manner then would the reforms, for which our demagogues contend, contribute to lighten the general distress? Let them carry their schemes of retrenchment to the utmost, unless they annihilate the national

debt, and abolish the poor rates, they must leave the taxation with which we are burdened at nearly its present amount, and with respect to any other advantages that might be expected, they must, to say the least, be very problematical. The legislature, as it is now constituted, combines a large proportion of the talent, the experience, and the virtue of the nation; and it is not very probable that wiser laws would be framed, or more powerful sanctions derived for the support of religion and virtue, by the new class of representatives whom universal suffrage would send to parliament.

No, let the people be assured that if they wish for that true reformation which alone can relieve their distress, they must reform themselves. They must become sober, industrious, and frugal; they must bear with patience, till means can be found (and means there is every reason to believe will in such case be found) to lighten their present difficulties, and they must take care not to bring new ones upon themselves, by avoiding those errors to which those that now exist are to be attributed. If, instead of listening to persons who seek to inflame their passions, they would listen to the advice of sober and reflecting men; if they would direct their industry from the channels in which too large a proportion of it has been accumulated, to others which present a fairer opening, especially such as tend to multiply the productions of the soil; if, above all, they would humble

themselves beneath the mighty hand of God, and beseech Him who possesses infinite power to relieve their distress; they would soon find their spirits raised, their afflictions lightened, and such supplies afforded as an infinitely wise and gracious Providence is ever ready to bestow.

If they refuse to listen to admonitions of this kind, and determine to follow the suggestions of those who are anxious to overturn the constitution of their country, the result must be their own destruction either by the sword of justice, or by the fatal success of their infatuated conduct.

Let us suppose a revolution effected—the rich plundered—and their property divided amongst the mob of reformers and their deluded victims. What would be the result? Rapine, massacre, and universal dissoluteness of manners, would deform the face of society, or rather destroy the bands by which society is held together. A few months of riot would consume whatsoever stores have been accumulated for the subsistence of the nation—manufacturing industry would cease—the soil would be in a great measure uncultivated, because no man could be sure of reaping the reward of his labours; and supplies could not be procured from other countries, in consequence of the uncertainty which there must be concerning the security of payments. Famine,

therefore, with its attendant, pestilence, would add their horrors to the scourges of domestic tumult; and, perhaps, foreign invasion would complete the ruin of this, which (notwithstanding present circumstances) is upon the whole the most prosperous nation of the earth.

Let those then who possess the power, and have hitherto but too much shewn the disposition, to agitate the public mind, be persuaded to pause for a moment, and consider the tendency of their own proceedings. They cannot in their sober moments believe, that the course which they pursue is likely to lead to real reformation. Even if their secret design is to advance their personal and private interests, there is great reason to believe that in this they would not be ultimately successful. But let them devote their talents to really useful purposes; let them labour as assiduously to promote the cause of virtue as they now do to promote disorder and disorganization; and whilst they secure the esteem of good men, they will probably obtain even greater permanent advantages than are likely to reward their present labours. At any rate, let them hesitate before they hazard the plunging their country into a sea of troubles from which it may never emerge;—before they raise a tempest which they will vainly endeavour to appease or to control. •

Let the friends of peace and order in the mean time

resolve to rally round the standard of loyalty; not that, in its name, they may contribute to the oppression, or even, if it can be avoided, to the punishment, of their deluded fellow-subjects; but that they may assist in dispelling their delusion, and give such confidence to the constituted authorities as to prevent their feeling themselves obliged to resort to measures of severity. And may those authorities be enabled to conduct themselves with that union of firmness and moderation, that regard to the rights of the people, that pity for the misguided, which may once more recover the esteem and affection that have unhappily been impaired, and establish the empire of law and justice and true religion in the hearts of men! May all, in a word, be persuaded to act in a manner consistent with the name of Christians which they bear, and unite in seeking protection and help from Him, who can still the fury of the waves and the madness of the people; who giveth salvation unto kings, and loyalty to subjects; who executeth judgment for the oppressed, and giveth food to the hungry; who is able, in a word, to relieve all our wants, and grant us permanent peace and true prosperity! To return to Him, from whom we have all too much departed, is the first great step to that radical reformation, which alone can avert our ruin;—that reformation, which, if adopted, will bring down blessings on us as a nation in time, and will make us unspeakably blessed as individuals throughout eternity.

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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

MINISTERIAL PLAN

REFORM.

BY

SIR JOHN WALSH, BART. M.P.

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OBSERVATIONS,

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SECTION I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE Ministerial plan of Reform has now been submitted about four weeks to the House of Commons, and to the country. Until the last hour, its details and provisions were kept a profound secret, were unknown to the subordinate Members of the Government, and could not, therefore, have been previously weighed and considered by the public. Scarcely, however, was the measure explained and promulgated, than a great number of petitions in support of it poured in from various quarters. In many instances, in the more remote counties, the petition in support of the Bill was forwarded almost by return of the post, which brought it down. In all, the interval was a very brief one.

Few subjects which exercise the powers of human intellect, are more difficult and complex in their nature, more perplexing in their results, than the science of Government. As none can be directed to more exalted objects, involving as it does the happiness of our species, so none can be more abstruse in their character. Any great change in the Legislature, or form of Government, of a nation, must be a doubtful operation. The keenest political vision cannot precisely foresee its consequences. That this measure is of a very extensive description, will be allowed by all, since it is one of its merits most insisted upon by its supporters. The Members of the House of Commons who have given it their most anxious and earnest attention, are scarcely yet fully acquainted with its provisions and details; the Ministers who framed it have not, in the course of nine nights debate, attempted to afford any insight into its effects. It is certain, that the body of petitioners, in favour of this Bill, cannot have founded their approbation, by return of post, on any deliberate reflection, or any close analysis. It is no impeachment of their intelligence, to assert that they cannot yet fully comprehend it, and that their admiration must be a little according to the practice of the Baron in *La Fausse Agnes*, who tells us, “*Quand Je lis quelque chose, que Je ne comprends pas, Je suis toujours dans l’admiration.*” In this situation, called upon to support a measure changing the

whole British Constitution; which no one, a month ago, anticipated; called upon by those, who were then as unacquainted with it as myself, and who since have had less opportunity of informing themselves of it, I am tempted, in turn, to ask them to weigh my doubts and difficulties. I invite them to consider some of those reasons which induce my mind to reject what they desire. Without having the presumption to suppose, that, in a very short time, in a very hurried manner, and in the compass of a brief pamphlet, I can fully discuss this question, my object will be attained, if I can succeed in directing the intellectual power of the community to those channels which I cannot now entirely explore. Admitting, that a great number of petitions for the Bill indicate a strong feeling in its favour; an admission, which however I should be inclined to qualify, still their very precipitation proves nothing but feeling. It proves, that at the word Reform, its advocates, throughout the country, have rallied, like the Highland Clans of old, to the gathering cry of their chieftain; but, like them, with more of devotion to the cause, than of reflection upon its merits or its justice. But a measure of this nature, so far exceeding all that moderate reformers ever contemplated, must be tried not by the ebullitions of a hasty feeling, but at the calm tribunal of sober reason. We must not, in the intoxication or enthusiasm of the moment, pronounce prematurely upon a question,

which, beyond all others, demands the most deliberate exercise of the judgment. We must not, at this great crisis, forfeit that proud national characteristic, which regulates the warmth of English hearts and feelings, by the coolness of English heads.

SECTION II.

REMARKS UPON SOME ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT
OF THE BILL.

IN the course of the long debates which have ushered in this Bill, nothing is more remarkable, than that from the Ministerial side of the House so little should have been said about it. Its specific features must be allowed to be of a very marked character; and yet, with one or two exceptions, all the speeches, not merely of the general friends and supporters of Administration, but of the Ministry themselves, were arguments in favour of Reform in general, disquisitions on the state of public feelings and opinions, which might have been uttered as appropriately upon any other Reform as upon this.

Of these general arguments, there are one or two on which I am tempted to offer some remarks. It has been the anxious endeavour of the Reformers, to establish an analogy between the Catholic Question and that of Reform.

The points upon which they principally endeavoured to found it, were its being originally advocated by a very few; its gradual progress; its

being supported by what they consider the irresistible will of a great mass of society, and (a resemblance which they seek much to establish) its final success. To all these arguments one short observation is applicable, that in no science are arguments drawn from analogy less conclusive, than in politics. To give weight to an argument from analogy, the analogy ought to be perfect, exact in all its parts, similar in all its bearings; and as this necessary requisite is seldom attained in the infinite diversity of human events, and in the complex relations of national interests, all parallels of this nature must be admitted with infinite caution. Statesmen are not, like lawyers, governed by precedent. The innumerably different combinations of circumstances, constantly vary the data for our decision. It would be easy to shew many very striking differences between these two questions, which deprive such arguments of all their force. The chief and strong ground occupied by the long catalogue of great men, who successively advocated the repeal of the Catholic Restrictions was this. They argued that all the motives for the continuance of these restrictions had ceased; they pointed out that the temporal power, once so loftily and arrogantly claimed, and so insidiously exerted by the Roman Pontiffs, had faded into insignificance. The gradual increase of knowledge and civilization had imparted even to the sincerest and most devout Catholics, juster notions of the proper

limits of the spiritual jurisdiction. They shewed the convulsions of Europe in the French Revolution; the indifference even to religion, and certainly to all superstitious feelings, which that event had scattered through the States of Continental Europe, and they reasoned upon the improbability of that power being dangerous here, which had fallen into such entire weakness in all the seats of its former domination. Like the Turks threatening Christendom, it might formerly have been a subject of legitimate apprehension and precaution, which had now entirely ceased. They re-called to mind that their penal laws had been enacted, when a formidable Catholic Pretender to the throne, aided by the most powerful Sovereign in Europe, favoured by a strong party in the country, would inevitably be supported by every Papist in the three kingdoms. But the last of the Stuarts had died in exile, and the marble monument which records his end, was raised by the Sovereign who filled his forfeited throne.

Every motive, therefore, which originally prompted the enactment of these laws, had ceased by the course of time and circumstances. They had been themselves relaxed and modified at different periods, leaving but a small portion of their pristine vigour. They were still sufficient to draw an invidious distinction, to create a feeling of great irritation, although they no longer served the purpose for which they were passed. But is it to be inferred,

that if the daring political courage of Chatham—the firm hand of Pitt—the Statesmanlike genius of Canning—or the bold decision of the Duke of Wellington, had directed the affairs of State in the days of William or of Anne, they would then have consented to their repeal?

But, in the question of Reform, we have to deal with no visionary phantom of departed dangers, we are called upon to remove no ancient barriers against enemies who no longer exist, and which therefore may have become useless. The fanaticism of democracy, is in its full tide of life and vigour. The risks that we run in dealing with it, in compromising with it, are as real, and belong as much to this age, as the difficulties of Henry II. and John, from the Pope to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; or the dangers of George I. from the Pretender to the last.

Another view of this subject, a very ingenious and striking view of it, was brought forward by the Lord Advocate. It is, perhaps, somewhat too abstract and philosophical in its nature, to be exactly adapted to the House of Commons, and would be better suited to a literary essay. His theory appeared to be, that we are now arriving at an epoch of great change, that one of those mighty crises which occur in the history of civilization is at hand. Society, it is declared, is now in a state of transition, it has out-grown the institutions which were sufficient for its earlier days, it has wants and desires which are irrepressible,

it is moving in a course which we may guide, but which we cannot arrest. We are supposed to be in a sort of chrysalis state, but undergoing that transformation which is to supply us with new wings, to soar to a yet higher pitch of prosperity and happiness. The whole of this argument may be true; and yet the Bill of Reform the worst possible, since the means adopted to facilitate the transition, may be far too violent and sudden. I object to the whole doctrine, if applied to justify a Government in effecting great and immediate changes in national institutions. I can only subscribe to it as a ground of gentle and gradual modification. It may be a curious speculation of moral philosophy in the closet, to trace this working of a new spirit in the human race, and to measure the chances of its fermentation, eventually producing some great and novel benefits to mankind. But I contend that our faculties are too finite, and our experience too limited, to allow of practically shaping our course upon confused perceptions of an occult moral influence. The Statesman is not justified in steering his course on such metaphysical abstractions.—He must cling to certainties.—Who, for example, is to calculate whether this shock of conflicting principles in Europe is to be succeeded by a new impulse of improvement, or whether it is to shake the whole social fabric, and throw us back into disorganization and anarchy. Such a crisis may be at hand, but if so, I have not philosophy enough to contemplate such a

prospect without alarm ; I am not sanguine enough to look at it, with hope. History teaches us that these portentous periods, happily of rare occurrence, are, to those who live in them, periods of great suffering and calamity. Social order cannot take an entirely new form, without wrecking the happiness of a whole generation in its fearful change. If, indeed, one of these great moral convulsions is at hand, we cannot hope to avert its progress. It belongs to greater wisdom to foresee, to greater power to direct its terrible course. We all hope for happiness beyond the grave, yet we recoil at the prospect of that dread change with instinctive horror and avoidance. The night of revolution may be succeeded by a bright aurora of prosperity and happiness, but it is beyond our ken, and probably it will never dawn to us. The very insufficiency of our faculties to calculate such stupendous results, renders it our plain duty, our clear interest, to avert such trials, if they can be averted by prudence, by temper, by policy, or by courage.

There have been great discussions and differences upon the word Revolution, and revolutionary, as applied to the Bill. It was contended that they were not only inapplicable, but extremely violent and exaggerated terms. It was argued that no measure could be revolutionary, which was effected without violence or intimidation, and in a legal manner. The word Revolution, in its first and strictest meaning, signifies a

turning round, as of a wheel upon its axis, and in a political sense expresses a complete change, which may be either in the form of Government, or in the whole frame and fabric of social order. But a revolution of the first description may surely be effected by the strictest adherence to legal forms, and violence is not at all necessary to constitute it. Were a Bill, abolishing the kingly office, and converting the State into a Republic, to pass the three estates, who could doubt, that it would be a Revolution? Now, not only do I think this Bill revolutionary, or having a tendency to cause revolution, but, in the first sense, as effecting an immense change in the Constitution of the greatest power in the State, I must consider it as a Revolution.

I have drawn a distinction between a revolution in the form of Government, and a revolution of the whole social system. Our own Revolution of 1688, was of the former character, the Commonwealth, and still more the French Revolution of 1789, of the latter. I at once admit that a revolution in the form of Government is not necessarily attended with general suffering to a nation.—It may be beneficial in its remoter consequences, without purchasing that benefit by great present distress and misery. A Revolution of the second description, however produced, whatever may have led to it, always must be one of the most fearful calamities which can afflict humanity.—It must rank with plague, with

famine, as one of those awful visitations of acute misery to his creatures, the explanation of which requires a fuller acquaintance with the great design of the Deity, than our limited faculties can attain. Every class of society must feel its dreadful pressure, and the lowest mechanic and labourer, whose subsistence depends upon the demand for his industry, must equally suffer. It lets loose all the worst passions of our nature, it overwhelms alike intellect and virtue, and it has this deep aggravation of its evils, that it brings all the coarseness, brutality, ignorance, and crime, generally confined to barbarous ages, into sudden collision with the refinements and highly wrought sensibilities of advanced civilization.

I have observed, that a revolution in the form of Government, does not inevitably entail this dreadful scourge, but it has always a strong tendency to produce it. The essential powers of Government cannot be transferred without so great a derangement of the interests and internal balance of a nation, as to incur the most imminent risk of a dissolution of the whole social system. We see, that France, where a Revolution of the first description took place in July last, under circumstances eminently favourable to the consolidation of the new Government, and the preservation of social interests, has nevertheless been constantly on the brink of one of the second order, into which there is much fear she will finally be plunged.

The very artificial state of England, the factitious character of her wealth, the maintenance of all her great interests upon a basis of credit, peculiarly liable to derangement from any political alarms, render it a matter of infinite delicacy to tamper with those institutions, in which the essential powers of the State reside. The existence of a formidable and active democratic party, bent on the subversion of Government, who have lately attained great influence over the minds of the middle and lower orders, give a doubly hazardous character to such attempts. The proposed measure appears to me calculated more to strengthen than to conciliate this party. I cannot think that it gives us the least security against fresh attempts, made with greater power and equal hostility against the institutions of the country. On this point turns the whole case, for and against the Bill.

I merely state it; subsequently, I shall endeavour to shew the grounds for my belief.

Reverting, therefore, to the controversy upon the expressions, revolution, and revolutionary; I have no wish to resort to any heated language, or to apply any exaggerated and declamatory terms in declaring my conviction.

First, that the proposed measure is, in the sense of the word, as applied to the form of Government, a revolution, as a complete re-modelling, and re-construction of the most important of the three estates must be considered.

Secondly, that in the sense of an entire subversion of existing social order, the measure is not in itself a revolution, but that it is highly revolutionary, as having the strongest tendency, and running the most imminent risk of producing that catastrophe. The first of these positions has never been discussed; it seems almost established by the admissions of the friends of the Bill; after all, it would be a mere verbal dispute.

The second is combated and denied, and upon it rest the merits of the question. It is, to use a military metaphor, the key of the Ministerial position; and if this position be shewn to be untenable, they are defeated.

I would close these prefatory remarks with one observation; that, in many instances, the approbation of the Bill may be much grounded upon, and mixed up with local views and interests. We all know, that the circle, which immediately surrounds us, is very apt to shut out the rest of the world. Without contemplating the sacrifice of the national to particular interests; the inhabitants of Wolverhampton, or of Brighton, may be attracted by the advantages to themselves, and disposed to think favourably of a Bill which adverts favourably to them. The freeholders, leaseholders, and copyholders of the large counties, the sober and respectable residents in open boroughs, who may have been disgusted with the riotous and tumultuary scenes of a popular election; all those in short who are personally affected,

may be disposed to consider that part of the measure which is confined to their own observation. I mean no imputation of selfish motives, I only allude to that natural disposition of men to give their attention first to what is nearest to them.

May all these remember, that this Bill must be considered in a wide and general view, that these localities sink into nothing, when compared with the great public results of this measure. I do not tell them merely, that private and partial views must entangle their judgment, which should exercise itself on the largest view of this case. I tell them, that the immense results of this step will bring home to their fire-sides consequences acting far more directly upon their most private and intimate interests, than any local effects it can produce upon them.

SECTION III.

 DEFECTS OF THE CENSUS OF 1821, AS A BASIS
 OF THE PLAN OF REFORM.

IN attempting to consider the new scheme of representation, with reference to that mixed principle of property, and population, on which, or rather on some vague approximation to which it professes to be founded, we are very speedily arrested by a formidable impediment. It is that we have no means of determining the amount, or the distribution, or the relative proportions, either of property, or of population. It so happened that His Majesty's Ministers acceded to office on three distinct pledges given to the nation, and declared, as the maxims of their policy, non-intervention with the affairs of Foreign States, great retrenchment of the public expenditure, and a Reform in the House of Commons. Now I believe that no custom can be more pernicious to the State, that nothing can be more injurious to the conduct of affairs, than for a Government to be trammelled by any pledges whatever. A Ministry should rest its claims to the public confidence upon known character, and tried ability, but it

should not be fettered in the difficult game of politics, by a prescribed line, which it may be unwise or impossible to pursue, amidst the constant shifting of circumstances and events. We cannot lay down certain rules for our guidance in an uncertain future. We must repose a large discretion, and guard against the abuse of it, by placing it well, and watching its exercise attentively. But these prospective engagements, these stipulations and contracts, are fraught with disgrace to the Minister, and injury to the country. It is said that the Austrian Generals could never hazard a battle without the permission of the Aulic Council, but Napoleon defeated both the Austrian Generals and the Aulic Council.

I really believe that many of the embarrassments and mistakes of the present Ministry have arisen from these self-imposed shackles. They have been unable to perform all that they had promised, and they have thought it incumbent upon them to perform, in the matter of Reform, more than was expected. They had promised non-intervention, and their intervention has been continued, and unlucky, even almost to the point of dispatching an armament to the Scheldt. They had promised retrenchment, and they added to the Army and Navy Estimates, and refused to adopt the recommendations of that very Committee for retrenchment of the Civil List, whose appointment had been the cause of their accession to power.

Their ignorance of finance, and their inexperience of the details and conduct of public business, had become apparent, and had shaken the confidence of the nation. In this very critical position they had no power to delay the question of Reform until they could procure for themselves, and for the House, the necessary returns and information, they had no choice between retirement, or proceeding to legislate upon this vital question, with the glimmering and uncertain light of former documents, extracted from the cobwebs of official Bureaux. We can make every allowance for the difficulties of their situation, but it is not the less a matter of regret for the country, that a subject, involving its national existence, should not have had the good fortune to be brought forward by an Administration strong enough to be gentle, cautious, and deliberate. We are not re-assured on entering this dangerous path, because we must tread it in the dark, and follow leaders who advance with the reeling, yet hurried step of desperate weakness.

In considering the unfairness and insufficiency of the data, on which we are called upon to proceed, we meet a thousand inconsistencies at every turn. On all sides complaints, well-founded complaints are made of partial injustice, of franchises taken from larger towns to be bestowed upon smaller ones; of large additions to the population and wealth of existing borough towns

having been overlooked, because they had extended beyond the limits of the ancient Borough.

The seeds of future discontent, of future change, are thus sown at every turn, and necessarily follow from the data which have been adopted. The basis of the new legislation rests upon an ordinary census of the population ten years old! How many influential changes have not occurred in the course of those ten years? How many towns have sprung into importance and commercial activity in that period? How different is the state of property generally throughout the country?

The scale assumed, contains an unavoidable principle of injustice within it. If the whole population advanced in an exactly similar ratio, if the wealth and the inhabitants increased every where at the same uniform pace, it would be a matter of comparative indifference, whether we adopted a census ten years or fifty years old. But as, on the contrary, nothing can be more unequal than this progress, so nothing can be more fallacious and partial than such a standard. It is worth remarking too, that the greatest practical injustice is sustained by those places, which have been the most thriving and progressive. Towns which have been stagnant, which have not distinguished themselves by industry and commercial enterprize, have less reason to complain, while those which have made use of their ten years to augment their wealth, their manufactures, and

where population has greatly increased in consequence, have a strong ground of remonstrance against the justice of such a course.

But this is not all that I have to allege against this census, as the groundwork of the Ministerial measure. Taken originally for no such great and important object, it is not only become already quite inaccurate by the effects of time, but originally it was wholly defective in that exactness and those details which would be required for such a purpose. A new, a complete, and a most elaborately classified census should have been the text book of this Bill. Before calling upon it to make so sweeping an alteration upon the basis of property and population, Ministers were bound to have submitted to the House the most precise and comprehensive statement of the manner in which that population and property are distributed. They should not have confined this to towns alone, we should have had spread before us the whole map of society, and we should have seen as clearly as figures could enable us to see, the various proportions and relations of the different classes of the community.

As it is, we do not know with certainty the population, or the proportionate increase of any one town from which we take away, or to which we add a franchise. We are called upon to reconstruct the House of Commons, in total ignorance of the materials we use, or of their adaptation

to the purposes we are told to adopt. We are informed, indeed, that no symmetry or uniformity is intended, that Ministers have found anomalies, and that they have left anomalies, and it needs but a very cursory inspection of the Bill to confirm their assertion. The difference, however, is, that in the one case the anomalies had been created by time, and had been proved consistent with order and stability by experience. In the other, they are introduced without any apparent design, and are neither the result of any fixed plan, nor of the gradual working of circumstances. Ministers appear to have argued, that because our Constitution, though full of irregularities, had worked well, while the more regular and uniform systems of the continent had constantly failed, that therefore it was only necessary to introduce a large proportion of anomaly, at hap-hazard as it were into the new scheme. They seem to conclude, that provided they introduce something very heterogeneous, they shall infallibly succeed. I must totally dissent from this theory. I must be of opinion, that if we introduce innovations so extensively and suddenly, that our experience of the old system can no longer guide us in calculating the effects of the new, while we equally reject all adherence to uniform arrangement, we shall produce something, which will quite defy conjecture as to its mode of operation. I must frankly confess, that I believe we should have had a better chance of success, by adopting even one of those

continental plans *à la Sieyes*, of dividing the country into districts, and fixing some general qualification to a certain amount, than by this measure. As it is, we retain all the partial operation, all the inequalities and local defects of our present representation, while we entirely destroy the existing balance of various interests, which has enabled it practically to perform its functions.

SECTION IV.

VIEWS, AND POSITION OF THE MINISTRY.

IN considering political subjects, I have never been disposed to regard them through the medium of any party feeling. Whenever I have had occasion, either in writing or in any other manner, to express my opinions upon them, I have done so perfectly free from conscious bias for or against any party, or set of public men. I have sedulously avoided every kind of personal allusion, or discussion, and have been only anxious to place my own impressions in as clear a light as I could. If I find myself now compelled to deviate somewhat from this course, it is merely because I cannot possibly regard this measure in an abstract and insulated point of view, unconnected with the state of parties, and opinions in the country. I am necessarily obliged, in order to form my judgment upon it at all, to consider it relatively to those who have framed, and brought it forward. Their intentions, objects, character, and position, must enter into all our calculations of consequences.

