

A FEW
THOUGHTS
ON THE
NEW ERA
AND
VETO,
IN
IRELAND.

By JOHN BERNARD TROTTER, Esq.

“ In pomps, or joys, the palace, or the grot ;

“ My country’s image never was forgot.”

Odyssey, Book ix.

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and piety. Thou, who on perusing this avowal, casteth these sheets from thee, in the rage of prejudice or in the coldness of disgust, recollect (if thou can'st allow thyself calmness to recollect) what is my error, or my offence. It is, to turn from the violence of Party—from the power of Ministry—from the ordinary walk of bowing to English Patrons of wealth and title—to the sequestered path of dignified retirement in this my native country, and there to offer to Irishmen, of tried magnanimity and patriotism, this tribute of respectful approbation from one who sees no terrors in the blameless exercise of his spiritual authority—no impropriety in estimating the rank and talents of an Irish Catholic Prelate highly—and nothing injurious to the repose of England, in the Catholic Religion, if treated with respect, and unassailed by persecution.

JOHN BERNARD TROTTER.

THOUGHTS
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&c. &c. &c.

MANY considerations which might prevent other men, are those which induce me to think of returning to my letters to Lords' Southwell and Grenville on the question of VETO, and also of hereafter offering an argument on the rights of excommunication undisturbed by municipal law in the Roman Catholic Hierarchy of Ireland. I am conscious that to many Protestants, to English party, both in this country and in Great Britain, and even to some of my own valued friends, such a production at such a time, may appear an extremely wild, unreasonable, and ill considered action.

Writing, however, for no party in England or Ireland; neither descending to attach myself as a stipendiary or volunteer to an English or to a Catholic Party; having in my mind the great considerations of justice and liberty, I shall feel no hesitation at continuing the decided, though humble advocate of the Roman Catholic Church, in two points; on the first of which it was insidiously attacked, and on the second openly menaced.

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Were parties and ministers, and even kings, to remonstrate with me on the impropriety of my reviving unpleasant discussion, or the impolicy of shielding and defending a Catholic Church, in a Protestant Empire, I should hold on my even course, feeling my duty to Ireland, my native and beloved country, to be too paramount to allow me to drop my pen, and esteeming its few and shattered liberties, interwoven with the questions I review and defend. Did I write merely for temperate, and deeply-reflecting statesmen, I should deem one sentence sufficient, as my motto and defence, in regard to the Irish Catholic Church, *leave the venerable edifice untouched*; but as its assailants have been artful, powerful, and full of vulgar clamour, I seize the lance, I buckle helmet and armour on, and prepare myself for warfare, begging to remind all my readers, that history has many examples of Catholic Prelates upholding the cause of liberty, in adhering to, and defending the ancient privileges of their body.

The delay which has arisen in publishing my meditated work, ought to be accounted for. My reasons were two-fold. I wished to give the subjects due reconsideration, deeming them delicate and important to a great degree, for Ireland; and secondly, motives of reverence and duty touching an illustrious personage, placed, until lately in a situation of unexampled difficulty, caused me to be silent on matters, which might admit of a pause in their renewed discussion, and whose revival in the agitated state of Ireland during the restrictions of the Regent, might have been construed into a desire to increase embarrassments, which I most earnestly wished to have seen diminished, or totally removed.

These causes of delay, no longer exist. Four years have passed since the proposition of Messrs. Grattan and Ponsonby to give the VETO to the Crown. I retain my original opinion against their proposal. A much shorter period has elapsed since the prosecution, (which I think might better be termed persecution,) of Dr. Mc. Loughlin. I am still equally adverse to any interposition of the municipal law, affecting the rights, privileges and independence of the Irish Catholic Church. The restrictions which fettered and qualified the full powers of the Prince, and the hopes which lingered near the couch of an afflicted Monarch, have no longer existence. I write as it were at the commencement of a new reign, and it may be some satisfaction to myself or my family hereafter, that my first act at this period of hopes, of temptations, of shameful inconsistency, and of variable politics; of party fury and party compromise, in which the true principles of liberty seem consigned to oblivion, has been to vindicate a venerable part of the Irish Constitution, to support my own consistency, and to offer to my country, a pledge of my independence of Ministers, of my disdain of party, and of my respect for the venerable fragments which scatter the base of that temple, once dedicated in Ireland, to religion and liberty.

