

The Guardian.

"WITH HEARTS RESOLVED, AND HANDS PREPARED,
THE BLESSINGS WE ENJOY TO GUARD."

A WEEKLY JOURNAL, OF POLITICS, COMMERCE, AGRICULTURE, LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND ARTS, FOR THE MIDDLE AND WORKING CLASSES
OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

No. 1.

SYDNEY, SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 1844.

VOL. I.

OURSELVES AND THE ASSOCIATION.

"Knowledge is Power;" and, "Union is Strength."

WHEN the publication of a new periodical is contemplated, as a matter merely of private speculation, it is usual for its projector to issue a prospectus of its proposed principles and objects, a sufficient time previous to its appearance to admit of the formation of a subscription list, or at all events of the nucleus of a constituency to ensure its support. In our instance, however, from the peculiar origin of the Journal with the establishment and conduct of which we have the honor to be entrusted, such preliminary announcements have been deemed unnecessary, and therefore, dispensed with. They are unnecessary in this instance, inasmuch as this paper is not a matter of private speculation, seeking a constituency and propitiating public favour, but the offspring of an already numerous and united constituency—the accredited organ and advocate elect of a considerable portion of the community.

We feel at once the critical importance and deep responsibility of the office with which we have been invested; and notwithstanding the professional experience of former years, and the ability and zeal for which we have received some credit—"with all our imperfections on our head"—we should almost shrink from so onerous and delicate an undertaking, were we not freed from the charge of presumption, to which we might be liable were we usurping a position and function which it is the prerogative of no man to assume without the suffrages of a constituency—and were we not encouraged by the confidence so freely reposed in us, and the assurances of a wide and energetic support. We feel proud of the honor that has thus been conferred upon us; and it shall be our future study and most earnest endeavour to merit the compliment implied in it, and act up to the obligation, more binding than pledges, which it imposes upon us.

Although, however, it was unnecessary for us to promulgate our principles through the medium of a public prospectus before hazarding the publication of our Journal, we deemed it expedient, to reserve for the introductory article of our first number, the explanation of our position, and the declaration of our principles and objects.

To justify the assumption of a title for our Journal more usually associated with politics of the Tory school, it is sufficient for us to say, that it was adopted as appropriately indicative of the great purpose for which the paper is established, and as harmonizing with the title of the Association under whose auspices it is published. As the organ of "THE MUTUAL PROTECTION ASSOCIATION," the *Guardian* has been started for the purpose of defending the just rights, and advocating the legitimate interests of the Middle and Working Classes of New South Wales. Its political principles are those of Constitutional Radicalism; or, in other words, those of pure and rational liberty, based on the indefeasible rights of man, and regulated by just views of social expediency and sound policy. Although organically connected and identified with

an Association, whose objects are partly political, and partly economical as regards the interests of industry, the sphere of the *Guardian's* advocacy will not be limited or trammelled by mere sectarian or factionary purposes. Its principles and objects are such as spring from, and are warranted by, that *love of country* which is the first and strongest guarantee for the freedom and prosperity of a people. Its object is not to mislead, but to enlighten and elevate, the people—to awaken them to a sense of their own political importance, and the importance of their political rights—and to convince them of the necessity and advantage, for their own interest and that of their posterity, of consolidating their strength by union and co-operation, for the purpose of mutual protection, and above all of disseminating and keeping alive a spirit of intelligence and independence throughout the land. "Knowledge is power"—and—"Union is strength"—two aphorisms that ought never to be lost sight of as the germ and safeguard of liberty—as the element and motto of our Association—as the very key-stone and first principle of our position.

As a general index of our political principles, we have declared them to be those of "Constitutional Radicalism;" and on this point we are desirous to anticipate and obviate mis-construction or mis-representation. We are aware that constitutionality is an indefinite and disputable subject, comprehended and expounded very differently by various parties and schools of politics. In the Tory acceptation of the term it means one thing—in the acceptation of the Whigs it means another—and in that of sound and legitimate Radicalism it means something considerably more than either of the former. In the estimation of such Radicals as the late Lord Durham or Jeremy Bentham, the word was expressive not merely of the positive rights and special privileges recognized in the Charters and Statutory Records of England, usually appealed to as the ultimate standards of the British Constitution, but of principles independent of these—principles which existed before them, and the development and recognition of which preceded and gave birth to the enactments that are simply declaratory, but by no means the primary foundation, of the nation's rights. There are ideas of Rectitude, and first principles of Justice, on which human rights are founded, which are far deeper and more primitive than Civil Polity, and can never be abrogated or subverted either by the legislation or despotism of human power. The institutions of Civil government far from originating them, owe to them their strength. "Right is older than human law. Law ought to be its voice." It should be based on the principles of justice in the human breast, and have, as the test of its expediency, and the obvious warrant of its legitimacy—"the greatest good to the greatest number." These, then, are the principles of Constitutional Radicalism—the Radicalism that goes to the root of all human legislation, and examines the foundation of social institutions. By these principles the constitutionality of our laws and the acts of our government may

be tested; and by them we shall be guided in all our efforts to bring about a salutary balance of power between the constituent interests of the Colony.