The substance of the statements of His

Majesty's Ministers appears to be this. " We find
 " an appetite in the public, which must be ap-
 " peased. 'There is a demand, which cannot be
 " resisted, particularly by us, who have already
 " so often pledged ourselves to the measures
 " which they require. All that we can do, there-
 " fore, is to bring forward a plan, which shall
 " attain the two ends of satisfying the people,
 " and of preserving not only the great institutions
 " of the State, the rights of property, and legal
 " order, but that dominant influence of the Aris-
 " tocracy, which we ourselves, with all our love of
 " liberty, have a very considerable value for." -
 Large as this measure may appear, it is offered as
 a compromise; and the argument of the Ministry
 is, that by removing the most unpopular features
 of the present mode of representation, they shall
 win back the alienated affections of a great body
 of the people, revive their regard to existing in-
 stitutions, and in fact settle the influence of those
 classes, who now are most powerful in the State,
 on a more secure, and legitimate foundation,

If we could find an adequate guarantee for the
 security of the Constitution in the great personal
 stake which the Ministers, as individuals, have in
 its preservation, there can be no doubt that we
 might safely dismiss all anxiety upon the subject.
 The list of the Cabinet is peculiarly, and loftily
 Aristocratic. Of fourteen Members who compose it,
 ten are in the House of Lords, of the four who are in
 the House of Commons, one is the Heir Apparent

of a wealthy and distinguished Peerage, one an Irish Peer, and one a Baronet of very ancient family, and very extensive landed property. Nor do the other Members of Government present a less dignified catalogue of noble names. Every consolation which these circumstances can afford us, the certainty that if they do misconceive the consequences of their own measures, they will pay a fearful penalty for their error, we possess in a supreme degree. But we must take this comfort with some qualification.

As a body, with the exception of the followers of Mr. Canning, who do not appear to be the leaders now, they are totally inexperienced, and untried in the management of state affairs. The qualities of mind, the habits, the description of talent, requisite to perform a brilliant rôle in the ranks of an opposition, are very distinct from those necessary to a Statesman administering the affairs of a great nation. There is a certain tact of government, wholly different from the art of attack in debate. The present Ministers have had no opportunity of acquiring this by the education of office, and they have not yet shewn among them that native genius, which would enable them to dispense with previous training. We have not, therefore, in addition to the assurance which their own stake affords us, that confidence which in times of difficulty and danger we feel in seeing the powers of government wielded by hands of known and practised skill, directed by heads of

tried, and experienced ability. There is often so much of recklessness, and temerity, in those born to great advantages of fortune, that I should much doubt whether in fact prudence would be most generally found in its possessors. If a carriage be overturned, nobody runs a greater risk of being killed than the coachman, yet as, notwithstanding, carriages are often upset, I should not feel less nervous in being driven by an inexperienced whip, particularly if he were an amateur.

When we see the present Ministers startling the whole nation with the magnitude of their plan of Reform, we must admit that they have not as yet established that reputation for surpassing talent, as to induce us to surrender our own judgment and views of consequences to theirs.

To ardent and lofty spirits there is something in the excitement of party struggles, a little like that of the gaming-table; and those who have passed their lives in such contentions may acquire somewhat of the same disposition to risk much in the pursuit, and to stake the destinies of a nation with some rash reliance on fortune. The present Premier has justly obtained in his long public life the fame of great senatorial eloquence, of unvarying consistency, and of high personal honour, but that life has been passed, with a trifling exception, in the opposition. The duties and labours of office, the habit of conducting great affairs, have been quite foreign to it.

It is scarcely probable that now, in the decline

of his energies, advanced in years, and somewhat infirm in health, he should be able to acquire new modes of life, new habits of thought, and action. As an accomplished and highly gifted Nobleman, whose name is associated with the recollections of the brightest galaxy of talent that ever adorned our Parliamentary annals, Lord Grey will, while he lives, receive the willing deference and respect of his countrymen; and when he is removed from us, will occupy no mean place in the history of his times. But that he should in his new character of Premier be entitled to that sort of entire confidence, which we only accord to a long career of successful Administration, is so far from being the case, that I should rather say his past life disqualified him from pretending to it. If he were now to make a very able, and successful Minister, he would be a most remarkable exception to the common rule of mankind.

It is quite incontestible that feelings of dissatisfaction, and discontent, with the existing order of things, both in government, and in society, have been widely disseminated among the lower and among the middling classes in this country. It is certain that sentiments of this nature have made a great progress, and have taken a formidable hold of mens minds within the last few months. It seems no matter of dispute, but an admitted fact, that among the lower orders generally, and among the manufacturing population, there is a considerable, numerically considerable party desirous of

the most radical changes, and who, if they do not use the word Republic, have tendencies entirely Republican. There is no doubt that this party is very strong in this country, that they have much organization, and concert, that they have principally possession of the public daily press, and that they have a few talented active organs within the walls of the House of Commons. But Ministers are not those organs.

On the other hand, among the possessors of property, and of affluence, among the best educated, and most intelligent classes, the greatest alarm, and aversion at these doctrines, prevail. Among a hundred shades of opinion upon political subjects, they agree in one great principle, that of resisting modifications of so extensive a nature, as materially to alter the English Constitution and social system. As old party designations become obsolete, and unsuited to new circumstances, they seem to have adopted that of the conservative party, which may express, as well as any other, the rallying point of their common creed. ●

The Ministry do not belong to either of these great divisions, and, in fact, represent no considerable body of opinion in the nation whatever.

If we adopt their own view of the matter, they are of the conservative party, they only profess to introduce innovations into a part, for the sake of securing the remainder. We may fairly take their own ground, and discuss the question with them upon its attaining this object. Their astounding

Bill of Reform has raised a popular cry in their favour, or rather in favour of the Bill; but they have not the confidence, and do not express the wants and wishes of the very persons who raise that cry. Who can doubt, that if one or two newspapers in wide circulation, if a small knot of gentlemen in the House of Commons, of very liberal politics, who take their seats on the Opposition side, had thought proper to decry this Bill as illusory, as aristocratic, as not giving the people what they petitioned for, the whole tide of feeling in the country would have been turned against it. It owes its popularity, not to those who brought it forward, but to those more accredited, more established leaders and directors of the popular spirit, who have thought proper to afford it their countenance and sanction. •

Nothing is more short-lived or uncertain, it is true, than the tenure of that sort of influence upon the popular mind; but still it would be some security, if Ministers were, *pro-tempore*, in possession of it, and could express, with the voice of the people, as well as their own, that it would be generally regarded as a final settlement. But this they cannot do; and that very argument which they have brought forward as an evidence of the safety of the measure, namely, their own high and elevated station, is in itself a proof that they cannot be identified with the popular party. They are, exclusively, aristocratic; and those who have remarked the systematic attacks directed against

the aristocracy, will need no other demonstration, to shew, that they can only retain an influence over the democratic party by an entire abandonment of the interests of their own class. We must all recollect, that the Noble Mover of this Bill, and another distinguished Member of the Government, (one, indeed, who both in his own department, and in his place in the House, has given decided proofs of possessing highly promising talents,) have both recently been defeated in popular elections.

In considering the nature of the proposition they have brought forward, we must bear in mind that the Ministers offer it on the footing of a sort of compact, or compromise. They introduce this sweeping Bill on the pretext of modifying our Government so as to suit the altered condition of society. It is supported by two perfectly distinct parties: the Ministerial, who offer it as a permanent arrangement; and the various shades of popular, democratic, agitating, and radical, who accept it avowedly as a means of accomplishing ulterior objects. That these parties are quite separate, although temporarily united for a common purpose, is obvious. It is equally clear that they would be immediately opposed to each other, were the Bill, which is their only link, to pass. Our first and most natural question is, What is the relative strength of each? and, What will be their relative position should it be carried? Ministers deprecate ulterior changes, and declare

that they aim at getting the reasonable on their side, and thus being better able to deal with the unreasonable.

We must remember that they do not belong to the party they are desirous to propitiate, who think them very unreasonable in what they withhold, as we think them most unreasonable in what they give. It is to be apprehended, that in these two great divisions of national opinions, few will be left to think His Majesty's Ministers reasonable, except His Majesty's Ministers themselves. We must allow, that they are not tried and known Statesmen, that they are an experiment as well as their Bill, and that hitherto they have not established any claims to confidence with the thinking part of the people, or even to popularity with the mass by the general ability of their measures.

With these impressions upon our minds, we must proceed to discuss their plan, on the grounds of the two objects, which it is proposed to attain together.

1st. Will it satisfy the people? . . .

2nd. Will it preserve society from convulsions? and more, Will it guard that existing ascendancy of the upper orders, which it professes to respect and uphold?

Ministers say, that it will do both; I say, that it will do neither. We have now, I hope, fairly joined issue upon these points.

SECTION V.

 WILL THE PROPOSED PLAN OF REFORM
 SATISFY THE PEOPLE?

I NOW ask whether it will satisfy the people? I do not mean merely whether it will allay for the time the feverish excitement which has lately prevailed; I do not mean, whether, appeased for the moment by a great and unexpected concession, the popular or democratic party will be contented to receive it, or will even joyfully accept it as a triumph, as a victory, and as a means of future conquests. I ask whether it has the character of a permanent, and satisfactory compromise. We have this difficulty, that on the part of the people such a compromise must be a tacit one. They cannot come forward collectively, and say, "We are content, and we faithfully promise on our side to revive the question no more." On the contrary, they have always the power, or their leaders have the power for them, of re-agitating it, whenever they think proper. The press, the most influential popular leaders, may begin again, whenever they chuse, to institute fresh topics of agitation, or to revive old

ones, and renew a game, which they have found attended with such extraordinary success.

I would remark, that this measure, though it may give the popular party more than they anticipated, yet does not give them by any means what they have demanded. Putting Universal suffrage out of the question, as not yet generally insisted upon, Retrenchment, and Vote by ballot, have been dwelt upon in almost every Petition which lies upon the table of the House of Commons. So little probable is it that these two points will be finally abandoned by the democratic party, that it appears difficult to restrain the expression of their desires upon them even while this measure is before the House, although every chance of its success must depend upon its appearing to give general satisfaction. The more influential leaders can only repress this feeling by pointing out that the present Reform is but a step, by a very short and certain road to the ultimate attainment of their objects, and that it would be impolitic to compromise it by startling the moderate and cautious by fully revealing them.

The new Electors created by this Bill, the £10. householders, are precisely that class who have most loudly called for vote by ballot, as a protection against the influence, unduly exerted as they conceive, by the upper orders. The pot-wallopers, the non-resident freemen, are little under the controul of this species of restraint, but

the small freeholders in the counties, and the resident shopkeepers and little householders in the provincial towns, are very differently circumstanced, and are the persons who have in fact called for it most determinedly. The present Bill, therefore, confers a vast increase of power upon a class of persons avowedly intent upon an important ulterior object, to which the supporters of the Bill are decidedly, and declaredly hostile.

I have instanced vote by ballot as the readiest, but not as the sole illustration of my position, 'that this measure will only be a commencement. But if we advert to the variety of popular topics, which have been so constantly before the public, the abolition of tithes, a great reduction of taxes, what is called an equitable adjustment with the national creditor, and a theory that the distress of the labouring classes is wholly owing to the unreasonably high rents of the landlords, and others equally subversive of existing society, we must conclude that Reform which does not settle any one of these questions, cannot set them at rest. These are all positive, and apparently substantial acquisitions; Reform is a mere theoretical experiment on the Government of the country. These demands have been distinctly brought before the House of Commons, and embodied in many of the Petitions which are so much dwelt upon as expressing the sense of the country. But in all the public meetings, in the speeches of popular leaders, and in the public papers, they

have been much more prominently brought forward. These are more faithful interpreters of the feeling of the day, than Petitions, which are always worded cautiously, and with a tone of respect and reserve. Now I do not believe that any man of sense, dispassionately considering the matter, can suppose, that having been long taught to view Reform as the means of accomplishing these objects, and finding in fact that it puts a vast increase of power into their hands, the democracy will abstain from exercising that power for the furtherance of them. Can we imagine that the party, the influential leaders, will stop in their career? that the public press will become silent, and inactive? Can we imagine that feeling, however the present Ministry may be the immediate agents, that they are the real authors of this movement, they will suddenly unite to arrest its farther progress? Is there any thing in their conduct, or language, to indicate such a change? Is it probable that all those motives of interest and ambition which govern, and have always governed such men, should yield to a rare moderation, a moderation not only sacrificing their known objects, but contradicting all their previous declarations to the present moment?

Or is it intelligible that their influence will be weakened by the moral effects of that very triumph, which, by all knowledge, and experience of mankind, will most contribute to strengthen and extend it? Who can doubt that the controul

of newspapers, and of popular leaders, would be immensely increased by the success of this Bill? It has been argued, that the very wide qualification which has been adopted is yet based upon property, that the poor artizan, or little shop-keeper, values his possession of £10. a year as much as the wealthy Squire or Merchant his £10,000. I will admit this argument so far, that I think this class would readily defend property against pillage, robbery, and violence, they would recognize those first interests of civilized communities, which enjoin the repression of open outrage. But I am so far from thinking that they would equally respect all the diversified rights, which have sprung up in our advanced and artificial society, that I am certain that six months would not elapse before they would begin to attack every one of the interests I have enumerated with all the force of popular opinion, and with all the additional influence in the legislature which this measure would confer upon them. I suppose it will be contended by the advocates of the Ministers, that attacks upon property are not attacks upon property if made through the organ of a representative assembly, and in conformity with the forms of the Constitution of the day, as they have already maintained that the measure itself would not be a Revolution, if it passes without open violence, and with an adherence to legal forms.

The only argument that I have heard for the

assertion that this Bill would satisfy the people, appears to me a peculiarly weak, paradoxical, and unstatesmanlike one. It is argued that this House has wholly lost the confidence of the country, while it is admitted that this is the consequence less of any fault of conduct, of any mischievous policy, than of the alleged unpopularity of its mode of election.

Now the supporters of this Bill affirm that its effect will be to restore this lost confidence, not by any change of measures, for they acknowledge that no change would be beneficial, not by removing grievances, or distresses, or diminishing taxation, for they confess that they do not see how these objects are to be attained, but by enabling them to preach patience and resignation to the country with more effect from the pure mouths of these regenerated Representatives. I will ask, if ever the institutions of a great nation were wantonly invaded, if ever an ancient and admirable form of government was changed, if ever the desperate risks of speculative innovation were incurred, upon so flimsy and groundless a pretext? We are to disorder the whole British Constitution, we are to endanger the very existence of social order, not with a hope, however illusory, that positive good may be attained, or that existing evils may be cured, but for the chance that the people may afford that credence to new Representatives, which they refuse to us. I must remain firmly convinced that this policy is wholly

mistaken, and that this expectation is palpably irrational. To indulge it would be to misunderstand the entire nature and course of popular movements, and miscalculate the force of the revolutionary current. I must believe that if a great portion of the population have been led to suppose that gross practical abuses exist in the government, that rents, that taxes, that tithes, that the national debt, that the influence and property of the aristocracy, are so many causes of misery, so many gross impositions upon the people, which Reform is to remedy, they will not be satisfied with a Reform, which leaves them all in *statu quo*. I do not acquiesce a moment in the doctrine, that the middling, and lower classes have a sudden and uncontrollable desire of political power on abstract principles, that they covet with such insatiable eagerness that imperceptible fractional share in the management of state affairs which a vote at an election would give them. I see that it is a matter of great indifference to them individually whether they have a vote for a Member or not. They have been taught to desire it as a means, not as an end; and those who have taught them this lesson would take care to prompt them to use again the same means, and not to rest contented with so bootless a victory.

The very argument of the necessity of convincing the body of the people, at an immense sacrifice and risk, that there is little practical good to be effected, that the measure is an attempt

to persuade them of the truth of a position which the government themselves believe, is in itself an admission of deplorable weakness. It establishes the fact, that the government is controuled by influences within the country stronger than itself. The passing this Bill would increase these influences. If they are too strong for the Ministry now, they will be still more unmanageable hereafter. Even if the people, after having had their expectations so highly raised, were likely to sit down contented with this theoretical improvement, producing none of the effects they anticipate from it, still they would not be allowed to remain tranquil by those influences, which will more than ever direct and controul them.

The limits or design of this pamphlet will not allow me to go deeply into the details of this Bill. I will only observe, that the great inequality and partiality in the operation, the inconsistencies in the scale of population, and the thousand errors and difficulties, many of which we see now, and many more must we expect to discover, if so vast and crude a scheme is ever set in motion, will be inexhaustible sources of discontent.

The variety of new interests, at first unknown to the possessors, and only to be ascertained by contest, and by intrigue, would throw the country for a long time to come into a continual ferment, and would banish the idea of repose, or of the absence of excitation.

These very obvious reasons have satisfied me that this measure would not, and that it is utterly impossible that it should satisfy the people.

SECTION VI.

WILL THE PROPOSED REFORM SECURE THE REMAINING INSTITUTIONS OF THE COUNTRY?

I COME now to the assertion, that the Bill will not shake the essential institutions of the country, and will not destroy the influence of the higher classes, but only somewhat change its character. I confess I was surprised, shortly after the introduction of this Bill, to find impressions current among gentlemen friendly to it, both in, and out of the House, very different from those which I had immediately entertained of its highly democratic tendency. I was told in various quarters, "Oh! you do not understand the measure, you do not see its operation. It is a most Aristocratic Bill. The popular party may think that they have established a fulcrum for their lever, to overturn all the power of the Peerage, but they will find themselves mistaken: our order will be better and more firmly placed than ever. The influence of the highest ranks will be founded upon the most secure basis, and the discomfiture, and disappointment of the Radicals will be complete." I was more surprised, than

re-assured at the intelligence of this aristocratic ambushade. By principle, feeling, and education, attached, fervently attached to rational, and constitutional liberty, I should not view this Bill with less hostility, should I discover, that under pretence of satisfying the popular voice, it deceived while it fawned, and disguised an insidious encroachment of the powers it professed to curtail. One of the best arguments I know in favour of close boroughs, is, that they afford a field, a noble one for the fair play of intellect, and the free expression of thought, and that a private gentleman has through them an opening to declare his honest convictions, without subserviency to the dictation of one Peer, or of twenty thousand operatives.

But these hints induced me to examine and compare the aristocratic, and democratic parts of the Bill. It has certainly both tendencies. It gives something to both; but on casting the balance, I cannot find that it confirms the fond anticipation of my aristocratic friends.

The first decided accession to the democratic influence, is the proposed amputation of 58 or 60 Members. I think it will not be disputed, that the 163 seats which it is proposed to disfranchise, are filled by a class of Members eminently attached to all the existing institutions of the country. It is a matter of accusation against them, that they are too much attached to them, that they resist all change too stoutly. I will not now discuss that point, but it will be generally ad-

mitted, that no extreme or subversive measures are likely to be supported by them. They would not favour vote by ballot, or annual parliaments, or the spoliation of the fundholder, or the confiscation of rents. In opposition, their opposition would always be confined within the limits prescribed by the forms of the Constitution. Now, if these premises be admitted, it is quite evident, that if 168 Members be taken away, and only 108 or 110 added, even if that 110 be equally attached to the principles of legal order, equally firm to oppose those sudden gusts of popular excitement and error, which, unless a government has a power to withstand, it is built upon sand; yet, that the relative proportion to that part of the House, more immediately subject to direct popular influence, is diminished. The reduction is about a tenth of the whole House; and it is taken not generally from all parties, but from the number of those Members, who, whether in the Ministerial or Opposition sides, are, from their class, and the tenure of their seats, likely to unite in defending the great institutions of the country.

The next accession to the democratic weight, arises from leaving so many flourishing towns of the second class with only one Member, and adding only one Member to several great manufacturing towns. Every one who has had opportunities of observing the working of popular elections, must be aware, that those little communities, those little separate states, as it were, the

provincial towns, are all divided into two parties. They have their blues, and their independents, the first attached to existing institutions, the second desirous of great innovation and reform.

Were a traveller to traverse all the country towns at the time of a general election, he would see pretty much the same scene in every one. The parties, the mottoes, the devices, would be the same in all. Here would be a set of blue banners with Church and State, Thompson and the Constitution, there a set of orange or green with no taxes, no tithes, Smith and cheap bread, &c. &c. Now some principal wealthy tradesman or manufacturer, canvassing for Mr. Thompson, and going to John Dobson, the carpenter, a £10. householder, would say, "Dobson, I hope you will vote for my friend Mr. Thompson; he is a most respectable gentleman, and every way a fitting representative of this Borough." To which John Dobson replies, "Why, Sir, Mr. Thompson is a very civil gentleman, and I like his looks vastly; but then, here is Mr. Smith, who is so fond of cheap bread, and so am I, and he hates taxes; so do I, therefore, I really think I must vote for Smith." "Nonsense," cries the tradesman, "you are not so foolish as to think Dobson, that if Smith were made Chancellor of the Exchequer to-morrow, he could perform all these fine promises. But, Dobson, you have two votes; give one to Smith and his cheap bread, and give the other to my friend, Mr. Thompson; for

“remember, that it was owing to me last winter
“you had any bread at all.”

This sort of compromise, which I have attempted to shew by a familiar instance, takes place very generally throughout the kingdom, between the influence of the upper classes, resident in country towns, and the numerical majority of the lower. It ends, for the most part, in each returning a Member, whose opinions assimilate to their own. But it is evident, that with one Member, no such arrangement is practicable. Party spirit will be more violent; there will be a struggle every where, between what I may call the aristocracy and democracy of the middle orders, and in the sixty-four Boroughs, which would, under the new arrangement, return one Member only, a great preponderance would be given to the spirit of pure democracy. I will offer some remarks here upon the qualification which has been adopted. We have been fatigued with desultory harangues and general declamation about the middle orders. We have been told, unceasingly, of their increased wealth and intelligence. The Ministerial arguments seem one constant appeal to that class. I confess, it appears to me, that they have the very loosest and most inaccurate ideas of those orders, for whom they profess so profound a respect. It is not wonderful, that, contemplating this division of society from the lofty eminence of their aristocratic elevation, many shades and gradations

in it should have escaped them, quite apparent to nearer observers. The liberality of the great leaders of the Whigs has ever been of a peculiarly abstract and speculative character, dealing much in generals, but little marked by any unusual affability and urbanity of demeanour, or by any cultivation of social and kindly intercourse with less distinguished ranks. I admit, and admit with that pleasure with which I shall ever observe, the real improvement of my country; that a great advance has been made, of late years, in the acquirement of knowledge, and in the mental cultivation of a considerable portion of those ranks. Among the opulent shopkeepers in London, among the respectable retail dealers in the provincial towns, among the superior class of yeomen and farmers, I have met, very generally, a degree of intelligence and information, not merely confined to their own business, but embracing a more extensive range; I have observed a facility of language, and a propriety and correctness of thought, which denoted a considerable share of education and refinement. If these persons really have a very eager desire to possess votes for the return of Members to Parliament, I should certainly not be inclined to throw any obstacle in their way. But I contend, that Ministers have, in their measures, exercised no discrimination. The qualification they have adopted, will have the effect of introducing, not this intelligent and educated portion of the middle

ranks alone, but a vast majority very differently endowed. The motives for this low qualification were explained to be, that, in many of the Boroughs, retained or added by the new scheme, it was found that a higher rate would give too small a number of electors. But is not this rather an argument against adopting a uniform qualification at all? It merely shews, that the same scale will not suit Calne, and Birmingham. I am sure, that to no portion of the community would this measure be practically more unsatisfactory, than to that valuable part of the middle classes, who would be thus confounded with those so much their inferiors both in attainments, property, and station in society.

The next element of democracy is the transfer of the franchise to the large towns, chiefly manufacturing, in England, and to the great suburbs of London, in all forty-four; in Scotland and Ireland to fourteen more; all these returned by electors, voting according to the very low rate of qualification fixed upon, and in which no aristocratic or permanent influence of any kind can be supposed to exist. This is another tenth of the House added to the democratic scale. The throwing open the right of voting from the corporations to the £10. householders in towns like Bath, Bury St. Edmonds, &c. is of course another transfer of power to the democracy, exactly equivalent to that of a close Borough to a large town. As many of these as are to be found in the list

of the House of Commons, may, therefore, be fairly added to the sixty proscribed Boroughs. In counties, the addition of the copyholders and leaseholders will, unquestionably, add some weight to the popular scale. It is impossible to examine and enumerate all these additions to the democratic influence in the State, direct, and indirect, without arriving at the conclusion, that the change in our Government is even more vast and comprehensive than the first view would have led us to suppose.

It would also be an inevitable result of such a construction of the House of Commons, that even where the same individuals are returned, they would hold their seats by so frail a tenure, that all independence of opinion would be destroyed. The popular voice and will would have so overwhelming a power, directed by the press, to bear on any point, that the House would become the mere organ of its wishes. It would be an assembly of delegates. The constitutional doctrine now is, that a Member is bound to vote according to his own best judgment, subject to being displaced by his constituents, if his conduct does not please them. But in practice we find that this stoical firmness of purpose is subject to great relaxation; and, at any rate, the conscientious representative would be displaced by another of more congenial sentiments, or of a less scrupulous character. If this will of the people be always perfectly wise, right, and

proper, if they always direct their representatives, by a gentle violence, into the best possible course of policy, I have no farther doubts of the excellence of this plan of Reform. My only remaining difficulty will be, how a population, so perfectly competent, to act for itself, can require any representatives at all.