The rights of conscience are so sacred in my eyes, that their infringement appears one of the most serious violations of human liberty; and I cannot without desertion of my own principles, but resist at all times every tendency to it. A new and additional cause, exciting in me surprise, and much reflection on the fluctuations of politicians, has very recently arisen, to induce me to review

the position of the Catholic Hierarchy, and to contemplate the probability of future attacks upon it.— Lords Grey and Grenville's late letter to the Regent of these Realms, retracts and annuls Lord Grenville's letters to Lord Fingall in 1810, or at least appears to me to do so. Lord Grenville's letter in 1810, is to be taken as the demi-official paper of opposition, sanctioned by that entire party. The late intemperate reply to the Regent, has the same weight and authority. Lord Grenville, in the year 1810, is fully impressed with the conviction, cherished too, for many years, that "much must be done;" that "suitable arrangements, maturely prepared, and deliberately adopted," were necessary, previous to Catholic Emancipation; but he particularly dwells on the necessity of "an EFFECTUAL negative on the appointment of Catholic Bishops." This, in fact, forms the main point of his letter, and was made the *sine qua non* condition, not only of emancipation, but of Lord Grenville's advocating the cause, and presenting the petition of the Irish Catholics.

The letter of 1812, from the same noble Lord and his friends, contains these words "we are firmly persuaded of the necessity of a total change in the present system of that country, and of the *immediate repeal of those civil disabilities*, under which so large a portion of his Majesty's subjects still labour on account of their religious opinions." In the production of 1810, much and mature deliberation is stated to be requisite touching Emancipation, and the prominent feature of the VETO. In that of 1812 all *deliberation* is thrown away, and an anxiety is mani-

fested to proceed *without* the VETO, and, with as much unqualified rapidity, as the declaration of 1810 announced solemn caution, and numerous previous conditions.

It is most difficult to rely upon the opinions of the authors of letters, so contradictory and vacillating. The Catholic Hierarchy of Ireland cannot repose confidence in them, and had better resolve to lean on no pillar, but the sanctity of their cause, rather than delude themselves by the dangerous and uncertain hope, that such leaders of English party, who are so flagrantly influenced by the motives of the moment, and whose variations are so manifest and indecent, have that tender regard for the liberty of a Catholic conscience, and respect for the integrity of the Irish Catholic Church, befitting genuine statesmen, and honourable to liberal men.

The letter to the Regent is so vaguely drawn up, and so loosely worded on the Irish question, that it may answer a double purpose; first, that of rousing unlimited expectation, in the Catholics at large for the present; and secondly, that of letting in future explanations, and qualifications of the apparently very inconsiderate passage in this letter of 1812. Lord Grenville's variations have been singularly marked and enhanced by his late reply to the Prince Regent: The VETO qualification and others were by him in conjunction with Mr. Pitt, deemed measures necessary *for the consummation of the Union*; on his separation from that Minister, and from the Councils of his Sovereign, he advocated the cause and presented the Petitions of the Catholics without insisting on these mat-

ters. In 1810, he became suddenly and most seriously impressed with their indispensable importance; and again in 1812, he forgets them all; flings the meteor of dazzling and unbounded hope amongst the Irish Catholics; leaves their venerable Church with the mine beneath it, *yet unexploded, but speciously covered up*, and casts on the Regent the odium of bigotry, while he reserves for himself the double armour of popular applause, and future prudential explanation.

In such a state of things it were infinitely better, that the Catholic Prelates of Ireland were to explicitly announce to the Regent's Government, the utmost point to which a conciliating spirit might carry them, and beyond which the Constitution of their Church, and of all Catholic Hierarchies throughout the world, would not permit them to advance. Above all men, they ought to disregard, and penetrate with just disdain, the efforts of party, to enlist religion on their side. The Irish Catholic Hierarchy should treat, as *principals* with the British Government, and not link themselves as accessaries to an English or any other party.

Lord Grenville's letter to Lord Fingall, of 1810 assumes with imposing and unbending gravity, that the nomination to Bishopricks is matter of right in the Crown, and has the best of policy to support it. In this his error was two fold. He argues as if an unprotected Church ought to give up part of its spiritual privileges, equally with a civilly privileged and favoured one; and, he supposes, that all arrangements were in former times beneficial to the state, where the Crown obtained the contested power in question.