That a legitimate balance of power does not at present subsist between the constituent interests of this Colony, will not, we presume, be disputed. By the constituent interests of the Colony we mean, the monied and landed interests, the interests of trade and industry. The three great elements of national wealth are Land, Capital, and Labour; the proper management of these, in relation to commerce, is the great object of the science of Political Economy; and in this relation, as the advocate of the Working Classes, we shall have occasion to show that there does not at present exist a legitimate and wholesome equilibrium between the constituent interests of the Colony. In the meantime, however, our remarks have more immediate reference to those relations in which these interests stand to each other in a social and political point of view, and which give rise to the usual distinctions of class and party. In these relations, therefore, we contend, there does not subsist a legitimate balance of power between the constituent interests of the Colony. These various interests are not equally represented, and consequently not equally secure. They are not coincident, but, in a greater or less degree, they are mutually dependent upon each other. They are in some measure antagonistic interests, liable from their very nature and relations, to be under certain circumstances, at variance with each other. When such is the case, the natural consequence is, that the classes attached to the various interests, will necessarily be jealous of each other; and hence arise the antagonistic principles in our political system of Aristocracy, on the one hand, and Democracy on the other. When the balance of power is in the hands of the former, government becomes Oligarchical; when in those of the latter, it tends to Republicanism. A legitimate balance between these two extremes is the salutary medium of sound and constitutional government, on which our ideas of British liberty are founded. Such a state of things, however, we reiterate, does not exist in this Colony. Here the social and political relations are far from being in a state of equilibrium; and when the actual effects and obvious tendencies of the dominant interests are contemplated and explained, our readers will perceive the necessity and advantage of union among the Middle and Working Classes for the maintenance of their mutual interests and legitimate rights.

In the first place, then, we would submit it as an obvious and indisputable fact, that the circumstances of this Colony—from its very nature as a pastoral country, and the facilities which it presents for the acquisition of extensive property in land and stock—are peculiarly favourable to the growth of a Colonial Aristocracy, and to the prevalence of aristocratic feelings and pretensions. To the existence of an Aristocracy, or a superior class of opulent proprietors, viewed merely with reference to the interests of property, the refinements of life, and the development of the resources of the colony,

we have no repugnance. But in a political point of view, we know it as a fact in the natural history of man, illustrated and corroborated by the experience of human society, that wealth generates pride, a love of distinction, and a lust of power; and that this is peculiarly the tendency of an opulent landed interest. Those feelings, from the aspiring pretensions and mutual sympathy of individuals, soon become a conventional feature in the character of the class; and at length give birth to a spirit of domination, which betrays itself in airs of contempt for "the vulgar," of repulsive superiority over the less opulent middle classes, and especially in a disposition to reduce the working classes to a state of abject depression, and of servile dependence on the lords of the soil. It is a remarkable, but very natural, fact, that this obnoxious disposition, and this domineering spirit, are peculiarly incident to persons who have amassed property and become opulent, through the instrumentality of slave labour; and this, among other things, has doubtless conducted to their growth and prevalence in New South Wales.

If we were to look back over the history of this Colony, we might enumerate a variety of notable instances in which the spirit of aristocratic domination was manifested,—in the countenance which it lent to the arbitrary despotism of the day, or in the implacable opposition and hostile influence which it employed, to frustrate the efforts which were made for years by a band of liberal and patriotic men, to obtain for the Colony the privileges and rights of the British Constitution. And when, in spite of their unnatural opposition, the boon so long withheld, was about to be bestowed, how eagerly did that spirit betray itself, in the insidious attempts that were made to impose political disabilities, and establish such a franchise as would contract the political influence of the people, and aggrandise their own.

There was a time of fallacious prosperity in which the middle and working classes of the Colony seemed so infatuated with the pursuit of their own private and selfish interests, that they did not care about politics and affairs of state. In those days the people seemed dead to their political interests, and it was not until this delusive prosperity began to wane, that they seemed to wake from their infatuated apathy, and take anything like an active interest in public agitation for their rights. The two great meetings at the Victoria Theatre and the Sydney College were the eras of that awakening. On these occasions the supercilious and domineering spirit of the Aristocracy was signally unmasked, and their inveterate repugnance to the principles of popular liberty, and to the advocates of popular rights, was palpably betrayed. In spite, however, of all their narrow-minded schemes and treacherous manoeuvres, the Colony has at length obtained a representative government on the basis of an elective franchise, which guarantees to the Middle and Working Classes in the Towns and Townships at least, the possession and exercise of that right, "which constitutes the difference between a freeman and a slave."