The aristocratic features of this Bill consist—First, in the line of disfranchisement which has been adopted, with reference to the population, and size of the towns. Secondly, in the addition to the county representation of fifty-four Members to the twenty-seven largest counties.

With respect to the first, it seems rather a reservation of some portion of the existing influence of the aristocracy, than any addition to it. It can only add to it in a few cases, where a numerous body of non-resident freemen are exchanged for a smaller and more manageable set of £10. householders.

The influence of the aristocracy in elections is of two kinds; one, where the Borough is entirely close, the other, where a large property, in a moderate sized town, and residence in the neighbourhood, with the obligation and patronage of tradesmen it gives, and a great command of money create a preponderance which other candidates are not disposed to contend against, on a mere chance of success. A large number of the Boroughs would consist of towns of this calibre and description, containing three hundred

£10. householders, or made up to that number by the neighbouring parishes. In all these Boroughs the aristocracy would, of course, seek to establish, or confirm their influence. A place of this size, and voters of this class, are peculiarly open to every species of illegitimate influence; and we might expect, throughout them all, a vast increase of bribery and corruption. The kind of influence too, is exactly of that nature which is most unpopular and obnoxious in its exercise, and the most opposed to the present temper of the people; and we might be prepared to see multiplied, throughout the country, the disputes of Newark, Shaftesbury, and Stamford. I would observe, that the sort of weight to be obtained in this manner, can only be obtained by the highest and greatest aristocracy. Towns of this size can only be swayed by the powerful influence of very great wealth, added to that of hereditary rank and station. All minor interests would be swept away. The result then would be to reserve, and, perhaps, in some instances, to confer upon the highest and richest of the Peerage, or those great Commoners, who are on a level with them, a power of returning representatives in several of these small Boroughs. This power would be very precarious, constantly open to attack and intrigue, and it could only be maintained by the general adoption of those means, which have already, in a few instances, created so strong a feeling of hostility to the aristocracy,

and which must always be extremely revolting, and unpopular. The same tendency may be observed in the additions to the county representation, and in the divisions of the counties into districts, thereby adding to the local influence of great estates. The large and remote counties are, it is well known, the strong holds of the great landed proprietors. In the small counties, estates are more divided, and overpowering influence less known. But in the more distant, and greater counties, we find the baronial halls, the princely domains, the unbounded hospitality of the proud and lofty nobles, who have, down to our days, preserved, in a more modern shape, so much of the greatness of their feudal ancestors. I acknowledge then, that in this sense it is an aristocratic, and a highly aristocratic measure. All that it does not give to pure democracy, it disposes of in favour of the highest and greatest of the Peerage, and landed proprietors: The intermediate ground is entirely swept away. All those avenues opened to the honourable ambition of the less distinguished gentry would be closed for ever. The most independent, perhaps the most enlightened portion of the British people, could no longer approach a place, which has so often been adorned by their talents, and where they have rendered such services to their country.

Two paths alone would be left to the entrance within the walls of the British House of Commons; one, the canvassing of a large provincial town, the

intrigues of years perhaps, the gradual coaxing an interest ; sometimes, alas, by humouring popular delusions, by inflaming popular passions, by lending oneself to the wildest exaggerations of popular prejudice. On the other hand, by the possession of the highest rank, by great and concentrated landed estates, by advantages to which men must be born, and which the exertions of a life, however active, however meritorious, however successful, could never attain. I do not deny, that if I thought my country's welfare demanded the sacrifice, the political annihilation of the private gentlemen of England, I should feel a deep regret. But, I believe, that their interests are identified, and that the blow which destroys this valuable class, would inflict a vital wound upon the nation. And let not this proud Ministry suppose, that they would eventually triumph, or that they could blend together two elements so discordant as the flood of democracy, which one part of their Bill introduces, and the exclusively and loftily patrician character they have given to the other. Let them not imagine, that the frail ark they have constructed would bear their Whig Aristocracy, unharmed amidst the waters of such a deluge. All that now renders the House of Commons a complete amalgamation of different interests would be lost. Now we neither see manufacturers nor agriculturists, nor monied men, sitting apart or acting separately. There is a fusion of all in that mighty crucible, into one great national interest. Should

this Bill pass, the first question which arises, bringing the interests of the aristocracy into collision, not only with the interests, but with the prejudices, or caprices, or passions of the multitude, would be the signal for complete separation. The aristocratic part of the House, exclusive, lofty, insulated, and obnoxious, would be assailed by the whole concentrated power of the popular party, both within and without. Numerically inferior to their opponents inside, and overwhelmed by the cry, which those popular leaders would easily raise from without, is it possible, that this feeble rampart of the Monarchy could long resist? And how long should we wait before some such question would be started? Are not vote by Ballot -- a completely free trade in corn--or such retrenchments as would render the payment of the national debt impossible, ready made to their hands?

I believe, that the framers of this Bill love their order; when I look at it, I see that they love their order, but I see too that they love it "not wisely, yet too well."

SECTION VII.

IRELAND.

IF I perfectly agreed with the Ministry upon every other part of their measure—if I thought its details admirable, its objects most desirable, and its provisions best calculated to attain them—if I considered every other danger chimerical, and the benefits it would effect as substantial, and extensive, as the most sanguine of their supporters—its effects upon Ireland would be sufficient alone to determine me to oppose it. In the present state of that country, in the consequences of the Bill, as it applies to it, and in the general position of the two nations, are to be discovered grounds of objection, calculated to neutralize, or to counterbalance, every possible advantage from it, even had these advantages a real existence. The state of Ireland is critical and disquieting in the highest degree. The arguments which have been most strenuously urged in support of Reform in England, do not apply to it, in the least. There are a thousand motives, on the other hand, to render interference, or alteration of the existing mode of representation in that country,

(particularly such alterations as are proposed,) dangerous, and impolitic in the highest degree, and menacing to the very existence of the empire.

First, the reasons brought forward with respect to England, are inapplicable to Ireland. Two thirds of the Members returned to Parliament, are from the counties; the large towns are generally open. The close boroughs do not bear such a proportion to the whole, as to render the anomaly a very striking feature; as respects the representation of that country.

The strongest ground occupied by the Reformers in England, was the absurdity and inconvenience of leaving such places as Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham, without Representatives. But, in Ireland, no such great manufacturing towns have sprung up; and although it has been judged proper to propose an addition of five Members to the borough representation, (for what reason, heaven knows,) yet, as no place of importance, already unrepresented, offered itself, in favour of which to dispose of these additional Members, they have been conferred upon five towns, which, according to the articles of Union, were already represented. In England, the view which has been most fondly dwelt upon, has been the increase of wealth, the acquirement of intelligence, the independence and progressive advance of the middle orders; but, in Ireland, it is the great evil and misfortune of that country, that this necessary and important link in the social chain,

is almost entirely wanting. The best, the most substantial and educated of the middle orders, are the Protestant tradesmen, resident in the towns; and these are precisely the persons whom the provisions of this Bill would cut off from all influence and controul in elections whatever. In England, it is unquestionable, that a great eagerness and desire for Reform, have taken possession of the minds of a large part of the population; but, in Ireland, although easily excited, and directed by those to whose suggestions they implicitly defer, to ask for any thing, the great mass of the people are, in themselves, far less interested in the question. In England, it has been constantly urged, that the advanced civilization of the nation, the different proportions and distribution of property and intelligence, required a corresponding change in the institutions of the State; but, in Ireland, the most marked characteristic of the mass of the population is a backwardness in civilization, as compared with the rest of Europe. That kind, and generous, and warm hearted, people, whom it is impossible to know without feeling regard and affection for, as they have the natural impulses, the primitive feelings, all the virtues of an early and rude stage of society, so they have the defects, the uncontrollable passions, and much of the ignorance, and want of information, which are also its inseparable concomitants.

The state of Ireland, for some time past, has

attracted so large a share of the public attention, that it is wholly unnecessary to enter into any lengthened detail of it. We all know, that the mass of the population, in three fourths of that country, is Catholic, and that the bulk of the property, and, we may add, the education and refinement, is Protestant. It is an unhappy, but too probable consequence of such a state of things, that a strong line of demarcation should be drawn, and a feeling of hostility engendered between the followers of the two religions. If it does not inevitably create fierce party differences, at least it prepares all the materials for them, and renders their growth rapid, and their extinction, when once they have sprung up, difficult. In many of the continental nations, the two faiths flourish amicably, side by side, and their existence does not in the least disturb the general harmony. But, this is very frequently, a result of that indifference to all forms of worship, which extends over a great part of Europe. The French have little religious feeling, and no superstition or bigotry whatever; at least, the only bigotry they are disposed to indulge, is a bigotry against the professors of religion. The devout Catholics and Protestants in these countries, are rather drawn together by the presence of this common enemy of both. They are more inclined to sink their differences, and to cultivate those sympathies and points of agreement which exist between them. The tranquil and specula-

tive character of the Germans, and the care with which a perfect toleration has been cherished in their States, explain the fellowship of the two creeds in that country. Generally, from the diffusion of information, from the fusion which has taken place among different nations on the continent, from the effects of the writings of the French Encyclopedists, and from the whole public mind having been fixed upon political doctrines and struggles, it is indisposed to entertain warm, or party feelings upon any distinctions of faith. But, Ireland is circumstanced very differently; it has been quite out of the sphere of operation of all these causes; the rude and simple character of its peasant population, their being undivided by any gradations of ranks, the influence of a priesthood, (extremely zealous and exemplary, like all the Catholic parochial and secular clergy, in the duties of their profession,) have preserved here much of the attachment to their creed, and reverence for its Ministers, which we should vainly seek in France, or in Italy. In the course of long and bitter struggles, religion has been made a point of honour and a badge of party; it was the standard under which, in the contentions which immediately preceded the settlement of the Catholic Question, the power of opinion, and the force of numbers were ably organized and concentrated. They were so organized and concentrated for a successful purpose, and the discipline and machinery which had had the credit of accom-

plishing it, was rendered familiar to men's minds, remained unbroken in the hands which had formed it, and convertible to new objects.

It might have been possible, that, upon the passing of that Bill, the authors of those formidable combinations, which, if they did not cause, certainly facilitated its triumph, might have themselves dissolved them, might have lent their great aid to promote the beneficent aims of the best friends of Emancipation, and might have sought to tread in the new and loftier path, which had at length been opened to their talents and their ambition. But, Washingtons are extremely rare; and it was a more tempting game to continue at the head of the system of agitation, and to supply a new object for its energies and exertions. The Repeal of the Union succeeded the Catholic Question, with this difference between them, that in the Catholic Question the Agitators, were united with half England, with its best Statesmen, with a great portion of its intelligence; and that in the Repeal they stood alone, at the head of their bands of Agitators, in direct opposition to the whole sister nation, and to all the property of their own.

I should scarcely have alluded to a state of things so well known, but for the purpose of vindicating myself from any imputation of intolerance, in objecting to changes in the representative system of Ireland, calculated to strengthen the influence of the lower Catholic

population. It is not as Catholics, it is not as professors of a religion differing from my own, that I object to them; it is, because I know that they will be instruments in hands which I distrust, for the promotion of purposes which I dread. If half the Protestant County Members in Ireland had been turned out by Catholic Gentlemen, possessed of equal estates, property, and consideration, in their respective counties, I should have regarded it as a matter of total indifference to the empire. But when it appears that any individual, or set of individuals, have sufficient weight and influence, by a sort of freemasonry of sect, by the mere force of their recommendation, by that moral controul over the Catholic freeholders, with which the circumstances of these religious struggles have invested them, to procure the election of persons, as Members for Irish counties, totally unconnected with them by any local ties, there is no mixture of intolerance in the apprehension which such a state of things creates. So formidable, so unprecedented a power of dictation, coupled with the avowed determination of exercising it to accomplish the Repeal of the Union, must be a source of anxiety to all reflecting minds. The state of affairs in Ireland must be perpetually present to the thoughts of the Ministry. The course of agitation, within the last few months, has excited their utmost exertions to repress it; in the form in which it has lately been displayed,

of constant meetings, and inflammatory harangues to assemblies of the people. Can they be blind to the yet more serious character it assumes, in this interference with elections, and in this power of nomination which it seems to possess; as absolute, for the time, as that of the proprietors of Gatton, or Old Sarum? Even now, is it not confidently whispered, that they would not have been disposed to trust their favourite Bill to the farther discussion of a House, which had allowed it to pass to its most critical stage only by a majority of one solitary voice; but that the consequences of letting loose this terrible force of excitement and influence, have made even their temerity pause? When the existence of a party so formidable, that they occasion a dissolution of Parliament to be dreaded by the rashest as almost a convulsion of the State, is a notorious fact, how must that policy be characterized, which, gratuitously, causelessly throws a vast additional weight into its hands?

The increased powers confided by this Bill to the hands of the Irish agitators for the Repeal of the Union, are derived from these resources:—

First, the reduction of the English Members in the House of Commons.

Secondly, the increase of the Irish.

Thirdly, the laying open twenty-five or twenty-six boroughs, and transferring the right of voting from the Protestant corporations to the Catholic £10. householders.

No reason has ever yet been assigned for the first two provisions. They are among those parts of the Bill, which, as Lord John Russell stated to the House of Commons, required no argument in their support, as they spoke for themselves. They do speak for themselves, but they appear to speak a different language to different minds. They give a large accession of weight, both positive, and relative, to the Irish representation in the House of Commons, which was uncalled for, which was unexpected, which was not conceded to any popular demand, and which is diametrically opposed to the true policy of the British empire.

But as if this were not regarded as bestowing enough upon the agitators, as if it were considered not sufficient indirectly to add to their importance, by depressing England, and raising Ireland in the scale, Ireland, the seat of their extraordinary power and authority over a large portion of the constituent body, a more positive donation must be made to them. Twenty-five, or twenty-six boroughs, a quarter of the Irish representation, are beyond their controul, are quite exempt from the sphere of agitation, are returned by that interest, which is the interest of property in that country. These boroughs are a counterpoise to their dangerous ascendancy, and these boroughs must be surrendered to them. Who can doubt that the Catholic £10. householders in the towns will act as the Catholic

£10. freeholders in the counties do?' Who can suppose, that, if they do not obtain possession of all these Boroughs, they will not at least render every one a focus of restless intrigue, and perpetual excitement? It is as certain, as it is that the Protestant Corporations would continue to maintain the Legislative Union, the rights of property, the authority of law, and the permanence of social order.

Well might the Honourable Member for Waterford support the Bill with more than even his usual ability, and with much more than his usual moderation.

But, agitation in Ireland has for the moment been suspended, and it is even remotely hinted, that the Repeal of the Union is a means, not an end, and, that it is possible, that if Reform works miracles for the relief and benefit of Ireland, the Repeal may be relinquished. So is the demand for Vote by Ballot hushed, so is the loud call for Retrenchment silenced, so are the hundred ulterior objects of the democratic party for the moment deferred. But, I would ask the Statesmen, who direct our affairs, what part of the conduct of the Agitators in their transactions with them, has given them such confidence in their moderation, that to them of all others are large concessions to be made without security, and new powers reposed with such unbounded trust, not in their pledges, but in these dark hints of possible change of views?

One remark suggests itself upon this subject, that whatever accession of strength the agitation party receives within the walls of the House of Commons, it will unite itself with the democratic English party against the settled institutions of the country. A Government, to possess stability, must be stronger not only than one party, but than all combinations of different parties; for, however opposed on other points, they will always unite to overthrow it. And in the lamentable course of these popular movements, the most extreme party has always the best chance of triumphing in the end, partly because *vires crescit eundo*, partly because while it is gaining and maturing its own strength, it fights with the force of all the other more moderate, added to its own. When a Ministry is overthrown by one compact party of different opinions, it is a much less evil to the country, and much less disquieting to the lovers of settled government, than when it is overthrown by a union of different ones.

For, in the latter case, whatever Ministry succeeds, will have the same disadvantages to contend with, and will equally want the character of permanence.

Time is measured by events; and in the course of the last few months, events have crowded in upon us with such rapidity, that those of very recent occurrence scarcely retain a place in our memory. Yet, there was a declaration, made by Lord Althorp, but a few weeks since, which, as it

made a strong impression upon his hearers at the time, cannot have been altogether forgotten. It was, that of his determination, rather than consent to the Repeal of the Union, to support the last dread alternative of a Civil War.

The known humanity and kindness of heart which distinguish this Nobleman, must have rendered such a determination a painful one. He could not avoid picturing to his fancy the dreadful scenes with which such a war would infallibly be marked. He could not but feel the deep aggravation of the evils of war at all times, when it is waged between fellow subjects and countrymen, when it vindicates no national honour, and promotes no national interest, when the widows and orphans it makes are consoled by no patriotic feeling, and when victory itself is but a negative and a joyless triumph. And a Civil War in Ireland! He could not have concealed from himself its appalling prospect—a wild, an excited, an uncontrolled peasantry, rising in an ungoverned mass, subject to no command, but that of the most desperate among themselves, and directing their fierce attacks against all that the country contained of property, and rank, and station. He must have anticipated all those horrors of warfare, happily now banished from the practice of civilized nations and regular armies, except in the short intoxication of a successful storming party. Against such horrors desolating the whole country in so irregular a struggle, the sole weak security

would be those better impulses, which might soften the passions of lawless and fierce spirits. He knew it was a war in which private property, and sex, and age must incur one common danger; that it was a war which might be stained with cruelty, disfigured with crime; that there would be no refuge for the defenceless in the courtesies of cultivated minds, or in the recognized usages of civilized nations. He knew, that this war could only be extinguished by the blood of many unhappy, mistaken, yet ardent and gallant men, poured forth in a melancholy contest with that disciplined British valour, which was formed on nobler fields. He knew all this, and yet he made his election rather to encounter it, than to consent to a measure in which he saw the ruin of the British empire. I do not blame his determination, I do not impeach his judgment; it would be a sad alternative; I firmly believe, it would be a right and a proper choice. But did he weigh all the responsibility which that declaration attached to him, when he gave his consent to this Bill of Reform? Can he quite reconcile it in his own breast, to give additional power by his Bill to those, whom he is prepared, if necessary, to repress by the bayonet? We cannot dive into the secrets of Cabinet Councils; we know not the negotiations, or compromises, which the Ministers of the King of England, may have judged it consistent with their dignity, and his, to enter into. We are ignorant of the value of the securities

they may have obtained, or of the grounds of the confidence they may place in them; but we know this, that if the great increased influence given by this Bill, to those Gentlemen who have lately agitated Ireland, to procure a Repeal of the Union, be further employed for the same purpose; and if human blood be ever shed in opposing it, His Majesty's Ministers will not only have the mortification of a great political blunder, but they will have prepared for themselves a source of deep and lasting remorse.

SECTION VIII. *

THE STATE OF EUROPE.

THERE is a certain class of politicians, who ask, "What have we to do with the Continent? What have Foreign States to do with us? Let us not intermeddle in their affairs, but confine our attention entirely to home; we have nothing to do with them." These politicians will not be inclined to follow my views, in considering the effects of this Bill of Reform upon the general destinies of Europe. I cannot, however, reject this consideration of the subject, because I can only coincide in their opinions to a very limited extent. I agree with them, so far, as to regard a meddling busy interference with the internal affairs of other nations, without great and adequate objects, as a mischievous and mistaken policy. It would be equally mistaken in France or in Russia. It is exactly analogous to the conduct of an officious busy body in private life, a character in which there is certainly neither dignity nor wisdom, and which is of all others the most likely to entangle a person in awkward scrapes and embarrassments. Let our interference be sparing, be judicious, be

only exerted for worthy national objects. But, this is only a just general principle, which ought to govern the conduct of all great States. If these gentlemen mean to assert that there is any thing in the peculiar position of England, which disconnects her interests in any especial manner from those of other nations, such a proposition appears to me radically erroneous. If there is a nation upon earth, whose interests are blended with those of others, that nation is England. The very nature of her power, the very character of her dominion, the complicated structure of her commercial and political superiority, render it inevitable. If Russia sends a fleet through the Dardanelles, or moves a Pulk of Cossacks towards the frontiers of Persia, we are interested. If North America covets Cuba, or coquets with the Canadas, we are interested. If the Burmese King dispatches a troop of predatory horsemen, within two hundred miles of Calcutta, we are interested. If the Emperor of China sends a new set of commercial regulations to the Chief Mandarin of Canton, we are interested. If France intrigues in Belgium, or menaces Italy, we are interested.

England is connected with, not separated from every other nation in the world by that great ocean, which is a part of her Empire.

Nor are we less united with the great European family, by the bonds of moral affinity, sympathy, and opinion, than by the more tangible links of direct national interests. England is not loved on

the Continent, she is not very popular, but “she fills a great space in the eye of mankind.” Our movements are watched with much of involuntary deference, our views, and policy have a great moral weight elsewhere. Nor is this influence all on one side; we in turn are powerfully acted upon from without. The convulsions which are tearing Europe to its centre, which menace it with a catastrophe similar to the dissolution of the Roman Empire, are the result of an electric shock of opinions, which pervades the atmosphere of thought and feeling from Petersburg to Naples.

We are within its sphere, we must regulate our conduct with reference to its course and effects.

The French Revolution of July last has, indeed, let loose a hurricane in Europe. On its first occurrence it was characterized by so much moderation, and the first movements of the new Government were directed by a Ministry of such temperate, and enlightened principles, that the lovers of constitutional freedom were sanguine in hoping that the change of dynasty would only have secured its mild ascendancy. Those who had had opportunities of becoming acquainted with the French people, hoped much from the changes which circumstances had worked in their national character. They had become less volatile, and more reflecting. A strong principle of justice, and integrity of dealing, marked their transactions. The nation was flourishing, and progressive, property was widely diffused, and a vast

body of commercial and agricultural interests were involved in its preservation. A spirit of industry, and a turn for manufacturing and trading pursuits had been created. The whole nation had a deep, and abhorrent recollection of the dreadful excesses which had stained their first revolution. On the other hand was the absence of those masses of property, that aristocratic mixture, which seems absolutely necessary to give permanence to institutions resembling ours. There was also much exaggeration of feeling, and error on political subjects, and there was the old recollection of the splendid victories of Napoleon, and the thirst for military glory, and conquest, subdued, but not extinguished, by the cultivation of the arts of peace. Still, upon the whole, there appeared fair ground for hope that the tranquillity of Europe, which had subsisted so happily since the fall of Napoleon, would not be troubled, and that the French might consolidate, under a new, a popular; and a prudent Sovereign, that firm, and well balanced limited Monarchy, which our interests, and our sympathies, equally prompted us to desire for them. Nor do I think that, had France been left to herself, these expectations would have been disappointed. During the eight months which have succeeded, the moderate party in the country have shewn that they possessed great strength, and rested upon an imposing mass of public opinion. From the 25th of September last, when they broke up some popular

societies of very dangerous tendencies, to the conclusion of the trial of the Ex Ministers, they always, when roused to action, proved too powerful for the anarchists. But the unfortunate course of events in Europe, the succession of popular movements, that most unlucky Belgic revolution, the Polish revolt, the Italian disturbances, have administered such a succession of excitements to the popular passions, that it is only wonderful how the new, and unstable government of Louis Philippe should have resisted them so long. Republican principles, and intrigues, the mania of an armed crusade of liberalism, the desire of military glory and national aggrandizement, all the chords to which French minds and feelings answer most readily, have been constantly and repeatedly struck. The alarms thus created have given a shock to public credit, and involved the commerce and industry of the country in embarrassment and distress. This state of things has again weakened the power of the State, by depriving it of much of the support of property, as wealth and prosperity are the natural props of Government, while no political adventurers are so desperate and reckless as men of affluent fortunes, suddenly ruined.

It would be doing less than justice to the character and policy of Louis Philippe, since his occupation of the throne, not to remark the evidence he has given of his attachment to moderate and rational principles. He has shewn through-

out a strong preference to the parties of the Centres of the Chamber, in which the best intellect, and integrity of the nation are to be found. He has endeavoured with much skill and address to steer clear of the rocks which shipwrecked the first French revolution, the intoxication of vain and visionary political theories, the intervention of the mob, and the national desire for foreign wars of conquest, and for the propagation by force of arms, like the followers of Mahomet, of the tenets of their political faith. He had the merit, in the case of Belgium, of foregoing a tempting opportunity of territorial acquisition, and of obtaining popularity at home. He probably felt that whatever lighted up a general war in Europe, its course, under any circumstances, would eventually be fatal to himself. Unsuccessful, he would be attacked from without, and overwhelmed by the weight of discontent and disappointment from within. Should the arms of France be triumphant, still he would have to contend with the violence of factions, and the embarrassments of financial difficulties at home, while every student of the Polytechnic School, every Lieutenant of Artillery, would be dreaming of the dazzling course of Napoleon. A whole tide of personal ambition would be let loose, and the first successful General, captivating the imagination of the soldiery and the people, would find it no difficult task to dispossess him of an insecure crown.