Now, there is very manifest injustice in a Government exacting a surrender of any privilege from the subject, without an equivalent compensation. This the Irish Catholic Church neither has in possession nor can receive, because it denies the possibility of trafficking spiritual for civil privilege; enjoys none of the latter from the English Government, and does not expect it; nor can it yield spiritual obedience to a civil power, which would violate and innovate upon the spiritual Constitution of the Catholic Religion itself.

Lord Grenville, as well as Vattel, seems in the second place quite led away by the former encroachments, and usurpations of Catholic Prelates in other countries, and in dark times: but can any man insist, that the Irish Catholic Prelates are in any manner to be compared with these Prelates who were great civil, as well as ecclesiastical Princes? or, can it be deemed cogent argument, that because England, Sweden and Denmark successfully tried the experiment of using violence against the Catholic Church, a middle course might not have been found leaving the clergy all spiritual privilege, and giving the Crown every civil prerogative and power in the state. At least it must be admitted, that this experiment has worked its way in Ireland, where the Catholic Church has preserved its rights, and is at this moment a most powerful engine for preserving order, peace, and christianity in it.

Lord Grenville's arguments go upon the false supposition, that many parallel cases, to that of an Irish Catholic Hierarchy, yielding up a full control to the civil power, have

taken place, and had happy effects. The fallacy consists in comparing the Irish Catholic Church, to others once possessed of great temporal power in former times. Former cases I repeat, were those of great temporal as well as spiritual Lords struggling with the Crown, and losing their power very deservedly, when they pushed matters to the extremity of lording it over King and People. *The very contrary of all this is the existing case in Ireland.* The Catholic Prelates have no temporal power, no acknowledged rank, no wealth to render them objects of jealousy to the Crown. Their piety and exemplary lives are all their armour; and their only strength lies in the affections of a devout and simple people. They are not more formidable than the Lutheran Prelates of Sweden, to a just Government; and, in fact, they present to Europe the picture of a virtuous Christian Church, uncorrupted by connection with civil power, destitute of all worldly wealth and honours, and totally free from the reproaches incurred by some Catholic Churches on the Continent in dark and unhappy times.

But, the connection with the Pope was made by Lord Grenville and his friends, the chief bar to Emancipation in 1810. The laity had to chuse between Lord Grenville and their Prelates, and adhered to the latter. In England there will always be many of Lord Grenville's first opinion. It were better therefore to convince England, that the point is decided—but how? There seems to me little farther declaration necessary from the Catholic Prelates; but, if any conciliating proposition from them, without merging or surrendering the right in question, could be devised, I should hold it a happy thing for Ireland and England. The

benevolence of the Regent might be excited, the inconsiderate violence of party be mollified or disarmed, and the great cause of Emancipation itself, be accelerated and improved.

I do not assume the part of specifying what middle course could be devised satisfactory to the British Government, and safe, as well as dignified, for the Irish Catholic Hierarchy. It seems to me that the former ought to be content with the certainty of the nominated Prelates, having no illegal traitorous foreign connection; and that the latter should cheerfully accede to give every satisfaction on this head, consistent with the forms of their Church.* To allow of any arrangement, however, the distinction between spiritual and civil rights in Ireland, must be admitted by the British Government, inasmuch as the former do not trench on the civil Government, and can not be held and treated as the latter.

Lord Grenville's letter of 1810, manifestly puts all the spiritual right in question upon a civil ground, but that demonstrates the superficial, though imposing view the noble Baron had taken of the point. He proposes a traffick of rights, without entering into the consideration, that the Prelates of the Catholic Church of Ireland, *could not* barter the immemorial spiritual privileges of it, for any wordly or civil advantage, without betraying their duty as governors of their Church. So far, as might be competent or agreeable for the Catholic Laity to enter into such regulations as might procure civil concessions, so far might they accommodate themselves to the English view of

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* Note. We find that a special and peculiar Oath was tendered to, and taken by the Prelates of Ireland, to satisfy the Government in the reign of Mary.

things, and even consent to leave their Chapels for Protestant Churches, if they thought it a justifiable exchange, receiving thereby civil advantage and privilege; but the Prelates of the Catholic Church of Ireland had no choice in the matter, without breach of trust, and lasting disgrace.