Whatever may have been the sincere reluctance

of the French Government to engage in war; whatever may have been the wise and cautious policy of Louis Philippe, rather to reconcile his more liberal institutions with the established monarchies of Europe, than to seek to disturb them; whatever may have been the force of the moderate and constitutional party in France, there is too much reason to fear, that events will be too strong for all these. Should they be overpowered, the issue of these convulsions will be indiscernible by any mortal sagacity. The probability is, that the Continent, after being ravaged by war, and wearied with anarchy, would sink again into the monotonous tranquillity of despotism. The commencement of the struggle would be fatal to all that national prosperity and progressiveness; to all that personal security, liberty, and happiness, for which alone free institutions are precious; the end of it would be the destruction of the forms of freedom themselves.

There is no hostility to the interests of real and rational liberty, in the opinion, that the success of its principles demands the cessation of these popular movements throughout Europe; which, whether repressed, or successful, must finally be injurious to its cause. A British Cabinet should never lose sight of this position; we should never forget, that there is no national object more essential, more intimately mixed up with our domestic welfare, than the allaying this fierce spirit of popular excitement, and the

reconciliation and amicable union of France, and the liberalized States, with the ancient monarchies. We must remember, while we are discussing such extensive changes, at this critical period, in our own Government, that we are a most influential part of this great whole; that we shall act upon Europe, and, in turn, be acted upon by it. If we add a fresh momentum to the popular excitation of the Continent, it will, in turn, give back an additional impulse to our own.

We must first consider, that the carrying of the Reform Bill, as it is hailed as a great victory by all our own radical and republican party here, so it will be trumpeted forth as a triumph by all the democrats and jacobins of the Continent. It will be proclaimed as a proof of the irresistible force of what they call "le mouvement;" it will be cited as an evidence, that "La révolution marche partout;" and it will be held forth as an example, to stir up the emulation of other nations.

In the next place, it is an impression on the Continent, which has been repeated in their journals for some time past, that the change of Government, produced by this Reform, would greatly weaken the influence of England in the Cabinets of Europe. Most firmly do I believe that it would do so, both immediately, and prospectively; but, at any rate, the mere impression,

to a certain degree, realizes itself. It is curious, that this effect is contemplated with peculiar satisfaction by the most liberal French journals, so much is there of national jealousy in their feelings towards us. It is a singular admission for that party, however, that a large infusion of democracy would weaken the power of the State, and lower its tone towards other nations.

The French have, likewise, since the dethronement of Charles X., been engaged in a Parliamentary Reform. Too much subserviency to the Crown, or a neglect of the popular interests, could not, during the fifteen years which had elapsed since the Restoration, been charged upon the Chamber of Deputies. The variety of little independent parties into which it was divided, their perfect independence, and their extreme violence, impaired the efficiency, and destroyed the stability of each succeeding Ministry; those of the politic De Cazes, and of the enlightened and liberal Martignac, not less than of the Jesuit Villele, and of the Ultra Polignac. Still it was considered, that this assembly was not sufficiently popular in its construction; and after having, by its daring vindication of its own independence, and assertion of the opinions of the people, occasioned, first the Ordinances, and then the Revolution of July; no sooner was that Revolution accomplished, than it became the object of the fiercest attacks of the popular party. It is evident

that this alteration of the elective franchise was entertained with the greatest reluctance by all but the declared Republicans. Not merely the Doctrinaires, M. de Guizot and the Duc de Broglie, but M. M. Laffitte, Sebastiani, and others of the extreme left, broached the subject unwillingly, against their better judgment, and under the compulsion of the popular clamour. A measure was at length provisionally adopted, lowering the qualification from the payment of 300 to 240 francs, direct taxes, and increasing the number of electors from 84,000, to a number, which has been variously stated as from 200,000 to 300,000. It was most apprehensively, and reluctantly passed by all the moderate parties, while it was decried as entirely inadequate by Lafayette, Mauguin, and the extreme left. Any one acquainted with the public mind in France, any one knowing how watchfully they observe all that occurs here, and who can estimate the sensation which the passing of this Reform Bill would have upon them, will at once perceive that it will inevitably lead to their insisting upon a wider basis of elective franchise.

Will they be satisfied with 250,000 electors for their 33,000,000, when they see us adding half a million at a stroke to our already large constituency for a population but two thirds of their number? But, it is certain, that in France, a country wholly destitute of an aristocracy, either of rank or of property, monarchy could not subsist a day concurrent with a widely extended franchise. The two institutions

would come into immediate collision, Republicanism would be established for a time, until replaced by its inevitable successor, absolute power.

I have pointed the attention of my readers to the unquestionable and powerful effect which the passing of this Bill of Reform would produce upon the nations of the continent. Were the spectacle offered to their eyes, of England, under the influence of a popular effervescence, making so vast a stride towards democracy, it would inspire the party of the "mouvement," or, in other words, those who are bent upon keeping up a continued action on the part of the people against all subsisting establishments, with unbounded confidence. It would give them, in reality, a great accession of strength, and, in France, it would lead to a Republican form of Government.

Now let us weigh the re-action of such a state of things upon us; and let us ask, whether our own monarchy and aristocracy, weakened by this change, would endure very long here against all those internal enemies, which every one must acknowledge they would have to contend with both in England and Ireland, backed by the example and influence of a Republic, probably a Military Republic, on the other side of the Channel. This measure would effect the subversion of two Thrones.

Finally, a vast movement is taking place throughout Europe, originating in a cause, which, at first, commanded our sincere sympathy; it has extended, in a manner which threatens the whole fabric of society with dissolution: we have felt the rockings

and heavings of the earthquake here. If our well proved institutions have strength to resist the storm, we may be able to check and direct it. The influence of England, judiciously and temperately exerted, might do much to calm excitement, to controul the fanaticism of liberalism on one hand, and to mediate between free governments, and absolute monarchy on the other. But if we want that strength now, if, by passing this Bill, we become parties to the movement, we shall be drawn with it in all its subsequent phases. Instead of its being subject to any guidance of ours, we shall become dependent upon it. If the current can be directed towards order, conservative principles, moderation, and settled forms of government, we shall take the lead; in a race of democracy, France will. If, therefore, we find in our internal condition a hundred strong arguments against taking this dangerous step, they derive additional confirmation from without. We are induced to reject the Bill by all our value for the general cause of rational freedom, as we would wish to see it happily, and peacefully consolidated. We are called upon to reject this Bill, as we would not see anarchy invade us from without, even if it were not bred within. We are called upon to reject it by all the pride of patriotism, as we would not see England following in a bad course, instead of leading a good one.

SECTION IX.

CONCLUSION.

I HAVE left almost entirely unnoticed the strong grounds of objection, discoverable by the examination, in detail, of the provisions and clauses of this Bill. It would be almost impossible to introduce so extensive an innovation, which would not, in practice, be found attended with many difficulties and defects, unforeseen by those who framed it. That any great change will be attended with unexpected consequences, is unavoidable; but this Bill seems chargeable with errors, imputable to hurry, and want of arrangement. The distribution of the franchises; the disfranchisement, of places of greater opulence and population, than others which are spared; the great deficiency of £10. householders in some of the smaller Boroughs; the large powers reposed in the Privy Council, and the number of Boroughs upon which they will be called to exercise them; the careful provision which has been made for the increase of bribery and corruption, by the creation of so many Penrhyns, and East Retfords, to which all those candidates, who come in now for close Boroughs, must betake themselves;

all these are sufficiently apparent faults, and many of them might have been easily objvated. They are an evidence of the inattention and of the haste with which it has been framed. As several of these defects are exactly of that kind which would attract the strongest animadversion from the radical Reformers, we must conclude that they have some powerful motive in passing them over so silently. It is not indeed difficult to discover. They are charmed with having established the precedent of so vast a change; and it is an additional recommendation to them, that the new system is to be so full of imperfections. Had the Ministry, by some strange chance, produced at once a perfect plan, their occupation would have been gone; but as it is, they would have the fairest possible prospect of continual alteration, mutation, and deterioration.

The very reason which decides them to support the Bill, with all its faults, is the strongest for rejecting it, with every mind alive to a prudent regard for the welfare of the country. The defects are serious objections in themselves; they alone are valid reasons for throwing it out; but when we consider that Ministers bring it forward as a final settlement, that it is upon that ground solely that they can be entitled to ask the House to receive it, surely all these flaws and blunders must entirely deprive it of that character. In this light, objections of detail assume a tenfold importance.

Every blunder, every oversight, every sin of omis-

sion, or of commission, however trifling, introduces an element of instability, a ground of future cavil, or of future modification, into what, if it be received at all, ought to be received with every guarantee of its being a final adjustment.

We are now fast approaching those later stages, which will determine the fate of this measure, and with it that of the British nation. Some observations which I have made upon the circumstances attending its earlier progress, induce me to address one short remark to those, who, viewing it as I do, as most dangerous and subversive in its character, have voted from deference to the popular feeling, in opposition to the dictates of their own better judgment. Let them remember, that this step is irrevocable; they wish to act with caution, but caution can have nothing in common with it. The reckless and blind temerity which brought it forward, or the still more alarming designs of many who support it, cannot be defeated by temporizing movements. Let those, who think that this, is "*the axe, and not the pruning knife,*" abandon the vain expectation, that they can direct the edge, or regulate the descent of this improper, clumsy, fatal instrument. They must arrest the uplifted arm that has madly raised it; there is destruction in its fall. The mortal blow would be given to the constitution, and to social order; the rest would be but the protracted struggle of lingering dissolution. If there be danger in the bolder, franker line, it is

a danger less in degree, and not so formidable in kind.

“ Let him who crawls, enamoured of decay,
 “ Cling to his couch, and sicken years away;
 “ Heave his thick breath, and shake his palsied head,
 “ Ours the fresh turf, and not the feverish bed.”

But let them be assured, that the more decided is the safer course. Let them do their duty, undeterred by that popular feeling, which is evanescent, which is mistaken; and which will, in the end, acknowledge its error, and subscribe to the decisions of justice and reason. Let them confront this menacing axe, as they value our prosperity, our place among nations, the prospects of our children. Let them oppose this Bill, as they would be faithful to their charge, true to their country, just to posterity; as they would answer it, in their last hour, to their conscience, and their God.

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POPULAR OPINIONS

ON

PARLIAMENTARY REFORM,

CONSIDERED.

SIR JOHN WALSH, BART. M.P.

THIRD EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS,
AND A POSTSCRIPT TO THE BALLOT.

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ON
PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.

SECTION I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE great excitement prevailing throughout the nation upon the subject of Parliamentary Reform, must attract the most anxious attention, in every one alive to the importance of the question. There can be little doubt that the public have been awakned to this intense interest from a recent state of comparative indifference, that very lately it was not much considered, and was left to those Reformers *par metier*, who constitute a small sect, and made few proselytes. Before I attempt to enter into the momentous question itself, some remarks upon the nature, and temper of this sudden, and strong feeling is an important preliminary.

When any great question of national policy gradually, and steadily advances in the favourable opinion of the enlightened, and reflecting portion of the community, when it is advocated by the

wisest, and most eminent statesmen of all parties, when it numbers among its converts the ablest of its former opponents, when it enlists as its supporters almost all the recruits from the rising generation, when, lastly, originating among the higher, and better informed ranks, it little by little conciliates, or overpowers the hostile prejudices of the mass, such circumstances constitute the strongest presumptive evidence of its wisdom, and policy that the testimony of public opinion can afford.

It will be easily perceived, I think, that I am not now describing the progress of the Reform question; in all these points it offers a marked contrast to the progress, and triumph of the measure of Catholic Emancipation. There is another leading difference between them worthy of observation. In proportion as the Catholic Question was investigated, sifted, and argued, as it were, in the presence of the whole nation, its scope, and probable operation, became better defined; indistinct apprehensions were removed, its objects became more precise, and its consequences clearer. Each party knew, one what was to be obtained, the other what it wished to withhold. We have not reached this epoch in the history of Reform. The word is a singularly vague one; it means every thing, and any thing; it conveys no positive idea whatever; but seems to have a different acceptation in each different mouth, and to assume as many shapes, to give birth to as many different

plans, as there are parties, or distinct interests in the nation.

The petitions which are presented to the House of Commons, and the views which are taken by the newspapers, are founded upon many assertions, which are entirely assumed, upon principles, which are greatly controverted, and upon expectations of future benefits, which could never be realized.

1st. They build all their conclusions upon the theory, that the will of the people, that is of the numerical majority of the people, is, or ought to be, the only legitimate source of government and authority. They regard that government as the best, purest, and most calculated for the general good, which derives its power most directly from this fountain head, and is the most faithful interpreter of this will.

2d. They believe that the present constitution of the empire is an usurpation of the higher classes; that there existed at some period of our history, either in the days of the Saxon Wittenam Gemote, or anterior to the invasion of Julius Cæsar, or at some other time not exactly specified, a greater degree of freedom, and happiness, a more equal representation, a House of Commons more independent of the executive, and more dependent on the people, than they have ever been blessed with since.

3d. They take for granted that the administration of the executive has constantly been, and is proflig-

gate and corrupt, in the highest degree; that the whole modern history of our country is a series of unjust and impolitic wars; and that our internal and domestic government is a grinding tyranny, wringing their hard earnings from the laborious classes, by iniquitous taxes, to lavish the produce in sinecures, and pensions, upon venal place-hunters, and upon grasping nobles.

4th. They constantly suppose, that as every political evil is the result of the misrule to which they have been subjected, so Parliamentary Reform is the sovereign panacea which is to cure them all instantaneously, that the nation is to be completely relieved from every burthen, that the inferior classes are to obtain an extended command over all the necessaries, and enjoyments of life, and that a great and immediate accession of national prosperity will follow this measure.

5th. Lastly, the most influential advocates of Reform openly declare, that any probable concession which may be obtained from the Legislature, any partial alteration in the mode of representation, is only a step to another, and a more extensive one. They frankly profess that it is their object and aim to effect, either gradually, or at once, a complete change in the whole constitution of the government; and that all our laws and institutions are to be subjected to so entire a modification, as to render it impossible for the wisest to calculate the effects of such extensive mutations upon the whole frame work of existing society.

Such appear to me the principal arguments, and propositions, which have been, at different times, very ably, and ingeniously supported, which have, either wholly, or in part, been adopted by the friends of Reform, and upon which their views and opinions have very generally been founded. Such are the impressions which, sometimes separately, sometimes indistinctly blended together, are entertained by the public, and form the basis of that eager demand for Reform, which makes itself so loudly heard.

I am aware, that, in stating the opinions of others, I am liable to misrepresent them; I am aware, that many a partizan of Reform may justly say, "You do not describe my motives or my objects accurately; I am not principally influenced by the reasons you have enumerated; my conclusions are drawn from different premises." Admitting the full force of such remarks, admitting that many arguments in favour of Parliamentary Reform cannot be classed under these heads, I still am persuaded that they do comprize the majority of those which have the greatest influence upon the public mind at this time. I am no uncompromising antagonist of Reform; and those, perhaps, do no disservice to the cause of practical, and rational reform, who, as we enter upon this vast field, endeavour to trace some boundaries to its extent. Nor is a determined hostility to a principle to be inferred, because, in a sincere and impartial search after truth, some of the arguments

by which it is supported appear to be doubtful, or erroneous. And in a question like that of Reform, which embraces a thousand others, which means every thing, from the transfer of the franchise of a borough to the adjoining hundred, to the assimilation of the British Constitution with that of Modern America, or of Ancient Athens, it is very desirable that Reformers should be classified, and that we should know how many different regiments of opinions are enlisted under the same banner.

SECTION II.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE PEOPLE.

IN the physical world, our discoveries of the great secondary causes, or laws, which govern the universe, have been derived from an attentive observation of facts, and from the inferences which have been drawn from them. Wherever an uniform operation of nature has been perceived, a general principle has been established, and the mightiest results of science are contained in this generalization of the fruits of our experience.

The most powerful minds, in quitting this sure guide, and in entering upon the trackless void of hypothesis and conjecture, have been speedily led into error. The analogy appears perfect in the moral world; and he who would speculate upon man, either in his individual, or social capacity, upon other data than those with which history, and experience furnish us, would soon be entangled in a web of errors fraught with far more practical mischief, than the baseless theories of Ptolemy, and Descartes.

The proof of the dogma of the Sovereignty of the People is the object of Rousseau's celebrated treatise, "Le Contrat Social;" and to reconcile

his theory with facts, he makes a gratuitous supposition of an implied compact originally entered into between the governors, and the governed, and reasons upon the imaginary conditions of this compact, as astronomers found their calculations upon the ideal lines of the Equator and the Zodiac. But it appears a manifest fallacy to prove the existence of a principle which is at variance with facts and experience, by the assumption of a purely fanciful hypothesis; and *Le Contrat Social* will be classed by all correct reasoners as a brilliant but hollow paradox.

The Sovereignty of the People cannot be established as the true principle of government, simply, because such a Sovereignty never has existed to our knowledge since the creation of man; because the evidence of all times, and the history of all nations, prove that while the Deity formed us as social beings, he made some form of government, and the consequent relation of the governors and the governed, coeval with our very existence. The will of the whole people must always be more inert, and consequently less powerful than the will of some portion of that people. Wherever such a maxim has been recognised, it has led to constant alternations of power into the hands of different persons claiming to be the interpreters of that will, until, by a tacit abjuration of it, some more permanent form has succeeded. The equal authority of laws, and the enjoyment of civil and personal liberty, are the offspring of no recurrence

to primitive rights ; they are the last results of civilization and intelligence, the consequences of a long series of discipline and controul, to which the popular will has been subjected, and they are preserved by the maintenance of certain restraints. The subjection of man to the authority of his fellow, never was an act of pure volition ; it was an effect of the circumstances of his position, and of the instinctive wants of his nature. We might as well call the power of a Queen Bée an usurpation, and assert that the bell sheep is the mere interpreter of the will of the flock.

But although it is generally admitted by sane minds that the will of the mass cannot directly govern, the existence of an inherent though dormant right is still stoutly maintained ; and it is asserted, that since the device of a representative system affords an organ to the expression of that will, the right revives, and that the people, through these their agents, ought to possess the substantive authority of the State. I can still see no valid argument in this fiction of a latent right, which it is acknowledged has never existed, which mankind could never have exercised or possessed, and could not therefore delegate. I must return to my position, that there is clear evidence of the intention of the Creator that mankind should be formed into communities, some portion the depositaries of, and the rest amenable to authority ; that we cannot at once suppose a right only to be governed by their own consent, and believe in such an intention

which would necessarily cancel it, that this division of our species is general, and conformable to a universal law, that the representative system, (however admirable as a human invention) is only partially adopted among the nations of the earth, and that it is absurd to suppose a common right thus generally in abeyance, and only revived to so limited an extent.

The Sovereignty of the People, and the divine right of Kings, appear to me to be principles, equally erroneous in themselves, and equally inimical to the happiness of society; the one leading directly to despotism, and the other to anarchy and confusion.

There are two grounds upon which the propositions are supported, that the will of the people ought to be the ruling power of the State, and that governments approach excellence inasmuch as they most directly reflect that will. One, founded upon the assumption, or inference of an inherent right, the other upon the assertion that in fact those governments are the best, diffuse happiness most widely, check the abuses incident to government most efficaciously, and secure the great institutions of society most safely, in proportion as they derive their force immediately, and renew it frequently from this source.

Now, if the first of these positions be established, it supersedes the discussion of the second. If a positive right exists, its effects do not destroy it; if its consequences are evil, we may lament; if they are good, we may rejoice in them; but these

sentiments do not affect its existence. We may deplore that a man in possession of fortune, dissipates it in gaming, or extravagance, and reduces his family to beggary, but his right to dispose of his own is undoubted, and we cannot interfere to prevent him.

But having discussed the question of right, and denied its existence, it is next incumbent upon us to examine that of expediency. The first, involved mixed considerations of abstract reasoning, and of the deductions from facts and experience; the second, is an argument from facts and experience only. We have no means of judging what will be for the benefit of mankind, except by observing what has contributed to it. It is evident that the recognition of the principle at all, is a virtual adoption of a purely democratic basis of government. Whatever power is bestowed by the people, may be legally, and at pleasure resumed by them. No authority can be compatible with such a theory, except a delegated and temporary one. I do not see how (whatever practical modification might be introduced) we could avoid drawing this conclusion, that the great end and aim of government should be, upon every measure, to elicit the wishes of the majority of the nation, and to fulfil them. The attempt to establish this form of government is no new experiment.

It has uniformly, except in one very peculiar and recent instance, totally failed. While it endured in the ancient Greek republics, in France

during the first years of the revolution ; in every other part of the world, except the United States, it has constantly proved of short duration ; it has torn society by frequent convulsions ; it has placed the reality of power in the hands of demagogues, who have ruled by the passions of the people, and it has been ever ready to violate, on lighter pretexts than even despotic tyranny, the security of property and person.

Wherever the will of the people, of the *masses*, according to the current phrase of the day, has been called into activity, and the powers of the State rendered immediately and directly dependent upon it, the elements of order and stability have been wanting, the influence of mind, and intelligence has been suspended, national prosperity and individual happiness have been injured, and such a state of things has always been temporary, because it was insufferable.

In the United States, a government originally republican, and assuming daily a more purely democratic character, has existed for nearly fifty years ; a brief space in the history of nations. To the high credit of that energetic, enterprising, and intelligent people, this form has there, and there only, been found compatible with the institutions of civilized life. But I will beg my readers to observe, that the experiment cannot yet be considered as fully tried, that the Americans inherited from us an admirable system of laws, and that they sprung into existence as a nation, trained

to obedience to these laws, as a colony. How peculiar, too, are its circumstances, a graft from the most civilized nation in the world, upon a boundless and an unappropriated territory. The rights of property there are almost universally diffused, and the collision of interests is rendered less close by the wide space over which the nation scatters itself. This is a very singular combination, and ought to be regarded as a solitary exception. We see that even in the Spanish American Republics, though equally favoured by position, the same results have not been obtained, and they may be cited as examples of the evils which have always attended democracies.

There is a belief that, left to themselves, the body of the people will, by a sort of instinct, by a kind of moral chemistry, extracting the essence of truth and reason from the mass of error and prejudice, favour those measures, and select those men best adapted to advance the interests of the whole. I cannot give my assent to this maxim *Vox populi, vox Dei*. I can understand no process by which, when a vast majority of individuals are ignorant, uninformed, and prejudiced upon a subject, a small minority should direct them to decide wisely. Truth, if left to itself, will out in time, but with such materials it would be a very long time in getting out; and as delay would not be permitted, the wrong decision would most frequently precede the right opinion.

In England, happily, public opinion means,

and is confined to the educated and intelligent members of the community; to those who are open to new impressions; who can understand and balance different arguments. Yet, with all this faculty of discrimination, it is a great advantage that our form of government does not yield too pliantly to every tide of public opinion; that each great and important measure is detained, as it were, some time under our examination. We must all be aware that public opinion is, and has always been, very often quite wrong, particularly at first; that instead of being the opinion of all, it is frequently the opinion of a few, and is adopted by the rest, who merely echo it; and that experience shows it as liable to error, mistake, and prejudice, as the opinion of any individual. What is called public opinion is frequently an opinion taken up by two or three leading periodicals, and imbibed for a certain number of weeks by a considerable portion of the community with their breakfast. People sally forth for the day, and naturally carve materials for conversation with their acquaintances in the street, club, counting-house, or dinner table, from these ingenious articles. It is much easier, upon subjects with which they may have a limited acquaintance, and no strong interest, to adopt and retail, than to weigh, balance, and examine. A certain number of watch-words and current sentiments, are thus passed from mouth to mouth; a general impression is created, and we are shortly

told, that this or that question, involving, perhaps, the most vital interests of the State, has made a wonderful progress, and that the public feelings have undergone a marked change upon it within the last two months. A new opinion is a little like a new fashion in dress; the tailors and milliners invent certain fresh modes every year; it is quite one of the arcana of their trade. Sometimes these modes do not take at all; they cannot get into fashion; nobody knows why: others are more successful, they have a great vogue for a long season before they are laid by and forgotten. Upon the whole, this constant starting of fresh matter for our attention and scrutiny, is highly beneficial. The intellectual faculties of the community are stimulated, and kept in exercise. Curiosity being awakened, and directed to any subject, mind is brought to bear upon it; and the question, which was first started in the columns of the Newspaper or the Review, is explored, developed, and finally disposed of by the profound labours of the scholar, the political philosopher, and the statesman. All that can be objected to, is identifying this noisy and fleeting echo with the calm and final judgment of the reason and intellect of the country.

No one estimates more highly the value of an intelligent, active, and enlightened public opinion, than I do; no one is more sensible of the wholesome influence which it exercises upon the executive, the legislature, and the nation; but it has

not yet established the slightest claim to infallibility; and from the time when it should be converted from a vigilant observer, an attentive monitor, into a controuling and dictatorial power, its tendencies would be as pernicious as they are now salutary.

But if such be the nature of the opinion of the cultivated part of the British nation, what would be that of the great body of the uneducated, or half educated people? They will either be entirely cyphers, or they would add to the mass of error, and render it more easy for prejudice, or clamour, to stifle the voice of reason. Perhaps, were England polled, the majority might still be of opinion, that the Sun moved round the Earth. Would they be likely to entertain juster notions upon politics, that most difficult and deceiving of all sciences, the results of which are so frequently the very opposite of those which a first view would lead us to suppose?

It has been argued, that the elective franchise properly should be vested in all persons of education and property. There can be no natural right thus created. Such an argument must be founded upon the grounds of the probable advantages and benefits to the community. It cannot be a part or a modification of the principle of the sovereignty of the people. If there is no inherent right in the whole people, still less is there an inherent right in any portion of that people. The merits of a practical measure, fixing any arbitrary qualifica-

tion upon such a basis, are fair subjects of discussion; but it must be upon considerations of expediency, not of right. Education, like Reform, is a word admitting of great latitude of interpretation. It signifies every thing, from an attendance upon a Sunday School, to the most brilliant academical honours; from a knowledge of reading and writing, to the highest culture and the most extensive acquirements of human intellect. In the sense in which it is used by the popular writers of the day, a very slight tincture of education appears to be meant. If that degree of it be intended, which would give the reason a predominance over the passions and prejudices, which would at all assist the judgment in forming correct conclusions in politics, a much greater share would be required. Nothing is so deceiving as those misty perceptions of such complicated subjects, which the first slender knowledge of books affords. Moving in such a fog, people mistake the size, nature, and relative bearing, of all the landmarks they manage dimly to descry; they soon become irretrievably puzzled. . .

If it be such a portion of mental cultivation as may enable the possessor accurately to comprehend, for example, the arguments pro and con, of any of the great questions of internal, foreign, or colonial policy which divide our councils, such a qualification might be a very admirable one, if the line could possibly be drawn; but it would certainly be one of the narrowest that could be

selected. It would not extend beyond the gentry, including members of the liberal and learned professions, and of the commercial world, artists, literary men by profession, and the flower of the middle ranks. Whether such a limit would be consonant to the views of Reformers in general, may be doubted. It would certainly not give our representation a more popular form than it bears at present.

SECTION III.

COMPOSITION, AND POWERS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS, AT FORMER PERIODS OF OUR HISTORY.

WERE the fact once established that the English nation ever enjoyed, at any remote time, a greater degree of real freedom, than they do at present, such a conclusion would be one of the most painful to the friends of rational liberty. •

Could it be proved that free institutions were contemporary alone with barbarous periods, with an early and rude state of society, that as men advanced in knowledge and civilization, if they did not abjure the principles, they discarded the spirit, and relinquished the possession of freedom, we should be led to fear that liberty could claim no natural alliance with prosperity and happiness. •

Fortunately for those who believe, that, in spite of a thousand errors, temporary misfortunes, partial retrograde movements, mankind are essentially progressive, who love liberal government from no blind attachment to a name, but because they think that a large mixture of the ingredient of freedom promotes the development of our highest faculties, and the attainment of practical good, the

evidence of our history establishes the direct reverse.

We trace, indeed, through remote ages, the germ of those principles which have since borne so admirable a fruit, as in the biography of some eminent individual, we love to note in childhood the first sparks of genius, the earliest indications of future excellence. The mild and equitable practice of our common law, the institutions of Alfred, the provisions of Magna Charta, and the statutes of the Edwards, are all parts of the foundations of this noble edifice. We may cite them with pride, as proofs of the innate love of freedom in the hearts of Englishmen, and of the strong practical good sense which all their national acts evince, from their first existence as a people.

But when, in the twilight of tradition, we seek to discover the outline of a uniform, and regular representation in Parliament, we find that the miracles of Merlin the Enchanter, the adventures of King Arthur, and the exploits of his Knights of the Round Table, rest upon far better ground. No records have been handed down to us of the composition of, or manner of summoning or assembling the Wittena Gemote of our Saxon ancestors. In this absence of all direct evidence, we are at perfect liberty to make what conjectures we please respecting it; and the arguments against the existence of universal suffrage, vote by ballot, and annual Parliaments, are purely presumptive, and derived from analogy. Yet upon the best consi-

deration the materials present, antiquarians have been inclined to conclude that it was similar to the assemblies of elders common to the rude tribes of Germany; and, compared with modern times, probably bore a closer affinity to a meeting of Sachems among the North American Indians, than to the structure of our present Parliament. Whatever may have been the merits of their system, it seems too entirely lost in the night of past time to admit of revival, and far too indefinite and obscure to allow of any claim of right being founded upon its extinct and forgotten forms. Indeed, the whole argument is so groundless, unsubstantial, and illusory, that it can never rank among the tenable opinions of men of letters and understanding, but must be classed as one of those fraudulent appeals to the ignorance and passions of the multitude which are resorted to by designing demagogues.

The warlike Monarchs of the Norman race, with their mail clad Barons, their forestal rights, their tenures by military service, bringing the feudal system in all its perfection in their train, cannot be regarded as the champions of popular and equal rights, or their reigns as the golden era of civil liberty. There ran, indeed, through the chivalrous institutions of the middle ages a certain irregular, and almost indefinable love of liberty, "which kept alive, even in servitude itself, the spirit of an exalted freedom;" but this sentiment, however worthy of the eloquent eulogy of Burke,

was of much too lordly and exclusive a character to incline them the least to the adoption of any peculiarly democratic basis of representation. Our early Parliaments appear to have been entirely composed of Nobles and dignified Clergy; and the first mixture of a more popular element in its composition seems to have been an innovation of Simon de Mountfort in the reign of Henry the Third, to render it the instrument of his criminal ambition.

It was long before it grew into importance or power; and the comparatively small number of members in Henry the Sixth's reign, only 300, the qualification too of voters for Knights of the Shire, 40s., which then equalled as many pounds of our times, shew how little of an extended or popular character the House of Commons possessed. It may, however, be justly remarked of these early Parliaments, that the close boroughs, the representation of places having no population or importance, an irregularity so much animadverted upon in our days, had then no existence. That is the mere effect of time, and of the decline of the former opulence of these towns. However, the privilege exercised by the Crown, of leaving out old, or summoning from new boroughs, according to its own good will or pleasure, would probably be considered as a full equivalent, and would tend to throw a little too much power into the hands of the executive. The sturdiest Reformer will altogether be inclined to allow that, in the nursing of

our young liberties, the gradual creeping of this defect into our system was attended with less dangerous consequences than the continued exercise of so formidable a discretionary power by the Crown. But from the great authority of the Nobles, it seems certain that an influence of a very despotic kind was early resorted to by them in the election of burgesses.

It is not merely in the mode of its election, but in the subordinate part it acted, in its utter insignificance as a political power, that we see the nature of the House of Commons in these times. During the fierce struggles between the Kings and Barons, the long wars of the Houses of York and Lancaster, how seldom do we hear of the Parliament—how silent is the voice, how impotent the authority of the third branch of the Legislature.

It is not under the sceptre of the Tudors, the tyranny of Henry the Eighth, or the vigorous but arbitrary government of Elizabeth, that we shall find traces of the independence of the House of Commons. It was a matter of very little importance how they were chosen, since it was clearly a mode which did not leave them a fraction of a will of their own.

From the accession of the Stuarts alone can we date the rise of the power and importance of Parliament, as it now exists. All its preceding history does but shew a few partial indications of its destined greatness. It was no creation of human wisdom, no settled plan; it grew gradually, from

small beginnings, like an acorn thrown into the ground, and was adapted, by circumstances, into an organ for the assertion of the rights, and support of the interests of the nation. When fierce Simon de Mountfort summoned the Knights of Shires to aid his lawless attempts to usurp the sovereign authority, he no more dreamed of a full, fair, and equal representation of the people, than he did of defeating Mr. Goulburn's motion on the Civil List, and causing the Duke of Wellington's resignation.

In the history of our country we find the most natural explanation of the various irregularities in the composition of the House; we see that these anomalies have not prevented it from being a faithful interpreter of the spirit of each succeeding age, and a useful servant in the great cause of rational liberty. If mature consideration shall fully establish that these imperfections are injurious to the action of the machine, and can safely be cured, no attachment to ancient forms should deter us from entering upon the task. But we must bring them forward as novel improvements, the responsibility of their introduction must rest with the present age; we must proceed upon the lights of our own times, not upon Saxon or Norman precedents. We shall not discover models to work by, in the depths of antiquarian research; and it is incumbent upon us to advance cautiously, for we are pioneers in a new path, and can derive no aid from the suggestions of past experience.

SECTION IV.

 REVIEW OF THE PRACTICAL MÉRITS OF OUR
GOVERNMENT.

THERE is no question connected with that of Reform, upon which it is more important to form correct opinions than this. Whether we shall introduce any change at all, to what extent, and in what manner we shall change our present system of government, depend entirely upon our knowledge of its excellencies and defects, and upon the means we possess of remedying the latter, without disproportionately subtracting from the former. Nothing can be more self-evident than this proposition; the only difficulty lies not in the statement, but in the solution. It is more arduous, because there is no fixed rule to go by, no settled point to depart from, no previous plan to compare with, no established theory to refer to, in the whole fabric of our constitution. It is throughout a collection of anomalies, a blending of different elements, and union of distinct principles; an amalgamation of various interests, an almost fortuitous combination of its component parts. It has been cemented into one vast irregular whole; it has adapted itself to the

wants, circumstances, and national character of the people, by the silent operation of time, and by the insensible and reciprocal influence between them. Such institutions can be judged only by their results; they defy all abstract reasoning,—they challenge comparison with those of other countries,—they appeal to history and experience. This large mixture of accident in the composition of our Government; this characteristic of unexpected effects produced by its combinations, as little to be anticipated as the discovery of gunpowder from the union of saltpetre and brimstone, has been one main cause of the almost superstitious reluctance felt by many able statesmen to attempt remedying its most trifling defect. They reasoned, that as human wisdom had not created it, and could not fully estimate its latent workings, or the connexion which one part had with another, it was dangerous to tamper with it, or to attempt innovations, which, however apparently beneficial in their immediate effects, might produce ultimate ones of a very different description. This argument has been pushed too far, but it may fairly operate with those who do not condemn the British Constitution altogether, to the extent of inducing the most extreme caution in every important alteration. One remark may here be made, that this gradual formation of our Government, and the natural influence of the people upon it, and it upon the people, are strong proofs

of the existence of that uniformity between the laws and the national character, wants, and habits, which is in itself no trifling good.

Those determined advocates of a very extensive Parliamentary Reform, whose party zeal renders them little scrupulous of the means by which they support their cause, and who certainly cannot claim the weight which coolness, impartiality, and candour, give to opinions, appear to agree with me, that it is very much a practical question. They take up incidentally other positions, such as the Sovereignty of the People, a former pure representation, &c., but they principally dwell upon the abuses of the present system, upon the profligacy and extravagance of public men, upon the cruel oppression of the taxes, upon the unnecessary burthens heaped upon the people, and upon the remedy from all these evils to be found in Parliamentary Reform.

If we look back to the history of Europe since the year 1688, there are certainly none of the usual proofs of a bad government; and the annals of no country, perhaps, have ever presented a more uniform course of prosperity, a more steady and unvarying progress of improvement, or a richer harvest of well-founded and merited glory. Our internal wealth, and our external influence and power, have been boundlessly augmented. Of the four great wars in which we have been engaged, three were undertaken for a mighty European object, in which our own interests were

identified with the liberties and independence of nations. They were marked by splendid achievements, and were conducted to a glorious and successful termination. One war, indeed, was more questionable in its policy, and less fortunate in its issue, but in its commencement it was the error, not less of the "peoole than of the government; the blame is at least a divided one. During this period our institutions have fixed the admiration of Europe; the greatest writers of the continent, from Voltaire and Montesquieu to Madame de Stael,* have celebrated their excellence, and almost every people has successively endeavoured, at the expense of enormous sacrifices, by the most determined attempts, to introduce and copy them. A long succession of great and illustrious statesmen have been trained to public life, by the means of these institutions, which have at least the merit of precluding weak and incapable men from acquiring or retaining power. There is this peculiar feature in our Constitution, that it has not, during this whole period, practically deteriorated. It has improved with the nation; its tendency has been gradually to free itself from blemishes. The Parliament has constantly been correcting abuses; it has been becoming less and less interested in its conduct. The House of Commons in Pitt's time was not venal," like that of Sir

* L'Angleterre est le fanal de L'Europe.—*Mudame de Stael.*

R. Walpole; and that of the present day is less influenced by ministerial patronage than that of Mr. Pitt. If a Reform be required, it never was less required than it is now, since 1688. I believe that patriotism is become a very unpopular sentiment; and that in dwelling upon the greatness and glory of England, upon the splendour of her actions, upon the renown of her warriors and statesmen, upon the excellence of her institutions, and the grandeur of her intellectual pre-eminence, I shall strike no sympathetic chord. Such feelings are regarded as a weak and visionary enthusiasm—as a mockery of distress. Our notes must be pitched to another key; we must deplore the growing poverty, the failing trade, the general misery of the country; we must mourn over the degraded and abject state of Englishmen; we must lament their condition as the climax of wretchedness, to which a long course of misrule has brought them. Our pity must not be for the man who can travel from Dan to Beersheeba, and cry, it is all barren, but for him who can so inopportunately discover the green spots in the wilderness.

The charge against the executive does not appear so much for tyrannical or oppressive policy, for mal-administration in the conduct of affairs, or for incapacity, as for a want of economy, for a prodigality and extravagance in the public expenditure. The point at issue seems to be chiefly one of finance. The first and principal

item in the charges of the State is the national debt. The greatest proportion of it was incurred in the prosecution of that mighty conflict against the power of France; certainly the most arduous struggle, in which, since the existence of the kingdom, we were ever engaged. The first question is, whether the war was forced upon us in its commencement, or whether Mr. Pitt could by diplomatic address, and negotiation, have at once restrained the other continental powers; and diverted, or confined within its own boundaries, the restless and ambitious spirit of the French Republic. Every opinion which can now be formed must be purely conjectural; and so impossible is it to predict the consequences of political movements, that could we now examine every actor on that scene, from Mirabeau to Napoleon; could we summon Pitt from his stately tomb, could we dive into the most secret records of every cabinet in Europe, we could obtain but an approximation to the truth. It seems certain, that the spirit of the French Republic was, early a hostile and aggressive one; that it was speedily and inevitably in a state of jealousy and opposition towards the established governments of Europe. Whether great forbearance and conciliation on our part might have averted the storm, cannot now be known; it is certain that the experiment was not tried. I will only observe, that the policy of so cautious a course remains doubtful, even had it been practicable; and that,

probably, no government in England, however popular in its composition, would have sought to avoid war. The temper of Republics has rarely been pacific, or their annals bloodless. But whatever uncertainty may hang over this question, which no subsequent investigation can ever dissipate, every impartial mind must be convinced, that once embarked in the conflict, from the commencement of the war of the Revolution, down to the battle of Waterloo, no one opportunity offered for terminating it with honour or with safety. There was neither an inclination to negotiate, nor a sufficient character of stability and good faith to give security to treaties, under the fierce and turbulent sway of the Convention and the Directory. And he has formed a very erroneous estimate of the character and genius of Napoleon, who can suppose that his was a temper with which compromise was possible.

The state of the case appears to be, that an unsolved doubt exists as to the possibility of our avoiding the war, and none at all as to the necessity of prosecuting it when once begun. As little can be entertained as to its nature requiring every exertion and every sacrifice; it was a struggle for all that is valuable to a nation, for honour, liberty, independence, existence; and we won it. Can it be supposed that we could win without paying some price? Every other country saw the horrors of war brought home to the firesides of its inhabitants, horrors of which our imaginations

form a faint and inadequate picture. We avoided these miseries, but we added twenty millions to the permanent charge on the revenue. It is a great and a heavy burthen, it was incurred for a ~~very~~ worthy and proportionate object. With respect to the conduct of the war, as a criterion of the ability of Government, errors were doubtless committed, some very important and unfortunate ones; but impartial posterity will, I think, pronounce upon the whole, that the country was guided through the trials and dangers of that memorable era with great skill, and a happy combination of prudence and enterprize.

The next point at issue is, admitting the war to be necessary, admitting the exertions we made to have been required to their utmost extent, could not the same results have been obtained at less cost? Was there not an unnecessary and culpable profusion in the expenditure? A perfectly satisfactory answer to this query could only be obtained by the labours of a second Mr. Hume, bestowed in a spirit of perfect impartiality upon the accounts of a thousand millions, and a period of twenty-five years. An opinion founded on less certain data, is all that I can offer. The heads of administration, I firmly believe, were free from all personal stain; they were most likely extremely desirous that the money should produce as much as possible; but in so vast an expenditure the power of controul was necessarily weaker, and the opportunities for peculation more numerous.

Neither the nation nor the executive had the same leisure to dwell upon details, afforded by more tranquil times, and the field for investigation was far wider. It would be a bold assertion, that, in such circumstances, the most economical course was uniformly adopted. But a greater degree of laxity in expense seems, at similar periods, from the reasons stated above, unavoidable and inherent in the nature of things, and no government could have entirely checked it.

If there is a passage in the history of these times which we have reason to regret, it undoubtedly is the management of the negotiations for the celebrated treaties of 1814 and 1815. It is certain that, always somewhat distinct from the continental nations, and having at that time been so entirely separated from them, during a great number of years, the country and the government were completely ignorant of their temper and feelings, and of the great changes in their nature and opinions, wrought in that period. We suffered ourselves to follow the lead of the great military powers, instead of taking that precedence to which our actions had entitled us, and which the moral influence, which we could then have easily placed ourselves at the head of, and which we could have directed to good, would have secured to us. We could have settled the affairs of Europe upon a really permanent basis, by effecting a compromise between old and new institutions, between the monarchical and liberal

parties, and an assimilation of the forms of government to our own. The golden opportunity was lost. At a later, and less auspicious period, ~~this~~ wise line of policy was embraced by the brilliant genius of Canning, and acted upon, during his enlightened administration, to considerable extent, and with eminent success. It was attempted afterwards in France by the judicious and eloquent Martignac, but with a less fortunate result.

We now arrive at the most important part of our history, with reference to the question of Reform. It is the general conduct and character, the actions and deeds, of the British House of Commons, during the last fifteen years. Has it, during that period, been a shameless, venal, profligate body, at the beck and controul of the Ministers of the Crown? Has it been unmindful of the interests, and deaf to the voice of the people? Has it effected nothing of retrenchment, enforced no principle of economy? Has it been utterly incompetent to the great ends of its existence? Has it been shown no advocate of the interests of the nation, no checking and controuling power upon the acts of the executive, no organ of the wants and wishes of the country? Has the public mind never derived any valuable information? have its occasional errors and mistakes not been removed? Has the House of Commons never been a channel for the dissemination of just views, for the correction of ex-

aggrated misrepresentations, for the soothing and evaporation of irritated feelings? And, lastly, has it become less free and independent, less active and intelligent, descending in the scale, and less competent to the fulfilment of its duties in this lapse of time? If so, then, indeed, is the hour of Reform come; is the necessity of Reform urgent; is the name of a Reformer synonymous with that of a true and enlightened friend of his country. But I must frankly state, that these positions cannot, in my judgment, be borne out by facts; that in all these particulars, the very reverse is the case. During all this time the influence of the Crown and of the Ministry has sensibly diminished, and a popular and liberal policy has gradually acquired a complete ascendancy. Constant examples may be adduced of the administration being defeated in measures against the sense of the country. In the great questions of the Repeal of the Test Acts, and of the Catholic disabilities, a triumph was achieved gratifying to the friends of liberty; and in retrenchment and alleviation of the burthens of the taxes, much has been effected. Above thirty millions* of taxes have gradually been repealed since the peace, and if the remaining ones have become, consequently, more productive, that is a consequence of prosperity, not a proof of distress. We are sensible that all articles of general consumption are much reduced in price. The House

* See Table at the end of this Section.

is daily acquiring more exact knowledge respecting the details of Finance, and applying itself to lop off the remaining excrescences of the system. The lists of places, pensions, &c., by their very publicity, will render jobs of rare occurrence. The luminous work of Sir Henry Parnell places the attainment of correct general views, upon the possible extent of retrenchment, within the reach of every reader of ordinary capacity and education. It is impossible to peruse that work, without feeling how valuable a present was made to the community in so clear and condensed an arrangement of the fruits of that able gentleman's extensive labours. But all are aware that he is the advocate for retrenchment, carried to its extreme limits. By comparing what he considers practicable, with what has been done, we shall see what can still be effected in this matter, so justly interesting to the people, and we shall observe how far it falls short of the extravagant expectations they have been taught to entertain, by the periodical writers of the ultra-liberal school.

Should we be blessed with a continuance of internal and external peace, those who have observed the current of events for some time past, will be inclined to come to the conclusion, not only that much has been done in the way of retrenchment, but, that if no Reform should be made, the present House of Commons would, in a brief period, accomplish all retrenchment compatible with the maintenance of national faith and national strength. Nor are its labours less

important or less useful to the country, in the vast and arduous task of legal Reform. The late Home Secretary has erected a durable monument to his fame, in his admirable consolidation of the voluminous and ill digested Criminal Law. The Report of the Commissioners of real property, the Bill of Lord Brougham, for the establishment of Local Courts, and those of Mr. Campbell, and Lord Wynford, give promise of corresponding improvement in our civil law, a branch in which they were still more wanted, and where the beneficial effects will be still more sensibly felt by the nation. Now, this uniform course of action, which has characterized the House of Commons for some years past, leads us to one of two conclusions, either that the present mode of election has had the merit of sending into the House a majority of men, of liberal and enlarged views, not blindly opposed to innovation, but bent on practical amelioration, or that the best and soundest sort of public opinion has had an increasing influence upon it. Probably, both opinions are, in some degree, correct. But either diminish the necessity for extensive Reform—either should induce the nation to view, with no hostility, a body, which has added these more recent ones to those ancient claims upon our gratitude, which are chronicled in the brightest pages of British history; and to touch, with no irreverent and hasty hand, an institution, which has so singularly combined the blessing of sta-

bility in the form of government, with an aptitude for improvement in the detail.

I am aware, that, in the wide range I have taken in this section, the most general view alone was practicable. I could not enter into the proof of my argument by any elaborate details; I could only, like an index, point the attention of well-informed readers to those passages of our history, to those particular acts of our Parliament, which convinced me,

First, That the English House of Commons, however alloyed by the mixture of human failings, however defective, theoretically considered, as a representative system, is yet one of the finest institutions the world has seen for the preservation and union of freedom with order and stability, and for the advancement of rational and constitutional liberty.

Second, That considered as a school of political talent, it has presented to the country a succession of great, and eminent statesmen.

Third, That those partial irregularities, which render it not wholly the creation of the body of the people, give it a certain independence, which enables it to exercise a salutary influence over public opinion. It leads, instead of tamely following it. It corrects many hasty impressions, combats many prejudices, prevents many errors; it is the guardian of the interests, not the echo of the will of the people. It is composed of representatives, not of delegates.

Fourth, That in the progress of time, and particularly of late years, the House of Commons has become more free from every corrupt influence, and that those imperfections, for the removal of which Reform is principally demanded, are in fact greatly diminished.

Fifth, That it has always represented the best spirit of each succeeding age; and if it be now swept away, or undergo such extensive modification, as entirely to destroy its identity, its last acts will have been worthy of its long and noble career, it will have escaped the decay of time, and its existence will have terminated in the full meridian of its vigour, and in the performance of acts of great and permanent benefit to the country.

TAXES REPEALED

From the Year 1816, to the Year 1831.

1816.	Property Tax	.....	£4,320,000
	War Malt Duty	.....	2,790,000
	War Customs Tonnage, &c.	.....	828,000
	Hearths, and Windows, Ireland	....	35,000
	Malt, and Spirits	.....	315,000
			<hr/>
	Total repealed in 1816	.....	18,288,000
1817.	Taxes diminished	.....	280,000
1818.	Assessed Taxes in Ireland partially repealed		236,000
			<hr/>
	Total repealed to 1818	.....	18,804,000

	€Brought forward	18,804,000
1819. Taxes imposed—		
	Foreign Wool	500,000
	Malt	1,400,000
	British Spirits	500,000
	Tobacco	500,000
	Coffee, and Cocoa	130,000
	Tea	130,000
	Pepper	30,000
		3,190,000
	Deduct	3,190,000
	Balance of Taxes repealed to 1819	15,614,000
1821.	Agricultural House Tax repealed	480,000
1822.	Malt reduced 1s. per Bushel . .	1,400,000
	“ Salt, from 15s. to 2s. per do.	1,300,000
	“ Leather, from 3d. pr. lb. to 1½d.	300,000
	Tonnage Duty on Shipping	
	repealed	160,000
	Hearths, & Windows, Ire-	
	land	200,000
	Total repealed 1822	3,360,000
		19,454,000

Brought forward 19,454,000

1823.