Had Lord Grenville deeply studied the Irish character and Catholic Religion, he would never have composed and published his celebrated letter. Throughout history he would not have discovered, had he searched, any thing more applicable to his line of reasoning than the case of Sweden under Gustavus Vasa; there the whole power of the Bishops was taken away, and complete tranquillity followed. But, if that case be well examined, it will be found quite dissimilar to that of Ireland. The Swedish Bishops were all powerful in Sweden; had maintained a constant and traiterous intercourse with a foreign nation, and were the most dangerous and turbulent enemies of the Throne. The minds of the people inclined to the reformed religion. And, finally, the extinction of the Bishops' power required the intervention of military force. To attempt to undermine and overthrow the authority of a Church, without any hope of changing the religion of the people, appears as wild and impracticable an idea, and as different from the statesman-like proceeding of Gustavus, as can be imagined.

In Russia, Peter the Great declared himself the head of the Church; but nothing very gentle marked the steps of that remarkable Legislator, nor—was he more favorable to liberty than our Henry VIIIth; besides the assumed power of the Patriarch in civil matters, was

dangerous for the Throne. Denmark acted in a somewhat similar manner, and for similar causes, as Sweden. The German Empire always struggled, I believe, against the temporal power of great ecclesiastics, and sought their degradation for civil and temporal causes alone. The investiture was in Germany, a right of nomination to a place of great power, wealth and civil authority. Is such to be compared with the humble office of an Irish Catholic Prelate, of whom it may be said, that his sanctity is his chief strength, and his poverty his distinguishing characteristic?

In Sweden and Denmark, the Catholic Prelates directly and very much interfered with, and had great weight in the civil Government. There was obvious reason for interference with, and correction of the Hierarchy, in these countries. Is there such here? The influence of France through the Pope abroad, and the existence of "a French party" at home, have been used by Ministers and opposition as grounds for additional restraints on the Irish population. My answer is, that the leaning of the Crown to a Foreign Power, in the times of the last King's of the Stuart race, justified considerable jealousy against the Catholic Interest; but as that no longer exists, the chimera of French influence through the Pope, or the imposing bugbear of French party in Ireland, are but *pretences for coercion*, equally serviceable for any English Ministry or party, but equally destitute of foundation in fact or truth. The restraint through the subjugation of the Catholic Bishops, brought forward by Lord Grenville and Mr. Grattan, in 1810, would operate differently, it is true, from any Coercive Bill directed against the Laity; the credit of the Catho-

lic Religion would be shaken by it, and its binding influence upon the great majority of the inhabitants of Ireland, be dispelled, or weakened to a great degree. Of all such schemes however, for depressing national spirit, I equally disapprove.

In recollecting the treatment which Ireland received, before and after the unfortunate rebellion of 1798, when Lord Grenville was the Co-Minister with Mr. Pitt;—in observing his willingness to renew the coercive acts of that period, in 1807, and in considering his design of throwing into the hands of the Crown, the nomination of Catholic Bishops in Ireland, avowed in 1810, I perceive nothing throughout the career of that noble politician respecting Ireland, to lead me to hope that Ireland would ever benefit under his ministry. Against the presumption arising from his conduct for twenty years, during which time, he has been almost uniformly the enemy to liberty in Ireland, is to be set up his late letter to the Prince Regent; in which he almost recommends impossibilities, contradicts and nullifies his letter of 1810, and exchanges the lofty caution of a statesman, for the haste and impetuosity of a modern declaimer. Such conduct must excite surprize, and suspicion, in the minds of sincere well-wishers of Ireland; and to say that it is mysterious on the Veto point, is to speak in the most favorable terms of it.

At such a moment, then, when the existing Ministry declare, that speedy and extensive concession to the Irish Catholics is inadmissible, and, when the candidates for their places go too far to permit much reliance on the prospect of their future performances; the Irish Catholic Hierarchy have to consider, whether silence, which may be

construed into acquiescence under the present Ministers, or into implicit faith in Lord Grenville's tenderness for their order, is to be preserved, or a dignified appeal to the Regent himself, declaring their unalterable determination of maintaining their rights and their wish to conciliate the British Government, as far as is consistent with them, is to be adopted.