Assessed Taxes repealed.	}	On occasional Servants.	Total . .								
		Ditto Gardeners.		reduction							
Assessed Taxes reduced 50 per Cent.	}	Lower class of Taxed Carts.	in Assessed 2,250,000,								
		Ponies, and Mules, under 13		Taxes in							
		hands high, employed in			England.						
		trade & husbandry, 3s. each.				.					
		Ground Floor Shop Windows.					}				
		Horses employed by small						}			
		farmers, 3s. each.							}		
		Male Servants.								}	
		Clerks, and Shopmen.									}
		Four-wheeled Carriages.									
Two-wheeled ditto.	}										
High Taxed Carts.		}									
Horses for riding & drawing.			}								
Ponies under 13 hands.				}							
Bailiffs' horses.					}						
Butchers ditto.						}					
Horses, and Mules, in agri-							}				
culture and trade.								}			
Window Tax.									}		

Assessed Taxes, Ireland, en-	
tirely repealed	100,000
Spirits, Ireland & Scotland ..	800,000
Customs, minor branches	50,000

Total in 1823 3,200,000

1824. Runf, from 11s. 7½d. to 10s. 6d.	
per Gallon	150,000
Coals, Sea-borne, to Port of	
London, reduced from 9s. 4d.	
to 6s.	200,000
Law Stamps	200,000
Wool, 6d. to 1d. per lb.	350,000
Silk, raw, from 5s. 6d. to 3d. }	527,000
Ditto, thrown, from 14s. 8d. } to 7s. 6d.	
Union Duties, from 1822	300,000

Total repealed in 1824 1,727,000

24,381,000

		£.			
'Brought forward		24,381,000			
		£.			
1825.	Remainder of the Salt Duty . .	200,000			
	Hemp, from 9s. 4d. to 4s. 8d. per Cwt.	100,000			
	British Plantation Cocoa, and Coffee, from 1s. to 6d. per lb.	150,000			
	Wines, French; 11s. 5½d. to 6s. the gall. other 7s. 7d. to 4s.	900,000			
	Ru.n, 10s. 6d. to 8s. per gall.) British { Malt, 10s. 6d. to 5s. } 1,250,000 Spirits { Grain, 10s. 6d. to 6s. }				
	Cider, 30s. to 10s. per hogsh. . .	20,000			
	Customs, minor branches . .	250,000			
<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: middle; padding-right: 10px;">Assessed Taxes Repealed.</td> <td style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; padding: 0 10px;"> Mules, carrying Coals. Four-wheeled Pony Carriages Occasional Waiters & Grooms. Untenanted Houses. Coachmakers' Licences. Carriages sold by Commission. Taxed Carts, 27s. each. Husbandry Horses let to hire. 635,936 Houses having less than 7 Windows. 171,739 Houses assessed at Rentals under £10. Farm Houses occupied by Labourers. Windows in Dairies. </td> <td style="vertical-align: middle; padding-left: 10px;">} 276,000</td> </tr> </table>			Assessed Taxes Repealed.	Mules, carrying Coals. Four-wheeled Pony Carriages Occasional Waiters & Grooms. Untenanted Houses. Coachmakers' Licences. Carriages sold by Commission. Taxed Carts, 27s. each. Husbandry Horses let to hire. 635,936 Houses having less than 7 Windows. 171,739 Houses assessed at Rentals under £10. Farm Houses occupied by Labourers. Windows in Dairies.	} 276,000
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Total repealed in 1825		3,146,000			
1830.	Bee & Duty	3,110,000			
	Cider ditto	29,000			
	Leather ditto	380,000			
Total repealed in 1830		3,519,000			
Total Amount of Taxes repealed, from 1816 to 1830, inclusive		31,046,000			

1831. The Chancellor of the Exchequer proposes in the present year to reduce the

Taxes on—	£.
Newspapers & Advertisements	190,000
Sea-borne Coals and Slates ..	830,000
Candles	420,000
Printed Cottons	500,000
Auctions, and Miscellaneous	140,000
	<hr/>

To impose fresh Taxes on—

Wine	240,000
Timber	600,000
Cotton, Raw	500,000
Coals exported	100,000
Steam	100,000

1,540,000

Deduct 1,540,000

Balance of reduced, 1831 540,000

By a Parliamentary Return lately furnished, it appears, that the number of Offices reduced from 1821 to 1830, amounted to 4050, and the Salaries upon them to £700,974.

Of these 56 were from £1000. to £3000.; and 68 from £500. to £1000. per Annum.

Lord Althorp has signified the intention of the present Government to reduce 210 more.

SECTION V.

EXAGGERATED EXPECTATIONS OF THE ADVANTAGES OF REFORM.

No topic of popular interest ever appears to have been made a more complete handle of, than this question of Parliamentary Reform. Political zealots and adventurers have found it the readiest theme for vague and inflammatory declamation, and the strongest lever of the passions of the people. They have applied themselves sedulously to heighten and exaggerate beyond all limits of credibility the two points upon which the force of their argument rests, the evils of our actual condition, and the efficacy of their proposed remedy, till people are induced to suppose that, by an easy and rapid transition, the adoption of Reform will transport them from the extreme of human suffering to a state of unexampled prosperity and happiness. The more enlightened advocates of the principle, whose expectations are confined to reason and probability, and who are incapable of entertaining views so extravagant, or of professing what they do not believe, have yet negatively encouraged their propagation. They perceived that the cause which they warmly favoured was

supported by these means, and their candour did not go the length of inducing them to disavow such allies, to explain the precise bounds of their own more sober expectations, or to dispel the delusions which created so strong a tide in their favour. Such is, unhappily, an almost universal characteristic of party struggles. Men, whose real opinions, whose final aims and objects are wide as poles asunder, are too often ready to co-operate for some temporary purpose, and for the attainment of some party end. Such coalitions are rarely productive of good. Popular errors are dangerous, and unmanageable auxiliaries, and are apt to entangle those in their consequences who tolerate, that they may use them. A union of centres is generally the triumph of truth and moderation, an alliance with extremes is always hazardous. We begin with an idea that we can restrain, and bend them to our purpose; and we presently find ourselves in a position, when a middle course is no longer practicable, and when we have no other alternative than to go along with the crowd, without sharing their illusions, like the poor gentleman, who got by some accident into St. Luke's, and was found, by the keepers, in the act of dancing a minuet, very much against his will, with a madman.

The first error of these Reformers of the Utopian school, is an entirely false estimate of the influence of government upon society. They uniformly exaggerate its importance and effects, great as

they undoubtedly are. Granting their positions to their fullest extent, granting that our present is the very worst system of rule, and that their proposed changes would make it the most perfect that could be devised, we might still have ample cause to deny great part of their conclusions, we might still accuse them of encouraging unfounded hopes, because they anticipate benefits, which no form of government could bestow. In earlier and simple stages of society this proposition is sufficiently evident, since the relation of different parts, being of a less complex character, the evils which arise from misgovernment, and those which spring from other sources, are more easily traceable to their respective origin. A scarcity, or a plague, or the inroad of a foreign enemy, create as great a sum of human suffering, as the veriest tyranny that ever oppressed a nation; but there can be no confusion of causes in such cases. Our own highly artificial, and intricate social machinery, admits not of so easy an analysis. We cannot so readily determine which of our ills allows of alleviation, or cure, and which of them we must endure with patience. As an example, take the debate upon Mr. Littleton's introducing a bill for preventing the truck system, in December last. No reformed House of Commons, no purely elected set of Representatives possible, could have entered upon this discussion with a more zealous and impartial desire to apply the best remedy in their power to grievances affecting the working

classes in manufacturing counties of a very serious description, and the reality of which was generally admitted. There was no appearance in the House of any party feeling, the speakers rose from every side, expressing the greatest diversity of opinions, and without a possibility of being marshalled under any particular banner. The only bias, the only influence which could have been exercised over the judgment of Members, was precisely that which it would be the great object of reform to strengthen, viz. the influence of opinion out of doors, the fear that if they rejected the Bill, the motives of their opposition might be misconstrued; that they might be supposed indifferent to the evils of the truck system, instead of doubtful of the efficiency or the expediency of legislative interference. The motion for leave to bring in a bill was carried by a large majority, indeed it would have been a most ungracious proceeding towards the Honourable Mover, and towards the large population whose grievances he so clearly stated, to have rejected all consideration of a remedy. But those who attended to the debate will incline to the persuasion, that the existence of abuses was more satisfactorily made out, than the possibility of effectually removing them, or the policy of attempting to do so. I have no disposition to digress, by entering into the merits of the question, farther to illustrate my position, that something more than integrity of intention is required, to cure all the diseases of our political condition.

The truck system is neither the only, nor the strongest instance of the existence of evils, which have arisen from causes quite independent of all government, or from past acts, the consequences of which we cannot now readily undo. The remedies for distress and want of employment of the labouring poor; the depression, at one time of the agricultural, at another of the commercial and manufacturing interests, the increasing burthen of poor's rates, the feverish state of Ireland, and various other temporary, or permanent sources of anxiety and discontent, form a catalogue of political problems, which no statesman or legislator has yet been enabled to solve. In many of these cases; no deficiency of good will, of inclination to adopt measures of alleviation or cure, can be supposed to exist; but the mode of accomplishing the object remains yet to be discovered. The various interests of the country are so thoroughly interwoven with each other, that it becomes almost impossible to relieve one, without injuring another, or to exact sacrifices from one, without inflicting a serious wound upon all. It is not that feasible plans for these purposes have been suggested from other quarters, and that the House has turned a deaf ear to them. They do not exist any where; political science and human ingenuity are at fault; and if a reformed House of Commons is to remove them, it must either be, by the adoption of some such daring and reckless course, that prudence and true patriotism shudders at, or by eliciting

some latent expedients, which have hitherto eluded the search not only of the legislature, but of all the intellect of the country.

It is easy to reply to such observations by vague common places about waste and profusion, boundless expenditure, retrenchment, economy, and the like; but such assertions are only deserving of the name of arguments, when they descend to particulars, and are founded upon some rational data. It discredits the advocates of practicable and definite retrenchment, to find themselves associated with such extravagant and unmeaning declarations; and it must damp their efforts, to obtain those real and solid benefits, which some reduction in the amount, and some change in the mode of taxation, would confer upon the country, to find that all they could safely effect, must fall so infinitely short of these chimerical hopes, which must be ever doomed to disappointment.

A mere change in the constitution of the House of Commons, would not directly reduce either expenditure or taxation. Any House of Commons would have precisely the same materials to work upon. The difference must be occasioned by the manner of their going to work. We must first observe, that, particularly since the year 1823, much has been effected in the way of retrenchment, both by the Liverpool and Canning administration, and by that of the Duke of Wellington. It is evident that those who are first in

the field have a great advantage in a work of this kind. Those who begin to retrench will attack the most obvious abuses, will sacrifice the least useful offices, will lop off those glaring excrescences which stare them in the face. The next set will have to examine more narrowly into more concealed errors and faults; injurious practices, which elude the first observation, and lurk in the hidden labyrinths of the system; they will have to strike, in many cases, a balance between expense and utility, and sacrifice what is unquestionably of service, because it costs too much. In these doubtful cases, as in that of disbanding the Yeomanry Cavalry, for example, subsequent experience may give cause to regret the decision. A succeeding labourer in the field would find a still more scanty gleaning, a still more arduous task, more toil and less fruit, and the alternative either of effecting little, or of attacking what is really essential, might be still more strongly forced upon him. I am far from arguing that no means of retrenchment consistent with the public interest remain; I only assert, that the retrenchments which have been effected, and to a very considerable extent, inevitably diminish the amount of those which can still be made, and render the task of curtailing expenditure more difficult.

In the next place, we must remember that the interest of the national debt, which few of our theorists yet openly propose to sponge out, forms about one half of the public expenditure, which

narrows the extent upon which retrenchment can be practised to 27 or 28, instead of 54 or 55 millions. This half, having already undergone a reduction since 1822; and the increasing disposition of Parliaments, as at present composed, and particularly of the actual one, to enforce retrenchment, must be taken into account, so that the question is, not what a reformed Parliament would effect, but what a reformed Parliament would do, which this Parliament will not. And, lastly, we must not forget that there is an enormous amount of taxation for poor's rates, nearly eight millions, local rates one million and a half, and tithes, over which the House of Commons has no jurisdiction, perhaps about three and a half: these taxes are among the most burthensome in their operation, which, added to the national debt, leave about $\frac{5}{8}$ of the application of the whole taxation of the country to be considered as a fixed charge, which could not be subjected to reduction.

Having gone through my argument upon this head, I shall take leave to present it again to my readers something in the form of an arithmetical statement, leaving it to Radical Algebraists to find the unknown quantity.

Given the whole amount of the taxation and expenditure of the country—Deduct $\frac{5}{8}$ of that expenditure, a constant quantity.

Upon the remaining $\frac{3}{8}$ make an allowance for

the retrenchment effected within the last eight years.

Required the amount of the difference of further retrenchment between a reformed and the present House of Commons.

Upon this subject I would avoid misapprehension. Economy is not only a duty in a Minister, it not only tends to allay popular ferment and dissatisfaction, but it does produce actual, substantial benefit to the country, considerably beyond the positive amount of taxes remitted. Experience has abundantly demonstrated that in the present state of England, a judicious remission of taxes has always given a considerable spur to the national industry, that the revenue has never proportionably suffered, but that the loss has been nearly compensated by the increased productiveness of other branches. Thus a diminution of expenditure is not only an immediate relief, but by the pressure it takes off the elastic resources of the country, gives a future hope of the same operation being again practicable. But this very circumstance is a strong motive for gradual reduction, which enables that to be accomplished easily, and with advantage to all, which, too violently attempted, might fail altogether, and cause a shock to credit, and great calamities. If a differently constituted House of Commons retrench gradually, it will do what this House has been doing, and will probably continue to do. If it

were to attempt any large and sudden reduction, it would injure the public service.

The beneficial effects of remission of taxes upon the revenue, and the impetus which it gives to consumption and production, seem much better established, than its efficiency in ameliorating the state of the labouring classes. The amount of taxes repealed, exceeding half the present income, within the last fifteen years, has been sufficiently large to produce some very sensible result, did it act upon their condition, in the manner we should be induced at first to hope. But observation has not verified these anticipations. The distress of the working classes seems increased in the agricultural districts, occasionally severe, though not constant in the manufacturing ones. The poor's rates, by the late returns, have greatly augmented; they are a million more in our present currency than they were in the depreciated one at the close of the war; and this total increase has taken place in spite of great local and partial reductions effected by a more vigilant and frugal application of them. The fluctuations in the manufacturing counties appear the inevitable consequences of those variations in the market which regulate the demand for labour, and are therefore almost out of the controul of governments. The more unvarying deterioration of the labouring agricultural poor, unchecked by the far greater proportionate amount of poor's rate expended upon them, not perceptibly affected by the reduc-

tion of taxes, leads us to infer that it arises from entirely other causes, and to augur that future diminution of taxes will avail but little to counteract them, or to effect any considerable improvement.

I have sought in the preceding pages, to point out the error of those who expect great and sudden amelioration and benefit from a reform in Parliament, or from any imaginable change in the policy of the Government. If such a reform can be adopted, as, without creating any just apprehensions for the safety of the existing social system, shall give a new impulse to the Government in the course they have already entered upon—if, without incurring the fault of a dangerous precipitation, the march of legal and financial improvement can be rendered firmer and more rapid, important prospective advantages would result to the country. But the existence of any such flagrant misrule, any such intolerable abuses, as would occasion by their removal an instantaneous deliverance from the pressure of immediate evils, cannot be supposed to exist by any sober and well informed mind. The Government of this country has, for years, been acting upon enlightened and liberal principles, which have been sanctioned by the approval of all parties, and by the testimony of experience. Whatever further development their principles might receive, the effect would certainly be gradual, and the gain to the community in the commencement, scarcely felt. Exaggerated hopes must end in disappointment, and might lead to great calamities.

But there is another branch of this subject which may require some consideration, and upon which it is of the highest importance that just views should be entertained by the bulk of society. It is an examination of the probable consequences of measures which are as yet rather indirectly and covertly hinted at, than openly recommended. I would meet such opinions in their infancy, while they are still only insinuated, not avowed; they should never be suffered to attain a dangerous maturity. I would never permit them to instil their mistaken, guilty, fatal maxims, into the public mind. I would not allow the concealment and incognito which they now affect, and are impatient for a favourable moment to throw off, to shelter their fallacies from detection, or their pernicious tendencies from exposure. I speak of plans of various kinds, of confiscation, of rapine, of inroads upon the rights of property, of fraud upon the public creditor. It is whispered, that property is in the hands of too few; that the many suffer, while these few revel in enjoyment; that the public debt was contracted in one currency, and is paid in another; with other of those insidious suggestions, which are applied to stifle the voice of conscience in nations, as in individuals, and urge them on to crime.

It is averred, that the emergency of our situation, the intensity of our misery is such, that we can no longer wait for the slow operation of alterative remedies, and that we must have present relief. Abstract principles, it is said, must give way to the pressure of necessity, and the incubus of the monopoly of

wealth shaken off the oppressed nation. It is hoped that a reformed House of Commons will be more alive to this necessity, and more obedient to the will of the people, who must, in the mean time, be instructed to demand most energetically some of these decided measures. Thus, those who admit that, by the application of ordinary means, the miracles they promise us cannot be performed, contend that reform will accomplish them by some of these bold and original expedients. u

Such dangerous and hollow doctrines are refuted by those incontrovertible truths, which are common to all nations and ages, that the rights of property are the foundation of society,—that no necessity justifies their violation; it is like resorting to assassination, quite proscribed even in the laxest code of political morality. The rights of property benefit all, though not in an equal degree; all are interested in their preservation,—all would suffer from their infringement. But if these general axioms, however established by experience, have, from their very universality, from their acknowledged justice, something of a trite and stale sound, they derive a new force, they assume an additional character of justice and validity, when considered with reference to the peculiar circumstances of England. To those who could persuade us that hers is that particular case, authorising a departure from these maxims, I reply, that if they were good for no other State, they would be good for her alone; that if there is a nation upon earth, whose prosperity, whose existence,

whose preservation from incalculable miseries, depend upon her adherence to them, England is that nation.

There is, first, no proof, either derived from our financial state, or from a general review of our condition, of any existing necessity offering a pretext for resorting to extremes. On this point, I shall take leave to quote two passages from Sir H. Parnell's work on Financial Reform,—a work no less cheering, than it is just and enlightened, and which has the high merit of rejecting those dark, and desponding views of our actual state, which are the favourite arguments of less candid and able reasoners. After some forcible remarks upon a sort of national hypochondria in politics, always leading the English to look at the dark side, and imagine themselves much worse off than they are, which he illustrates by some curious quotations from writers of the last century, he observes, “ With respect to what are called our financial difficulties, and about which so much alarm is felt, they are not so much present as prospective difficulties. The Treasury easily finds means for paying all demands upon it, and we may rest assured, that, whatever the difficulties may be under which the country is at present placed, they may be made to yield to sound principles of legislation.”* And again, he quotes the opinion of Mr. Ricardo, sanctioning that high authority by his corroborating approval,—“ Notwithstanding the immense expenditure of the English Government during the last twenty years,

* Financial Reform, page 13.

“ there can be little doubt but that the increased pro-
 “ duction on the part of the people has more than
 “ compensated for it. The national capital has not
 “ merely been unimpaired, it has been greatly in-
 “ creased; and the annual income of the people, even
 “ after the payment of their taxes, is, probably, greater
 “ at the present time, than in any former period of our
 “ history. For the proof of this, we might refer to
 “ the increase of population, to the extension of agri-
 “ culture, to the increase of shipping and manufac-
 “ tures, to the opening of numerous canals, as well as to
 “ many other expensive undertakings, all denoting an
 “ immense increase both of capital and annual pro-
 “ duction.” To this Sir Henry adds, “ As ten years
 “ have elapsed since Mr. Ricardo wrote this opinion,
 “ and as similar proofs can be referred to, to shew a
 “ continual increase of production, the conclusion is
 “ that the national capital and income are now much
 “ greater than they were in 1819.”*

Leaving the support of this part of my argument
 to such high authority, and such convincing state-
 ments, I shall proceed to notice another current
 opinion, that property in this country is in the hands
 of too few. It is not true that property in this coun-
 try is in the hands of a few. The principal nobility,
 the chief commercial men, the leading manufacturers,
 are in the possession of colossal fortunes; but it is a
 gross error that they monopolize all property. In
 each of the great divisions of national wealth to which
 they respectively belong, to which we may add the

* Financial Reform, page 17.

liberal professions, there is a regular gradation of riches, of affluence, of competence, and of independence, each embracing a numerous class, and altogether constituting a larger proportion of the population in the possession of property, compared with the aggregate number of the whole, than exist at this time in any other country in the world, or than probably ever did exist. There are more great fortunes, and more small fortunes--more men of £100,000. per annum, and of £20,000., and £10,000., and £5,000., and £500., and £100., and £50., than could be found in any other part of the globe; and none of these classes appear to trench upon another, since there is a proper and relative proportion of each. If, therefore, the institution of property is beneficial to society generally, to no society is it so beneficial as to the English, since no where is it so widely diffused.

If we examine the causes of this state of things, we shall find that they are of a peculiar, and principally of a moral, rather than a physical nature. Should we contrast our condition with that of our great neighbour, France, we find that she possesses a much larger and more compact territory, a more central European position, a greater fertility of soil, and variety of natural productions. Her population is far more numerous. How has it arisen that the internal wealth, and prosperity of England has greatly exceeded that of France, that she has woven a larger tissue, out of a smaller raw material. Her insular position, and maritime advantages, may have been

some compensation for the other physical superiorities of her mighty rival; but the principal causes of her greatness, have been the intelligence, and energy of her people, the excellence of her institutions, the honour, stability, and good faith of her government, and the long immunity from internal war, whether foreign or domestic, the perfect repose and security, which she has enjoyed. These inestimable benefits have inspired universal confidence in the nation, have enabled them to extend every operation upon the basis of credit, and to calculate surely and justly upon the future. Now, coupled with the honest pride which Englishmen may justly indulge in, while contemplating these great and glorious results, in feeling that we have done more with our five talents, than other nations with their ten, we must carry this qualifying circumstance, that as our prosperity is more the work of human wisdom, ingenuity, and integrity, and less the consequence of natural advantages, a more artificial character belongs to it. It is not the spontaneous creation of the fields, it is not the unvarying attribute of material force, it is a fabric of human structure, and its maintenance depends upon the continued operation of the causes which have called it into being. We do not think it less secure on this account, because we believe in the permanence of these moral ingredients, but its nature requires a more watchful and anxious care; and were it unhappily destroyed, we fear the ruin would be complete and irretrievable. Were we to suffer our "high blown" prosperity "to burst under us," we should

fall, "like Wolsey, never to hope again." The storms of revolution, and the tide of war, have rolled over France, but she is still great and progressive. We fear that in a similar trial, England would sustain irreparable evil. The works of nature are more pregnant with life than those of man. The corn field, the vine, and the olive, still clothe the sides of Vesuvius, but Herculaneum and Pompeia are destroyed for ever.

The national debt is one of the objects, for example, of these covert attacks. We will not dwell upon the individual misery which any violation of faith with the public creditor would scatter through the land; we will not dwell upon the description of persons whom any such measure would affect, the widow's jointure, the younger children's portion, the retired shopkeeper's little competence, the provision against age and want, saved from the earnings of a life of honest and laborious servitude. Passing over these private considerations, let us regard it in a purely public point of view. Upon the national debt depend all the security and solvency of the great mercantile establishments, of the whole body of Bankers, of the Insurance Offices of all descriptions, of the Savings Banks in every part of the country. The first indication of a disposition to invade its sacred claims, would be the signal for a universal panic, for a suspension of those commercial pulses, which propel the life blood through the veins of the state.

We have had one faint experience, one little ex-

ample, on a small scale, of the tremendous consequences of such a revulsion in credit. In 1825, we all recollect that public opinion was strongly pronounced in favour of a variety of schemes and speculations of a very hazardous and extravagant nature. Those who believe that the public opinion is not always infallible; those who, committing treason against the sovereignty of the people, think that it is in the nature of things that some should lead, and that others should follow, whether to good or to evil, assert, that a portion of the public led the rest of the public into a great scrape. Certain it is, that a number of these schemes were unsuccessful, and that they occasioned the failure of two or three London houses of considerable note, though not of the very first eminence, and of a great many country Banks. We must all remember the disastrous consequences of this shock to credit, the alarm universally spread, the sudden alteration of trade and manufactures from a thriving to a most disastrous state. Trifling and partial as this crisis must be regarded, compared with the slightest breach of the great national faith, it will be long referred to as a period of great calamity, of public alarm and despondency, of general and acute distress.

But were illustrations required of the unavoidable evils occasioned by all great changes, however absolutely required, and however prudently and temperately conducted, let us turn our eyes to a more recent instance, that of France, within the last six months. It is worth while to premise what all per-

sons acquainted with that country know, that the transactions of trade and commerce are there conducted on a more limited scale than with us. Credit is much less extensive, paper not generally in circulation: the whole system narrower, simpler, more confined than ours, and therefore not so liable to be affected by panics or reverses. Yet let us mark the consequences of late events upon the trade and internal prosperity of that country.