A new era has certainly arrived; and however the feelings of party may lead men to exclaim against the exclusion of their friends, this clamour cannot affect the respectable Prelates, who have to guard their Church against Ministerial attack and intrigue, or against the propositions of an English party, not eminently distinguished in latter years, by regard for the independence of Ireland,

It will be but just, perhaps, to give the Royal Personage who sits on the Throne, an opportunity of declaring his sentiments, on a point vitally affecting the Catholic Church in Ireland, and through it, the safety and tranquillity of the country itself. I do not think any excessive delicacy ought to check such a proceeding; and at whatever time, and whatever manner the Catholic Prelates come forward before the Throne, which circumstances must at some time render necessary, and will always be right and independent, in those Prelates, I am sure they will acquit themselves with the dignity and firmness worthy of their characters and past conduct: necessary—I say, because the point is far from settled, and is perpetually brought forward in the Legislature, either in shape of a still longed for *desideratum*, or a fatal obstacle to Catholic Emancipation; and the Prelates alone

can extinguish vain hopes in England, or silence unjust objections—right,—because these Guardians of the Roman Catholic and ancient Religion of Ireland, can never recede, without flagrant desertion of every sacred and holy engagement; and independent,—because the transformation of their rank from that of primitive and Apostolic Bishops, into the degrading state of Court Pensioners, to a Protestant Government, must involve in its operation, a main security remaining against the overbearing influence of the Crown.

I neither have presumed (for it would be, in me improper presumption) to point out precisely what farther satisfaction the Catholic Hierarchy can give to the British Government, or how they should approach the presence of the Prince Regent, to address to him their dutiful appeal to his justice, and to his sufficiently proved dislike of innovation, on all ancient establishments. I do not desire for my country to see the Catholic Prelates of Ireland become political suitors at the Court of the Regent;—far more respectable and venerable in their own modest residences, and in the bosom of their dioceses as they are;—but, I do earnestly desire at this new era, to behold them vindicate their unquestionable and constitutional rights, to the Regent himself, and shew to his Ministers, that as they are willing to concede all they can for the welfare and general tranquillity of the Empire, so they are *equally resolved* to barter to no Minister, under any reign whatever, the integrity and independence of their Church, for the false grandeur, or vile emolument, which an English Minister might proffer, and an ambitious Sovereign

might bestow! The phenomenon of Lord Grenville's extraordinary reply to the communication of his Royal Highness the Regent, which appears not quite befitting a subject either in tone, or matter, and the new era which the Prince's accession to Power has certainly produced, have drawn from me an exposition of my sentiments, which, since the year 1808, have remained and do remain unchanged, otherwise uncalled for.

My mind leads me to prefer, in all questions touching the liberty of the subject, (and what more important branch of it, than liberty of conscience, founded on the integrity of the Church, of the great majority of the Irish) the most manly candour, and the most prompt decision. The Prince Regent cannot propose to himself, as a measure of his Government, the degradation of the Catholic and National Religion in Ireland, (and such would be the consequence of a surrender of the VETO,) with much less injustice than he could affect to introduce a modification of it, in Spain, to the cause of which country, he is supposed to be as zealously attached; nor, do I believe could he promise himself better success in one than the other. It is therefore better, infinitely better, for the ease and security of his Government, that an open understanding should exist between it and the Catholic Prelates, so as to obviate the doubts of present or future Ministers, and take away cause for alarm and apprehension in Ireland, touching the independence of the Irish Catholic Church.

I conceive indeed, that great mischief ensued from party getting hold of this point, a few years ago, to wield it

against the Crown and its Ministers, because it was subject matter only between Government itself and the Irish Catholic Prelates, and that which is very far removed from the broils, the intrigues and the heat of party, was utterly unfit for discussion, between contending factions.

The enormous blunder made by the party, who hurried on the matter, as if it had been a disputed account in the Public Offices, an error in Ministers, or a mistake in the military or diplomatic departments—not, the awful question, (awful at least to Ireland,) of the independence or annihilation of the Irish Catholic Church, has abundantly proved, that the VETO was no House of Commons debating question, but was dragged there as a subject for sacrifice at the Altar of English prejudice and English fear. It may be urged to me, Do you rashly insist that the obstacle presented by the VETO point, in the way of Emancipation, shall never be removed; and do you, with fantastic zeal for the Catholic Church, incite its Prelates to fresh and obstinate resistance, at the commencement of a new reign? I reply: The point was most crudely and inconsiderately brought forward by a party in Parliament; and Ireland, is by no means bound by their proceedings, or responsible for them.