If ever there were a revolution justified, and rendered a duty by the conduct of the Government, the Revolution of July was that one. Nor was the conduct of the people less admirable than their motive was justifiable. No drop of blood was wantonly, or unnecessarily spilled; no cruelty stained their victory; no mixture of sordid deeds, no acts of rapine or robbery, corrupted the purity of their cause. The authority of the laws was but a moment relaxed, the new government was instantly invested with the powers of the State. There was no protracted struggle; the ascendancy of good sense, and moderation was every where maintained; the nation seemed instantaneously to re-enter that state of calmness and repose, which had been momentarily disturbed. Could a change of this nature take place in any country, without affecting its internal prosperity and its trade; the recent revolution in France, from its short duration, from its exemplary moderation, from the judicious and patriotic hands into which the government fell, and from that absence of an extended system of credit, would have entitled

us to hope such a result. But the consequences have been less agreeable to contemplate. Evils, which, however the excellent spirit of the people intitles us to hope, and believe will be of short and temporary duration, have yet clouded the brightness of the prospect, and introduced afflicting sufferings into the land. The spirit of disorganization and anarchy has been unchained; and though compressed, and checked by the firm good sense of the nation, has scattered through it doubt and alarm. The operations of industry have been suspended, the workmen have been exposed to great privations, and the productive powers of the nation have been checked. It must awaken the sympathy and regret of every friend of liberty, that the commercial failures and distresses which have taken place in Paris, have reached men, whose names are known as the warmest and truest friends of freedom; who have been ever foremost in its cause, and who would have purchased that triumph with their lives, which they are doomed to see followed by the entire ruin of their fortunes. Let us admire the French, but let us rejoice that we are not obliged to redeem our liberties at such a price; and let us remember, that the best, wisest, and justest revolution, is always a calamity.

Reverting to the subject of the extreme sensitiveness of our own system, and of the disastrous consequences of any invasion of rights, we may observe, that upon the great mercantile and banking establishments, before enumerated, depend all the manu-

facturing and commercial interests of the country. Were they to be affected, all our power looms would be arrested, our steam engines would stand still, our ships would rot in our harbours, the retail trade would be reduced, the whole industry of the country would be paralysed. Nor would the agricultural interests escape better. Besides the direct loss sustained by landed proprietors, through their connexion with the Bankers, it is sufficiently proved, that the demand for agricultural produce follows, at no remote interval, the state of our trade and manufactures; that one depends upon the other. Lastly, let not the labouring classes be taught to suppose, that such violent changes can be calculated, in the remotest degree, to better their condition. The property of England may be destroyed by force, but it cannot be diffused; it is like one of our machines, of too delicate a texture. It is not that A obtains what he attempts to take from B; it will perish. The labourer will not cultivate the field he has wrested from the farmer; it will lie fallow; the weaver will not move his shuttle the faster within his own cottage, because the manufactory of his master is shut up. Here again we may refer to the panic of 1825. At the beginning of that year every thing was flourishing and prosperous in a high degree; at the close of it the failures took place. In the spring of 1826, the weavers and manufacturers were almost universally out of employment, and in a state of destitution. Alarming riots took place, factories were burned, machinery destroyed,

and soldiers called out; lives lost at Manchester, Blackburn, Wigan, &c., throughout the manufacturing districts. If that capital, which animates the whole, be destroyed; or if that system of credit, which alone renders such complicated and extensive operations possible, be once dissolved, the first and greatest sufferers would be the whole vast manufacturing population, whose existence entirely depends upon this mighty and artificial machinery. If they are unhappily exposed now to great privations, from the unavoidable fluctuations which must always occur in the demand for the productions of manufacturing industry, what would be their state in the event of a total check to the whole process of production, an entire derangement of those powers by which it is impelled and set in motion?

The poor also have their national debt, their six millions and a half of rates, levied upon the annual income of the State. What would be the fate of this tax in the event of any national revulsion? Would the collector's be an easy task, making the circuit of the parish, presenting his rapidly augmenting demands with a smile and a bow, and receiving the ready forthcoming amount into his capacious canvass bag? Would not the rate payers be constantly converted into the rate receivers? Would not the arm of the law be wearied with enforcing its numerous distresses on goods and chattels; an operation, which, like a fictitious and delusive sinking fund, for the extinction of poverty, ruins with one hand, that it may relieve with the other? Let them be convinced,

that the poor's rates would not survive such a convulsion; and that they, whose existence is a mortgage on property, are, above all others, interested in its preservation. I have instanced the national debt as the readiest illustration of the pernicious consequences of these extreme, and subversive measures; but the same effects would flow from any other attack, directed against the integral parts of our social edifice. I would not be accused of colouring a picture with the darkest shades of an "invalid imagination." I know and acknowledge, that I am painting an extreme case, but I am supposing those extreme measures which would realize it. There is no fear that we should voluntarily encounter such horrible misfortunes; since doing so, would be a perfectly gratuitous act. I believe, that the nation is, as it has always been, sober, discreet, and wise. I merely point out the possible results of an access of national delirium.

This section has led me into some length; and I hope that my readers will not have entirely lost sight of the positions I have been derirous of establishing;—

First, That it is a great error, and will lead to much disappointment, to suppose that any rational Reform could effect such a change in the policy of the executive, as materially and immediately to improve the condition of the empire, or of any class of its population. The advantages arising from an amelioration of the system would undoubtedly be of a gradual, and at first, almost an imperceptible nature. They

would rather consist of a certain change in the tone and spirit of the House of Commons, than of any benefits of a substantive character.

Second, That if it be imagined that a reformed House of Commons would proceed to effect its objects by more decisive acts, disregarding those rights which have hitherto been held sacred, it would be the author of the most cruel calamities. Should it be clearly pointed out, should it be even reasonably apprehended, that a Reform would have such a tendency, it would become the duty, not only of every one charged with the weighty responsibility of a seat at this time in Parliament, but of every honest, wise, and prudent man throughout the nation, to oppose it, as he would avoid the deep guilt of assisting in the ruin of his country.

SECTION VI.

VOTE BY BALLOT.

THE advantages of the system of vote by ballot, appear to me a very fair induction from the doctrine of the Sovereignty of the People. If we admit the principle of an inherent right, vested in the majority of the population, or the fact of the great ends of government having been uniformly best attained in proportion as we have approached nearer its practical application, it then only remains to consider Vote by Ballot, with regard to its being well adapted, or otherwise to elicit the unbiassed expression of that will. And certainly it does appear, that if it be an advantage to separate the actions of men, as political agents, from all those influences which guide their conduct as social beings, vote by ballot has the merit of being a most ingenious device for the accomplishment of that end. It will probably make as near an approach to the attainment of it, as any mode which could be invented for a purpose, counteracting so strongly motives of action, which are a part of our nature.

I am disposed to admit, that vote by ballot is as good a method as could have been proposed for obtaining the pure unmixed expression of the will of

each individual, and therefore of the majority of the whole. I dispute not the efficacy of the means, I contend against the expediency of the end. Let us allow that vote by ballot would destroy the influence of property and station, that it would even diminish that sway which intellect and energy exercise over mental weakness and timid obstinacy; I still doubt the wisdom of thus insulating our political existence, of sending the elector to the poll exonerated from all those motives, which influence his every other act as a member of the community. It would dissolve the cement which binds and unites the social system.

Should we succeed in excluding the slightest external bias, or feeling of personal interest, from the mind of the elector, is the advantage so indisputable? We shall not have overcome these motives by moral causes, by increasing the weight of higher motives of action; we shall only have eluded and evaded them by a slight of hand, by a *ruse de guerre*.

Are we sure that we have eradicated all the deteriorating and injurious influences within his breast? If his vote be no longer in the remotest degree dictated by his interest, is it equally unbiassed by his passions, his prejudices, or his ignorance?

Will not envy and hatred sometimes find a secure vent in the concealed drawers of the balloting box? Will virtue and talent be always his choice? By the ballot at Athens, Aristides was banished, because he was called the just.

Vote by ballot, if coupled with an extended right of suffrage, would undoubtedly destroy the ascen-

dancy of the upper classes. I do not mean to use the term in the restricted sense in which it has an unpopular and invidious acceptation. I do not mean the narrow limit of the nobility, or the landed proprietors, or the possessors of large fortunes. I speak of that great division of English society, stretching from the very highest possessors of hereditary or acquired importance, quite down to the confines of what is called middle life. It includes all those who either possess a competence, or who derive one from the exercise of an honourable and liberal calling or profession. It comprizes the flower of the intellect, and probity, and educated portion of the community. However inferior in number to the next great division, that of the middle classes, it is even numerically important. When considered relatively to its position, and its mental superiority, it is the leading influence in the State. Granting that vote by ballot, a franchise generally extended to the great provincial towns, and a low qualification in the electors, should entirely destroy this influence, would the benefit to the country be quite incontestable? There may be those who are sceptical enough to doubt whether the power thus enjoyed by the most intelligent, and most virtuous part of the nation, is upon the whole a defect. There are some Reformers who think it ought rather to be increased than diminished. There is an opinion that the entire population of Birmingham, or of Manchester, would not, if giving their votes by ballot, free as air, as their prepossessions, or their caprices, or their prejudices, or the best lights of

their understanding might dictate, be more likely to choose well, from the absence of this sort of influence. It would appear to resemble, the improvement which would be effected by any subtle physiologist, who should contrive to release the limbs and members of the human body from the controul of mental volition.

The advocates of vote by ballot constantly cite, as an example, the recent history of France, and exclaim, with triumph, "The ballot has saved France." They forget that the elective franchise in that country was exercised by 84,000 electors, chosen by a qualification, which secured their being among the richest and most independent class in their population of thirty-three millions. Such a mode of voting might have been exceedingly useful as a defence to their limited electoral body, against the intrigues and menaces of the plotting and arbitrary ministers of Charles X. ; but the difference between the two cases is this. The right of election in France was in the hands precisely of that class, who, as far as two very different states of society can be compared, correspond to that part of the English nation, whose influence in elections I have been contending, is beneficial. It is allowed on all hands that they used their franchise wisely and well. It would be too much for the most strenuous supporter of the ballot to assert, that all the merit was due to it, and none whatever to the men. Therefore these events were highly favourable to the character and public conduct of the portion of the nation answering to that part of the British people,

whom I would wish to see continuing to possess a leading voice in the choice of members. It is not desired that, as in France, they should have the whole elective franchise, only a considerable weight. But vote by ballot in England would be a weapon levelled against these very persons. It would be adopted with no other view than that of extinguishing them entirely, politically speaking. Vote by ballot in France was a power confided to the hands of the upper classes in the sense in which I have used the words. In England it would be a power directed against them.

It must be admitted that the practice of bribery at elections would be much diminished, and rendered more difficult, by the introduction of such a mode of voting. This would no doubt be a considerable advantage attending it. It would, however, be too dearly purchased, by the destruction of all those legitimate influences which are interwoven with the whole frame work of civilized life, and which are the great bond of its adhesion.

In pursuing the chimera of abstract rights, or the phantom of an ideal independence, these political visionaries lose sight of all ultimate ends. They reject experience, they disregard the conclusions founded upon history and human nature. They fancy that they have found the *summum bonum* of legislation, the *beau ideal* of civil government, because, in the performance of an important social act, they have contrived a means of emancipating men from all those restraints which surround them as social beings

They think that in a system, the very essence and beauty of which is the responsibility of all the depositaries of power, and their subjection to the controul of opinion, they can, in the exercise of this one essential power, safely and beneficially release men from all check and responsibility whatever.

POSTSCRIPT

TO THE

THIRD EDITION.

THE attention with which the public has honoured the preceding remarks upon the ballot, and some arguments which have been brought against them by gentlemen who entertain different opinions, have induced me to add a farther explanation of my views, and to attempt to meet the reasons that have been urged against them. I am happy in the opportunity of expressing my sense of the great courtesy which those who dissent from me have adopted in the tone of their discussion. The foregoing remarks are founded entirely upon two or three positions, which I perhaps rather inferred, than distinctly set forth. If these positions are erroneous, the whole reasoning falls to the ground. If they are proved, I do not see that it can be confuted. I first denied the doctrine of an inherent right to govern themselves, existing in any population. In the section of the sovereignty of the people, I have endeavoured to shew that this theory, so prevalent, particularly on the Conti-

nent, is a fallacy. I contended, that a general principle of this kind could not be established, because all history and experience proved that men naturally were formed by Providence into communities, consisting of governors and "governed. I asserted, that this attempt to establish a general principle, upon hypothetical argument, at variance with uniform experience, could not be borne out. It is disproved by that process of inductive reasoning from facts, upon which every general law, whether physical, or moral, can alone be founded. All that the philosophy of experience teaches us on this subject, is, that government is natural to man, and government supposes the relation of rulers and ruled. That the proper end of government is the prosperity of the State, and the happiness of the nation, is quite another position, and one to which I give my cordial assent. Now, the application of the foregoing argument, to the subject of Vote by Ballot, is this, that it answers all the reasons put forth by those who contend for certain natural rights and privileges in the body of electors, which this mode of voting would contribute to secure. Like every other innovation, this is only a question of expediency. It must be tried upon the ground, not of any tendency to secure theoretical rights, but of its effects upon the whole body of society, and of the substantial benefits which it may contribute to bestow. The representative system itself is not a matter of inherent right. it is a mode of government, which, having

been found practically good, having secured to us great blessings, is therefore the object of our regard, and in which the British people have a prescriptive and legal right, but not a natural one. Vote by Ballot is advocated on the ground that it would render the elector a perfectly free agent, and that it would release him from all extraneous influences, except that gentle and benign influence which his partialities and affections may exercise upon his judgment. I have not dwelt upon the insufficiency of the ballot to produce this result. That argument has been wielded by the ablest hand; it is entitled to great weight. But admitting its efficacy for this purpose, I maintain that its supporters have proved but the first, and least material point. It remains for them to shew that this entire, this abstract freedom, would, in its effects, be calculated to benefit the country; that the change it would introduce in the composition of the House of Commons, would be advantageous to the community, compatible with that description of government which the position of England amongst the nations of Europe requires, not subversive of the whole frame of our political system, and of the other parts of our constitution.

This brings me to the conclusion of the first part of my discussion, which is,

1st. That the question of Vote by Ballot is not a theoretical one of its efficacy, in giving to the elector an entire independence, but a practical

one, as to the 'effect of that independent power, so exerted upon the constitution of the State.

2nd. That it is not to be argued upon the narrow basis of its removing this or that blemish from our present mode of election, (imperfections which I lament, and wish corrected, if by safe means,) but upon the larger field of its ultimate consequences, and whole future operation.

The remainder of this section points to the enquiry into the nature, the various kinds, and the effect of influence upon the constituent body. I have felt more strongly, in proportion as my thoughts have been fixed upon this branch of the subject, that, so far from it being possible to do it justice in a short section, or chapter, of an ephemeral pamphlet, it both merits and demands much patient investigation and laborious analysis. Could I even flatter myself that I were competent to the task, I can neither at present command the time, nor would my limits allow me to give it its full development. I cannot, however, help suggesting to those possessed of more leisure and ability for it, that they will find much indistinctness, confusion, and inaccuracy, in many current notions upon this branch of the discussion; and I must repeat, that the data upon which alone we can determine the practical merits or demerits of the ballot, depend upon the clearness, truth, and precision of our ideas upon this point.

I have argued upon the ground that intelligence,

education, and if not the endowments, the acquirements of intellect are very unequally distributed among the different classes of society. I will add, that this distribution is inevitable. It appears to me easily proved, that it is impossible to diffuse the higher branches of knowledge so generally among the mass of the lower orders, as to remove this disproportion. Their time and their attention must, in the nature of things, be chiefly occupied with the care of providing, by manual labour, for their subsistence. In a less degree, the same causes will preclude the middle classes, almost wholly occupied in the acquirement of the means of independence, by a steady application to the business of trade, from cultivating their mental faculties so highly as those above them. I know that, with respect to the middle orders in this wealthy country, many do possess, and are born to that degree of competence, which enables them to dedicate a sufficient time to the acquirement of the most liberal education. I merely observe, that my remarks do not apply to these; they are at the head of their own class; they border upon and they share the advantages of that next to them. But I speak of the majority, for whom we legislate. I know, too, that great and illustrious examples may be adduced, particularly in a country where the barriers are none of them insurmountable, of the highest class of intellect forcing its road from the lowest order of society. The same answer may be given. We make laws

for the bulk of ordinary men, not for splendid and rare exceptions: where they occur, they make their way as it is. But their existence is no proof that the general body to which they belong has any greater natural capacity, or an equal share of acquirements, with those to whom the attainment of knowledge is more easy.

Lastly, it is no reason, because in all large bodies of men, whether they be peers, or gentlemen, or persons in middling life, much error and prejudice may not be found, that therefore there is an equal ignorance and mistake in all. If we could find perfect wisdom and honesty any where, we need not discuss Vote by Ballot, or even representative government, any more; we should only have to place our interests in such hands. But the existence of imperfect knowledge every where, does not prove that we should not rather select, as the depositaries of power, those who have the greatest comparative knowledge. But even mind and intelligence are not the only requisites to seek in those who confer political power. It is likewise desirable that their station and stake in the community should be such as to secure their attachment to settled institutions, and that they should not be tempted, or easily acted upon, to seek change upon light grounds. I am not sure that a large constituent body consisting, if it could consist, of very clever and very poor men, would not be found in practice a most dangerous, and fatal instrument, that it would be inefficient

to all the purposes of Government, and would soon destroy itself. The upper classes in this country seem to me to unite these requisites of intelligence, and a sufficient guarantee for their attachment to stable institutions, in a greater degree than any others. They are numerically inferior to the other classes. If we destroy the influence which their property gives them, and make the system of government a mere matter of arithmetic, a mere polling of heads, shall we not destroy, or at least diminish, the preponderance which ought to belong to that body in which the securities for a proper and wise use of the power exist in the highest degree ?

The legal claims of a proprietor may, in a few instances, have been hastily and improperly enforced; but we are not therefore to conclude that the whole operation of the influence of property, which is at once far more general, and more gentle, than is at first perceived, is pernicious. It is assumed that it acts no otherwise than in the harsh guise of intimidation and positive constraint. Those who look more closely, will discern numerous shades in its operation, and in a thousand instances it merely amounts to an unwillingness to disoblige, or refuse those to whom the voter is under obligation.

I asked above, whether we were sure that in destroying the motive of interest, we subdued every other deteriorating influence? I will go a step farther and ask, whether we are sure that

some may not be thus increased? As in our individual character, we perceive that one passion, or propensity restrains another, that ambition counteracts avarice, that anger conquers hypocrisy and the like, may not different motives of action neutralize each other in the electors mind.

Suppose that the influence of property is bad, which I only admit as a mere hypothesis, since I think it good; are there not other influences not only internal, but external, which would gain the ascendancy and weight of which property would be deprived. An artful and eloquent demagogue, for example, would surely find it a more easy task to pervert the judgment, and to excite the passions of the less educated portion of the electors, to misrepresent facts, and to confuse with false reasoning, were the checking, and controuling power of those persons the least likely to be imposed on by his sophistries removed. Still more would the same reasoning apply to the greater power of the periodical press, a power so beneficial to society, when exercised by men of talent and political honesty, and addressed to the really educated portion of the nation, so dangerous when used by able, but unprincipled incendiaries to inflame the passions of the ignorant, or to mislead the half-informed.

Another argument which has been opposed to my views, is that the degree of education and intelligence, necessary to enable a voter to judge of the fitness and capacity of candidates, is greatly

inferior to that required to empower them to comprehend political measures, and that the bulk of the lower orders may fully possess the former, though not the latter. If I understood the idea correctly, it is, that a certain moral tact and instinct would guide the voter to chuse well in bestowing his suffrage, though he might want all the means of rightly estimating the course of political conduct which his representative might pursue, or the motive of his actions. I almost entirely dissent from this whole doctrine. The faculties which teach us to discriminate the abilities and character of public men, are even of a higher, a more refined description, than those which lead us to estimate the bearings of different courses of state policy. We must possess all the knowledge necessary for the latter, and a great acquaintance with mankind also: we must be near the scene of action, scrutinize its springs, as well as its effects. The breath of popular favour is even proverbially capricious and uncertain. The popular opinion is very frequently in error upon the merits of cotemporary statesmen. Vote by Ballot would probably have made John Wilkes premier, and turned him out at the year's end. But I totally deny, that, in point of fact, the elector would give his vote to the most worthy candidate, without concerning himself about measures above his comprehension. He would, on the contrary, give his vote to the most pliant and flattering candidate, who would pledge himself to the measures the

voter preferred. Instead of chusing the ablest representative, and reposing a full confidence, he would chuse the most subservient, and hamper him as much as possible.

Finally, I must always think that the influence of property is one of its natural defences, that property cannot dispense with its support. I must believe, that the ascendancy of property and intellect are united, and that Vote by Ballot would equally assail that great and essential institution upon which civilization is founded, and that noble faculty by which it is extended and improved.

SECTION VII. . .

APPREHENSIONS OF A SERIES OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORMS.

THERE is a numerous portion of the best informed ranks of the community, perhaps the majority of them, whose opinions on Reform may be thus rendered.

We are sensible of considerable imperfections in our present mode of representation. We think that some of the highest and wealthiest families in the State have too great and direct a power of nominating members. We lament that so much disorder and venality should disfigure our elections. We should cordially approve of measures of Reform calculated to soften, or to remove these blemishes. But we see considerable difficulties in the accomplishment of these limited objects. We venerate our Constitution as a whole. We admire its free spirit, its long tried merits, its attainment of that difficult result, the union of civil and personal liberty, with order, with a good and a strong government. We totally dissent from those accusations brought against our political system, representing it as a radically bad, venal, and profligate one. We cannot trace all the evils with which we are afflicted, or with which we ever

have been afflicted, for its errors and faults. We think, on the contrary, that it is, taken altogether, the best which has ever stood the test of a century. We have experienced its advantages and its blessings. We think that they far out-balance its defects. Though we should be glad to cure them, we do not desire to run great risk of destroying the whole in the attempt. We would rather have the defects than the risk. We do not feel disposed to venture all that we enjoy on the desperate chances of a political speculation.

Those who reason and who feel thus, and they are many, must inevitably be alarmed at the prospect, not of one Reform, the consequences of which they can estimate, but of a long series of Reforms. They perceive, that if they, like kind, yet clear sighted friends, wish to amend the Constitution, there is a numerous party of fierce foes, who seek only to destroy it. They see that this Reform is but a first step, to be followed by a number of others, which lead they know not whither. Those who think that great changes in governments are evils, only to be incurred for some definite and important benefit, are startled to find, that they are to be exposed to a succession of changes, intended gradually to effect a complete transformation. They conceive that the final aim of these successive reforms, always tending to infuse an increasing portion of democracy into the Constitution, could be, no other than the establishment of a pure republic.

Under such circumstances, the question of Reform

presents itself in a totally different point of view. It is no longer whether this or that plan of Reform is good *per se*, but what will be the position in which the different parties will stand to each other, should it be adopted. We must calculate our means of resistance, we, who do not wish to establish a Republic, or to introduce into our government a principle of indefinite and incessant change, must endeavour to estimate what would be the effect of this first measure upon the relative strength of parties.

We should regard it as a final one, others would consider it as a commencement: Which would be right? It seems evident that there is a party, and a considerable one, whom no concession would satisfy, who would look upon all they could obtain now, as a means of obtaining more hereafter. There are many who have declared war against the Constitution, either avowedly or secretly, who assail it with every engine, and with whom its friends could make no alliance. There are others, who, though they do not go so far, are yet exceedingly desirous of a much greater alteration of the representative system, than it is likely will now be proposed. These two parties, however they may separate afterwards, will unite to a certain point. They will pull together till they reach the place where the latter intend to stop. Now, were it once proved that the passing of any measure of Reform would have the effect of strengthening these two parties, and of facilitating the attainment of their ultimate objects, I think the moderate and temperate friends of the Constitution, whose opinions I have been de-

scribing, would, to a man, unite against any Reform. We do not think our frame of Government so bad as to induce us to surrender it to a succession of experiments. We do not desire that our social system should be indefinitely unsettled. We dread the alterative processes of these empirics. Revolution does not appear to us in a less repulsive form, because, instead of an acute distemper, it is to wear us with the wasting pangs of a chronic disease.

It is impossible to conceal from ourselves, however, that it will be exceedingly difficult to carry any measure of Reform which will not have a tendency to strengthen these pernicious influences. It will be difficult to frame any plan so prudently, or to introduce it so temperately, and so firmly, as not to give to these extreme parties an impression of triumph, and a persuasion of something extorted. They will gain a certain accession of moral power, they will be inspired with fresh confidence, and they will suppose that they can gradually wring from the country in detail the full extent of their objects.

I confess, it appears to me that Reform should have a two-fold object; while it aims at a correction of the blemishes mentioned above, it should guarantee the great body of the nation, all who have an interest in the permanence of Government, or the tranquillity and repose of private life, against the perpetual recurrence of this insatiable and reckless spirit of change. Nothing can be clearer than that it will not stop of itself. It will either go on till it completely subverts every national institution, or it must be arrested

by some stronger influence. The energy of the Government is one principal agent for this purpose, and the moral force derived from the good sense of the people the other. The species of security against wild innovations, which I allude to, must consist in discovering in what part of the community this good sense exists in its purest and most unalloyed force, and in so adapting Reform as to strengthen its expression, and add to its weight in the Legislature.