The point does not necessarily stand in the way of Emancipation, but must be set to rest for ever, in some manner or other, as a preliminary to it. I conceive that a gracious declaration of the Prince Regent, assuring the Catholic Hierarchy, that no attempt at in-

novation on their *ancient privileges*, shall mark or disgrace his reign, would answer every purpose of conciliation on his part, and that the Catholic Prelates consenting to any liberal mode of meeting the jealousy of Government, in any future case, on their parts, would remove all impediment to Emancipation on that score.

The wisdom and exalted views of both parties in this manner, free from the contamination and the fury of party, might produce important benefits for Ireland—relieve the Regent from embarrassment, and the Prelates from apprehension—and give Emancipation, that fair chance for success, which party has impotently aimed at, but unhappily blighted.

I have learned, that some of that party in Ireland are willing to drop the question of VETO altogether, and no longer meddle with it; but this mode of treating it can never be admitted. Every Session, the advocates against Catholic Emancipation renew and urge the point! What a thing to have to urge? And what a guilty appearance, to submit to a perpetually urged objection, in awkward silence? The Prince Regent, may however with great safety, give an assurance to the Prelates, that their Church shall not be molested, for he can have no fears of being considered, like the Charles's First and Second, or James the Second, too partial to a Catholic Interest at home and abroad. Emancipation might then, disembarrassed from party aid, (at present its great bane,) and from VETO objection, be calmly and temperately taken into consideration, and properly brought forward by Government.

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If the Regent, does not adopt something of this decided course for Ireland, his reign may prove as calamitous, as can well be imagined; and whilst he is planning a campaign in the Peninsula, there may be engendering a not less destructive war in that island, which at a less distance, may hereafter decide the fate of the Empire.

The Royal assurance to the Catholic Prelates, would have instantaneous and beneficial effects; and if an additional declaration followed, that the civil disabilities of the laity, should be forthwith taken into the most serious and mature deliberation, in his Royal Highnesses breast and Council, I am satisfied, that his unpopularity in Ireland would altogether vanish, and that the efforts of party in England, so active, and indeed ungenerous at present, in discrediting his Government and himself, would be perfectly unavailing.

It is certainly quite idle for the Irish Catholics, to make themselves auxiliaries to any party in England—they lower themselves thereby—embarrass or rather teize the Ministers by it—but gain nothing—and in allying themselves to a dissatisfied English Aristocracy, perhaps a more capital mistake in politics would never have been made by any body of men. If they looked to the side favourable to Liberty, it is certainly to the Reform party they ought to lean, but even there they will remember Cromwell, and his independent friends.

Do I advise them to join the Minister? No man will suspect the advocate of the VETO, for such a foolish surrender of Irish honor. No! I desire that they should

act more in a National, and less in a narrow party manner, opening their arms wider to independent-minded Protestants, and shutting their doors against that English party, who, adverse to Reform in their own country, would be the first to refuse us the restoration of a free Parliament, and Irish Liberty. Let the conduct of Parliament be observed by the Catholic Body, and they will find that the argument of the Reformers* is irresistible in their own case—that either a Reform is wanted, and Lords Grenville and Grey should declare for it, with their Party, and then Emancipation would more easily take place; or, it is not necessary, and the sense of much of the Empire or of their representatives is against Emancipation, and it is Government alone which can give or procure relief for Catholics. But Lords Grey and Grenville and friends are against Reform, and cannot carry Emancipation without it. And the Houses of Commons and Lords regularly decide against Emancipation at present,—therefore it seems an irresistible conclusion, that the Catholic Body should apply to the Throne, as the only emanating point from whence a gleam of hope may start. We in Ireland, cannot hope at present to see reform carried, or rather the English aristocracy reformed; and the English people can do little separately, and of themselves. Without it, Parliament left to itself, is likely to be against Emancipation, and the present Ministry, seem to promise security and escape to their Royal Master, “from thralldom.” The Catholics, to succeed, must leave a party who have nothing of the conciliation, popularity and principles of liberty, which distinguished a Rockingham or Fox Administration; and by trying new

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* Mr. Grattan, and the loudest advocates of Emancipation, have been recently either silent or cold on Reform.

modes of acting, and by frequent (at the least annual) deputations to the Throne itself, composed of their most dignified and eminent Members, elicit such answers as may lead to permanent and satisfactory arrangement,—such as may compose the Protestant and satisfy the Catholic mind, and finally give to all the inhabitants of Ireland, *equal rights and equal laws, preventing the depression of one body, or the superiority of another,* to an improper degree, and relieving the Government from the *endless* task of governing Ireland, by the *armed jealousy* of one party, and the *uncertain submission* of another.

The Prince Regent on his Throne, will not decline to reply to the dutiful supplications of the Catholics of Ireland. It is not at the drawing room, the Catholic Delegates should be seen, but at a solemn audience granted for them alone, to hear,—to answer,—and to take into consideration—the grievances of Millions of distressed subjects. This was a good old custom in Ireland, and ought to be revived. It existed when her sufferings forced her to appeal to the House against aristocratic tyranny at home, and when her Parliament was but a name. It ought now to be resorted to, because there seems not any other course so good, or rather any other effectual one remaining.

I have placed the Catholic Prelates in the front rank,—because the sacrifice of their independence is still required by British Legislators,—because Lord Grenville's reply to the Regent, involves his Lordship's and friends conduct, in suspicion more alarming than their open hostility on the Vero question, and—because it is deemed

a main obstacle to Emancipation by many—by the present Cabinet, a minor one, amongst greater ones—and because at this new era of disappointed hope, and of doubtful futurity, I think it would be both dignified and decisive, (so well becoming their former conduct,) in the Irish Catholic Prelates, again to shew themselves above the workings of party, true to their country, and resolved in this reign, as well as in the preceding one, never to surrender, what is not less dear and essential to them, than the diadem to the Royal Head of the Government.

Of that Illustrious Personage, whom, with angry and most indecent attacks a party in the neighbouring country, affect to lower, as much as they once extravagantly elevated him, I desire to say nothing but what is reverential and grateful. To those who move in the inferior ranks of life, it might almost be permitted to lament the distressing situation in which his early adherents have seemed determined to place him,—his pillow is truly one of thorns, and the cup of suffering presented by ancient friendship, is of exceeding bitterness. This case too of a Sovereign, so rancorously assailed for selection or retention of Ministers, is without parallel. To such rancour, I can never wish Irish Catholics to ally their cause. That step would be an ill passport to the Throne, where they may soon lay their humble supplications, and from whence the first glimmerings of relief must emanate.

It is true, that I may be conceived to entertain the idea of a very extravagant approach to the Royal Presence, through the declaration or audience of Catholic Prelates,

and that it may be objected to me, that I encrease an obstacle to Emancipation, by reviving the VERO question in such a shape and manner. I do not feel, however, that to unbigotted and fair minds of all persuasions, the coming forward of a truly elevated, and respected body of his Majesty's Irish subjects, would be any thing indecorous or extraordinary. The English public, I admit, might stare and grumble for a day, as the rights of Irishmen have not been usually the objects of their very anxious and tender cares,—and the apparition of Irish Catholic Bishops asserting their rights, might terrify them for a moment; but such alarm would not long endure, when the Catholic Prelates, were discovered to be humane, learned and polite, equal in arts, of composition or oratory, to most other classes of the King's subjects, and hearing the olive of peace, not the torch of hatred in their hands.

It may be said, that Emancipation may be impeded by want of concession of the VERO, by Catholic Bishops.—I have noticed the impossibility of their yielding, though I am satisfied, that English minds will reluctantly admit it. The Statesmen of the Edinburgh Review, the Ministers in Downing-street, the lordly Aristocrats, the popular party of London, or the Yeomanry of the English nation, all I believe concur in proscribing our Catholic Prelates of Ireland, if they do not exchange their venerable Ecclesiastic Head, for that of an illustrious German family, at the head of the civil and spiritual powers in England. I am certain this is chiefly prejudice in England. But as a Catholic Hierarchy's independence, has appeared an indigestible morsel to *every* English party; it were very right to convince them *all*, that it must

ever remain to Irish Catholics, the humble relic of ancient faith and better days; or, at least stand, 'till the Irish Catholics voluntarily forsake their religion, for that introduced by Luther. If the question of Emancipation be narrowly examined, the Barrier-gate will be discovered to be guarded by the Catholic Prelates. It is with these guardians of the Catholic Religion, the Preliminaries must be adjusted of a future treaty, and I may be permitted, I hope respectfully to remark, that the Catholic Laity in Ireland, and the Parliamentary advocates of Emancipation, do not completely investigate and bring on that question, when they leave the VETO point slumbering beneath the surface.