I would remark, that the innovating and revolutionary spirit of change I hold up as dangerous, is very distinct from that sober and rational desire of ameliorating ancient institutions, which has already produced such beneficial effects. The latter adheres to the outline of our venerable Constitution, takes it as the basis, which must be preserved and strengthened, and only seeks to adapt it skilfully to the altered circumstances and wants of the present age. The former is bent on destroying it. They are as different as Sir J. Wyatteville repairing and beautifying Windsor Castle, is from Martin the incendiary, who burned York Minster.

The very worst government is perhaps better than the constant agitation produced by incessant changes in the most essential forms; at any rate, it is the most frequent termination of them. England is so entirely unsuited for a Republic, that it needs no very extended political vision to foretell that the denouement of these ultra Reformers' political drama would be an absolute monarchy. In the meantime,

what a wreck of national prosperity and happiness would not these fierce party struggles occasion! Heaven avert the hour, when an English Minister should re-echo the sentiment lately wafted to us across the Irish Channel, and declare that "England wants repose."

SECTION VIII.

ENGLISH ARISTOCRACY.

ARISTOCRACY is a particularly sonorous and high sounding word. It is also a convenient one. It classes, under one general term, a variety of different meanings, and throws upon the hearer the burthen of decyphering the particular sense in which it is used. It is likewise an expression agreeable to the feelings, and flattering to the self-love of a powerful and distinguished class in the community. It has lately been converted into a term of abuse, a rallying point, a magic form of invocation of the angry and hostile passions of a large portion of the population. In this latter acceptance it has been the parent of a number of titles of a similarly classic derivation; such as the oligarchy, the squirearchy, the parsonarchy, and other compound words, containing an equal proportion of Greek and English, of Demosthenes and Cobbett. It is quite intelligible, that, with such recommendations, it should have been received into general currency, and should have become a favourite with the speakers and the writers of the day. It is nevertheless certain, that in the general and popular meaning in which it is now

used, it is a recent importation into our vocabulary. It will appear too, that, like all foreign words, applied to the nice and peculiar characteristics of national manners, like all those sweeping terms, which pretend to express every thing with five syllables, it conveys indistinct and erroneous ideas. It is not merely, that it does not show us the shades and details of the body of the picture, it is radically defective in the outline, which it attempts to convey to us. The images that it presents to the mind, are confused, and false. I really believe, that much of evil has arisen to the country from this word. It has led to unfounded and invidious views, and pretensions in one class. It has awakened morbid dissatisfaction, sullen discontent, fierce and deadly resentment in others. It has been the apple of discord among us. When we speak of the Aristocracy of ancient Venice, or of Berne, any one acquainted with the nature of those Republics, knows exactly what is meant, but nobody can annex the same precise meaning to the term English Aristocracy. Its vagueness, has been favourable to indefinite assumption on the one hand, and to indefinite but virulent attack upon the other. In order to explain myself more clearly, I would induce my readers to follow me in some observations upon the nature and past history of the English nobility and gentry, and of their actual relations to the rest of the community.

We all know that the order of the peerage traces its origin to the feudal times, and its earliest mem-

bers were the proud and powerful nobles of the middle ages. We know that in the wars of the Roses, and under the tyranny of Henry the Eighth, the power of these Barons was broken, and the families of many became extinct. Their ranks were recruited by Elizabeth and James from the flower of the gentry, but their independent, and almost princely authority, was finally destroyed. An interval seems to have occurred between the reduction of this species of separate dominion, and the revival of their importance as a corporate political body. But during this period, when they were the submissive vassals of Henry the Eighth, or the obedient servants of Elizabeth, there was still something that preserved the *prestige* of their name, and a considerable portion of their personal consequence. There ran, through all the monarchies of feudal origin a certain sympathy between the throne and the nobles. They were like husband and wife; however they might quarrel and fight, they never could resolve to carry things to the last extremity; they always contrived to be reconciled in the end. No usurpation of the crown by a subject was ever permanently successful; and, however Henry and Elizabeth might determine to subdue, they never sought to degrade their nobility. The political importance, therefore, which they subsequently attained as a separate portion of the Parliament, was grafted upon the recollections of their former greatness, and upon the dignity and estimation which they still preserved. It was fortified too by the consideration

and favour of the crown, no longer jealous of their distinct jurisdictions; and it was supported by the reality of great wealth, of the most solid and enduring kind. When we consider, that the feudal system, wherever it was established, has left the most lasting traces in the habits and modes of thinking of the European nations; and when we observe, how many of the more modern elements of personal consequence were grafted upon these ancient recollections, the importance of the peerage, down to our days, is a matter of easy explanation.

But however this association of feudal recollections, with the substantial attributes of wealth and political power, may have invested the peerage, as a whole, with much of its lustre, we must not look to find them often united in the peerage individually. The peerages which survived the convulsions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were few in number; and of these few some families became extinct in the course of nature. From these periods, down to our own, the peerage has been largely recruited in every age from the ranks of the landed gentry, of the most distinguished families, originally connected with commerce, of the highest legal functionaries, of successful political intriguers, and of those who rendered important services to their country in the senate and the field. Little of its original composition remains, although its original character is preserved. We see, therefore, that, however distinguished, the peerage has never, in modern times, formed a body entirely separated from the gentry. It has constantly been

replenished from among them, it has, been connected with them by marriage, it has, pursued with them, the same objects, it has been united with them by a thousand ties.

If we next ask the nature and limit of the term gentry, it is less capable of an exact definition; the precise boundaries are not so clearly marked out. Like the peerage, it has a feudal origin; and as the first peers were the Barons, the first gentlemen were the Knights, whose name recalls all the best and noblest part of those dark and turbulent times. Less corrupted by the possession of uncontrouled and inordinate power, and raised above the coarse brutality of an unenlightened age, by the singular institutions and noble spirit of chivalry, this class appears to have been the depositaries of all the highest qualities of their time. When the restraints of law were weak, when each individual was surrendered so much to the dominion of his own inclinations and passions, it would be too much to suppose that the Knights were always the representatives of the principles they professed. Violence, fraud, and cruelty, the vices of their age, no doubt were abundantly frequent in their rank. Still there was in the spirit and institutions of chivalry, a freedom from selfishness, an elevation and delicacy of sentiment, a lofty and generous sense of personal respect, which invested them with a moral grandeur. They proscribed what was mean, base, and sordid. They inculcated honour, truth, fidelity, and courage. They enjoined the protection of the weak, and the succour of the

oppressed. Even in their tone of hyperbole, and exaggeration, there is something of dignity; it is an imitation—a burlesque one if you will, of what is, in itself great and noble. We may find a confirmation of this in the inimitable work of Cervantes. The most accomplished satire extant, attacks it in a playful, not a hostile spirit. We smile at the extravagancies of the hero, but we respect and esteem his character. The author has depicted the aberrations of an amiable and generous nature.

I have referred the origin of the gentry, like that of the peerage, to the feudal times. From those times they have inherited many of the qualities which we usually annex to the idea of a gentleman, a grace and dignity of manner, a high sense of self respect, a peculiar delicacy of honour. But like the peerage, even more than the peerage, have they changed in the actual composition. Much of the tone has been preserved, but the qualification has never been in the proofs of lineal descent. The human body, it has been supposed, changes every particle of its frame in the course of seven years, yet the spiritual identity remains. In the same manner many of the best characteristics of ancient chivalry form the foundation of, and still survive in the class of modern gentry, although few of their ancestors ever went to the crusades, or broke a lance in a tournament. From this point, and in this class, are we to trace the great difference between English manners and character, and that of the continental nations. While

the latter clung to heraldic forms, to rigid proofs of descent, to artificial distinctions, and therefore only obtained from this stock of knighthood, and chivalry, a withered, stunted offspring of provincial, petty, secondary noblesse, we took a totally different course. The original foundation was common to all, but we built upon it very differently. Retaining a certain value for family and descent, we wisely rejected too close an adherence to these strict rules. Our patent of admission was more in the soul and spirit than in the quarterings, was more a moral than an heraldic qualification. The ranks of the English gentry were widely and liberally opened to receive all those who became distinguished by successful enterprize and talent, who attained fortune by honourable means, who won eminence by intellect and exertion. Ours was an expansive, theirs an exclusive spirit. They decreed that no man who was not "*gentilhomme*," should enter the army; we resolved that every officer of the army and navy was *de facto* a gentleman. They condemned the learned professions of law and medicine to a marked inferiority,—we paid a generous respect to the high talents they require. They disdained and rejected the least mixture of commerce,—we welcomed cordially those enterprising and enlightened men, who, in acquiring great wealth to themselves, conferred great benefit on their country. They preserved the narrowness, the prejudices of feudality,—we caught and diffused its best spirit. They copied the castes of the Hindus,—we imitated

the sagacious policy of the former mistress of the world, who conferred upon the incorporated nations the lofty privileges of Roman citizens.

It followed, from these different courses, that while the great and little noblesse of the continent became an extremely obnoxious body, and were gradually undermined by the increasing wealth and intelligence of the rest of the community, the composition of our gentry was totally different. Their ranks included not merely all that was illustrious in descent, but the most affluent in fortune, respectable in station, honourable in character, distinguished by professional ability, pre-eminent in intellectual merit, throughout the country. They blended the highest acquirements of civilization with ennobling feelings, derived from their chivalrous parentage. There was in this distinction nothing that was invidious, nothing that was oppressive, nothing that curbed or injured freedom. It is a profoundly marked national line, and is viewed with no national hostility by any part of the people. In its most popular signification, the word gentleman is never used in a bad sense, it never conveys an unfavourable impression. It is so exclusively national, that it has no corresponding term in the other languages of Europe, and all the niceties of expression must be resorted to, if we wish to explain its meaning to a foreigner. The most violent demagogue seldom ventures to assail it with his terms of invective and reproach; he knows that he should not easily excite the sympathy of his hearers. The lowest classes always annex to it a mixed meaning of

character and of station. The readiest term of vulgar abuse, is, to tell a person of respectable situation that he is no gentleman, meaning that he wants the moral qualities which ought to accompany his rank in life. They are right. An English gentleman generally justifies their impression of this necessary union. Were I, without previous knowledge of the individual, obliged to place boundless confidence in the honour and integrity of another, I would select through the world an English gentleman.

If I have been at all successful in describing my impressions of these characteristic divisions of the upper classes of English society, my objections to the term aristocracy will be easily understood. A nobility so mixed and blended with the gentry, cannot possess that separate and exclusive quality necessary to complete the idea of an aristocracy. In a government of a purely aristocratic nature, like Moliere's "*Tout ce qui n'est pas vers est prose*," all who were not aristocrats would be democrats. But the great body of the gentry is far too extended in numbers, and far too popular in its composition, to be classed as an aristocracy. They are equally removed from all affinity to democracy. We must therefore reject the Greek derivatives, as not at all applicable to the shades of our national ranks, and recur to words of more familiar use.

The events of the last sixty or seventy years have caused important changes in the individual composition both of the Peerage, and of the gentry, but their proportionate relations to each other, and to the rest of the

community, have not been substantially altered. During this memorable period, the conquest of our eastern empire, the vast extension of our national debt, the immense increase of our commerce and manufactures, the various roads to distinction and preferment opened by the late war, all thronged the ranks of the gentry with a sudden and prodigious accession of numbers and wealth. The same sudden and large infusion of new materials, has equally taken place in the ranks of the peerage. The causes were very similar. The same acquisition of added importance, wealth, and power, by the class immediately below them, the same movement and action of the whole nation, through the exciting struggles of the war. Perhaps something may be ascribed to the particular policy of Pitt. It may partly reconcile some of the opponents to the memory of that celebrated statesman, that he seems to have been peculiarly free from prejudices in favour of rank and title. His lofty pride, like that of his distinguished father, appears to have been of a strictly personal nature. Emerging from the ranks of the private gentry, and owing his greatness to his own vast powers, and to the splendid talents of his father, the dim coronet, which late, and in his decline, encircled the brows of the first Earl of Chatham, seems to have inspired no very lively sympathy for the order in the breast of his son. It is curious to mark the difference, in this respect, between him and his great rival, and to note how variously passions, feelings, and opinions, are chequered in the mind of man. Pitt the idol, and the cham-

pton of the Tories, in the simple austerity of his manners, in his contempt for the adventitious decorations of high station, in his ready appreciation and production of talents, reminds us, in some points, rather of the President of a Republic. Fox, the warm and eloquent defender of popular rights, was, in private life, the assiduous votary of the pleasures of rank and fashion, and seems to have had always a greater leaning towards the advantages of high birth and connexion, than he would have cared to avow even perhaps to himself. It is certain, that, in fact, Pitt was the firm and liberal patron of ability, wherever he discovered it. The names of Huskisson, and of Canning, will attest his discernment to posterity. In the opposition of that period, eminent talent was made the tool of party; Pitt rendered it the associate and heir of his power.

In his lavish distribution of the patronage of the crown, by the creation of new titles, Pitt was, perhaps, influenced in part by an indifference for the honours he gave. Certain it is, that the composition of the House of Lords was materially altered by the infusion of such a vast number of new peers.

However, it must be owned, that, as a body, it was rather strengthened, than injured, by the accession of so many recruits, generally chosen among individuals of large fortune, of political influence, or of eminent personal qualities. As a whole, their consideration was rather augmented: on the one hand, it is true, that a peer was not quite so rare a phenomenon, the distinction was a less marked one

than it had been fifty years ago ; but, on the other, they had acquired the strength of numbers, and of added wealth. Their *esprit de corps* too, was still preserved, and they had the force of union.

From these circumstances it has arisen, that the indirect influence of the peerage, in the Lower House, has sensibly augmented within the last twenty years. The great riches of some of their body have been directed gradually to the purchase of many close seats, formerly at the disposal of private gentlemen. A Radical Reformer would probably observe, that so long as the corruption existed, it was immaterial to the people who exercised it. Practically, however, it is a matter of some consequence, that a great transfer has taken place from one class to another. The events of the same period have, I think, lessened the importance of the gentry as a political body. The creation of so many peers, robbed them of several influential members ; jealousies existed among themselves ; the transfer of close boroughs to the peerage closed many of their avenues to consideration ; and the fastidiousness, and spirit of exclusiveness, which few, acquainted with our society, can have failed to notice, also was a powerful agent. It tended to destroy their identity as a class. The most distinguished among them were enrolled, and incorporated with the societies of the nobility ; and the great mass, consisting of all those who fill the unobtrusive ranks of private life, the learned and liberal professions, the majority of the army and navy, perhaps became partially divided by a spirit

of this kind, from the more brilliant members of that class, of which they are essentially a part.

Those who admire, in most of its parts, the character of the higher orders in this country; those who reject with disdain the calumnies which have lately been levelled against them; those who know their talents, virtues, and public spirit, may yet apprehend, that they have fallen into an error in cultivating a spirit of too great fastidiousness and reserve. The real titles that they possess to respect, and estimation render it less necessary for them to hedge themselves round with these artificial defences. Their friends fear that they have not chosen wisely for themselves, or for the system of which they are so integral a part; when instead of encircling themselves with the moral support of the most valuable portion of the nation, they have sought the distinctions, and the dangers of a solitary and attenuated elevation.

The most violent Reformers, and democratic writers, have eagerly adopted a classification so favourable to their views. Taking advantage of the added influence, obtained by the peerage in the Lower House, and making no allowance for the counterpoise created by the increasing wealth, power, and intelligence of the other parts of the nation, they represented us as governed by a mere junto of Aristocrats. They have not adverted to the fact, that the influence of the great families has been as much and as often exerted on the side of popular rights, as of ministerial power. In their frequent

panegyrics of the independence and intelligence of the middle ranks, and in their fierce attacks upon what they term the oligarchy, they either inadvertently, or designedly, omit all mention of that most important part of the nation, the gentry. So profound a landmark in the feelings, opinions, and modes of life of Englishmen, could not be obliterated by their omission. Like the Holy Alliance, they might trace at pleasure new and capricious boundaries in the map of social life, but they could not efface those moral affinities which unite and distinguish gentlemen. It may justly be complained of, that in all the discussions and plans which have recently been broached upon the subject of Parliamentary Reform, the interests and claims of this most valuable portion of the community should have been overlooked. Placed in right, both of property and intelligence, in the foremost ranks of the people, supplying that demand for intellectual ability by which, in all the professions, the finest operations of the social machinery are conducted, so numerous, independent, and enlightened, as to preclude the possibility of their being classed as an oligarchy, or rendered the willing tools of power, this body has every title to the first consideration in any question of Reform. No reform indeed could be otherwise than deeply injurious to the welfare of the State, which should tend in the least to displace them from their proper situation in the community.

We are sensible both of the honesty and industry of the middle classes, and of the great advances they have recently made in education and mental acquirement; still, any reform which either intentionally, or otherwise, should have the effect of transferring the borough influence now possessed by individuals, to these ranks, over-stepping the gentry entirely, would be a complete inversion of the natural and existing order of society. The practical excellence of a House of Commons, depends not upon its conformity to any theory of representation, it consists in its uniting the largest portion of the intellect, independence, and patriotism of the country, within its walls, its structure should be such as to render the attainment of a seat in it of not too difficult acquirement. A mode of election, securing these important results, could not be pronounced radically bad, however it might be susceptible of improvement in the detail.

I will not disguise my impression that a very considerable influence of the gentry in elections, — a fair and natural influence, be it understood, is essential for accomplishing this purpose; still more must I believe that it is among the body of the gentry, that the members of the House of Commons must be selected. I have already, I hope, shewn, that I mean no narrow and exclusive limit by this line, their ranks are ever open to receive superior merit, and acquired consequence. Within their wide circle is chiefly con-

fin'd all the reality of talent, integrity, and liberal feeling, which render them the best fitted to be the depositaries of this sacred trust.

We might rejoice at a reform which should improve our modes of election, or curtail the influence of our great families. That reform would be indeed fatal to the best interests of England, by which the House of Commons should cease to constitute an assembly of gentlemen.

SECTION IX.

CONCLUSION.

THE most sincere friends of the great cause of rational freedom may be excused for mingling an almost extreme caution with the warmth of their devotion. The experience of all history proves, that nothing is more difficult, particularly in large States, than to combine liberal institutions with order, stability, and a necessary strength in the executive. The past, indeed, affords us, with a few brilliant exceptions, (the first and most splendid of which is our own constitution,) little more than a melancholy detail of a series of oscillations between anarchy and despotism, ending, for the most part, in the latter.

The path of real freedom is a strait and narrow one; and it must always be present to the minds of its advocates, that it is beset with equal and formidable dangers on both sides. A very slight deviation from its proper track, will occasion its being lost in absolute power on one side, or in disorder and confusion on the other.

The chief cause, indeed, of the difficulty experienced in the attainment of this great blessing

is, that, both in its pursuit and preservation, a degree of moderation and exemption from passion is necessary, exceeding the average proportion of these qualities in the breast of man. Thus, it may be observed, that visionary theorists upon these points, are always driven to suppose some very extensive improvement in our species in these particulars. They constantly assume that we have become infinitely better fitted to govern ourselves than we were heretofore, and that the deductions of experience are not, therefore, applicable to our present state; but it has uniformly been found that they have been over sanguine in such views.

The improvements of the human race, and they have been great and real, have not extended yet to give to their reason any strong additional power of self-control; a variety of fierce and lawless passions still slumber in our breasts, disciplined indeed, but not destroyed by the steady hand of legal government. There seems no just ground to assume that less than the degree of restraint which has always been necessary to deter men from the commission of actions injurious to others, would now suffice.

If we cast our eyes over the present state of Europe, we shall see little reason to apprehend immediate danger to constitutional liberty from any direct attacks of absolute power. The latter principle is universally on the defensive, and is, perhaps, not indisposed to seek some compromise

with its antagonist, but we have not the same security against the assaults of the equally hostile and dangerous spirit of anarchy.

So many quickly succeeding revolutions taking place among people not yet in a high state of intellectual improvement, and, perhaps, commenced, in some cases, without any elevated or patriotic views, must cause extreme anxiety, not merely to the partizans of absolute power, but to the most sincere friends of constitutional freedom.

It is impossible to feel yet assured, that the continental nations, in shaking off the arbitrary sway of their ancient governments, will have the good sense to replace it by institutions of a more free but equally permanent and regular nature. Should they deviate from this rational and moderate course, we must be prepared to witness the great body of European civilization surrendered to a series of convulsions of a fearful character, and unknown termination. We derive, indeed, great hope from the example of France, from the admirable and temperate use she has made of her power, and from the great moral influence she possesses over the other nations of the Continent; but as this influence is reciprocal, there seems, likewise, some risk that these elements of disorder which lurk within her own bosom, may acquire an unfortunate preponderance from the added momentum they may receive from without; and thus the whole state of the Continent, if not one of unmixed gloom, is yet full of causes of

great solicitude. In many places it may be clearly perceived that the struggle is not less between the principles of constitutional liberty and of anarchy, than between the former and that of absolute power.

The close sympathy which unites even ourselves with the other parts of the great European Commonwealth, gives this state of things an important connexion with the consideration of the question of Reform. With us, indeed, the contest with absolute power has been long over, and we have only to watch with jealousy the encroachments of the other great foes to liberty and to happiness. We ought not, indeed, to reject temperate and judicious ameliorations in our civil institutions; but we should bear it always in mind, that those modifications are introduced in the presence of a watchful enemy, as anxious to subvert as we are to amend.

A strong impression of the actual existence of such a state of things, has chiefly dictated the preceding pages; they have been inspired by no wish to retard the progress of human improvement, but by a fervent desire that its secure and steady march should not be rashly and precipitately compromised. I am conscious, that in the irregular and heterogeneous compound of our representative system, there exist considerable imperfections, and much that, with a temperate sagacity, may be advantageously amended; but it is a difficult and dangerous task, and appears to

have been rendered more so, by the clouds of error and misrepresentation with which the subject has been surrounded.

Reform may be compared to one of those complicated and delicate operations of surgical science, by which some diseased portion of the human frame is removed from the very midst of all those beautiful organs, upon which vitality immediately depends. Should such an operation be successful, a source of irritation and uneasiness is removed, the frame acquires additional health and strength, and the result is a glorious triumph of the science of man; but it must be performed upon the maturest deliberation, with a profound knowledge of the anatomy of our structure. The hand that directs the knife through all the intricacies of this wonderful machine, must be firm, bold, and skilful, yet cautious and tender. One trivial error, one false direction of the edge, and life is gone!

In the prosecution of a task requiring the highest degree of coolness, moderation, sagacity, and accurate knowledge, and in which such imminent risk is incurred by the absence of these qualities, it is disquieting to perceive how much the temper of the public mind seems impudged with their direct reverse. A state of strong and feverish excitement, exaggerated and ill defined expectations, appear, of all others, the dispositions to whose guidance we should least willingly surrender ourselves in such a path. They are most favourable,

indeed, to the views of those who seek only change, and would unhesitatingly sacrifice all that we possess to the blind chances of a complete lottery. But those with whom conservation is the first principle, and improvement the second, naturally feel that the difficulty of blending them in any course of action, is much increased by the hostile influence of feelings so irritable, and expectations so exaggerated.

Without venturing myself to attempt the detail of any precise plan of reform, I have been induced to offer to the public the remarks contained in the foregoing pages, from an earnest desire to allay this heated and vague excitement. I am sure that the chances of a beneficial result will be increased in proportion as we approach it in a sober and temperate spirit. Many of my opinions will differ materially from those of numbers of individuals: I hope that I am free from the dogmatism of believing in the infallibility of my own convictions; I cannot help thinking, however, the difference between myself and the readers who dissent from me will be diminished, if, dismissing previous bias, they ask themselves candidly and dispassionately the precise ideas they associate with the word reform.

Let them examine with their own minds the extent to which they really wish change to be carried, let them endeavour to estimate the probable consequences to society of any Parliamentary Reform they might wish to introduce, and let them

answer whether, in a question upon which they feel perhaps so strongly, they see their way clearly and plainly to the secure attainment of practical good. When reform is entertained in this calm and deliberate spirit, I have little doubt that its results will be advantageous to the community. It is to be feared, however, that the public mind is far from considering it in such a temper, and that no plan of reform can have the effect of satisfying its present hopes. We must never forget that the English Constitution is an amalgamation of the popular and monarchical elements of government. It is no easy problem to balance these as they have been balanced. The nicest discrimination and judgment are requisite in adding to the weight of the popular scales. Give it a little too much, and the transition to a Republic, of a peculiarly wild and unsettled character, would be inevitable.

To those whose ardour for Reform has effaced all regard for that Constitution which was so long the object of our pride and affection, and which we so long believed to be the source of our prosperity, I would cite one high authority. To those, who, in pursuit of their idol of a pure and perfect representation, would unhesitatingly endanger or sacrifice every other political institution in the state, I would oppose one great name. To those, who, like myself, think our Constitution as a whole so excellent, that the spirit of improvement must always remain subordinate to the principle

of conservation, I would secure one mighty support. On this very subject, in the face of the assembled Commons of England, in almost the last display of his splendid powers upon this great theatre of his eloquence and his talents, proclaiming it with the departing tones of that voice which for twenty years had exercised so powerful a sway within its walls,—when he left them for a loftier, but scarcely a more brilliant station, the present Lord Chancellor declared, what I trust millions of his countrymen will ré-echo, that he would infinitely rather perish beneath the ruins of the Constitution, than survive to lament its destruction.