The Regent cannot be supposed to entertain the scruples of his parent, because different circumstances—more enlightened times—association with liberal men—have prepared his mind, to look with more enlarged views on the religion of the Irish; nor is it a fair conclusion, that because he has not chosen Lords Grey and Grenville, or even any of his intimate and early private friends as his Ministers, that liberality and justice have fled from his bosom, to reside for ever at Dropmore. Despair should not seize Catholics, unless these Statesmen seize the helm, as if Ireland hung on their nod—nor has the Regent to contemplate any Catholic interest arrayed against his empire, as in the times of Elizabeth, which some Statesmen, even of those he has called to his councils, even now, seem with a sort of reflex horror to dread. What result then do I aim at? This—that it is the mutual interest of the Regent and the Catholics of Ireland, that a permanent and satisfactory arrangement,

prepared by the VETO question's being disposed of, so as to guarantee to the Catholic Prelates their independence, and to satisfy the Crown's jealousy of foreign interference, should no longer be delayed.

It is the interest of neither to support faction, or to perpetuate discontent. It is the interest of neither to feed declamation, or to excite the hostility of prejudice. I desire to see the grand parties in the affair—the Sovereign, and his aggrieved subjects amicably adjusting the balance of the empire, and turning from the interference of exasperated politicians, to the grand work of national conciliation and concord, when after its accomplishment, each of the contracting parties might sit down, and be enabled to exclaim:

“ How sweet the products of a peaceful reign,
The heaven taught poet and enchanting strain,
The well filled Palace, the perpetual feast,
A land rejoicing and a people blest;
How goodly seems it, ever to employ
Man's social days in union and in joy !”

It is with this view, erroneous perhaps, but inspired by an honest love for my country, that I have at this time written. If unhappily I offend the Government, or the parties who divide the state, I shall sincerely grieve, but I cannot say that I shall wish to retract one of these pages. The venerable persons to whom this production is addressed, will judge benignly of my intentions, and are fully competent to investigate and decide upon the thoughts I have thrown out, “ the censure of one of whom,”

does in my mind, "o'er weigh a whole theatre of others;" and imperfect as those ideas may be, I can have no hesitation in saying to the country at large, that something must be done—that declamation must be exchanged for arrangement in a statesman like manner,—(an arrangement which no one has yet even sketched out,) or—that foreign operations against the enemy of Liberty on the Continent, must be impeded, and our domestic peace be continually held on the frail terms of circumstances and chance.

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POSTSCRIPT.

On the Protestant Petitions sent from Ireland, I cannot forbear making a remark, as I have abstained from signing any of them. They appeared to me the work of Party, and as such I considered them inefficacious and nugatory. They were, besides, prepared and signed in a manner utterly irreconcilable to my ideas of public constitutional proceedings. No county meetings were summoned to discuss their merits, sanction their contents, and receive signatures.

My weightiest objection, however, remains behind, which, as an independent Protestant, the friend of my country, and sincerely wishing to behold Catholic gratification engrafted on Protestant sympathizing judgment, was to me extremely strong. No masterly hand drew the plans and raised the foundation stones of mutual amity between the parties in these Petitions. I had been pre-

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viously disappointed at the meeting of the Catholics of the County of Wicklow, in not hearing from the lips of Mr. Grattan, or his friends, some illuminating positions laid down to correct and improve the chart of Catholic and Protestant, or rather Irish futurity. I experienced greater disappointment at the Catholic Dinner of last winter, when Mr. Grattan simply, and as it appeared to me in a meagre manner, recommended Protestants to petition, without giving any new matter to enlighten Catholics, or guide Protestants. The Protestant Petitions I therefore considered better let alone, than lamely brought forward; and I believe the result will justify my conduct and my conjecture. These remarks apply very peculiarly to the Petition of Protestant Nobles and Gentlemen assembled at the Thatched House, in London, stiled by Lord Lansdown, the Proprietary of Ireland, which arrogated to itself too much height above the Protestant Gentlemen resident there.

In the late debates I discern little consolatory for Ireland. The system of coercion I nowhere perceive disavowed or abandoned. The Catholic Church remains in a state of jeopardy. The Insurrection Bill, is amalgamated into our code—a promised motion for a repeal of the Union, is no longer mentioned. If the magnanimity of the Prince be not excited to quiet our cares, and relax our bonds, I cannot discover from the tone of the contending parties in Parliament, any source of permanent satisfaction. It is from this much-apprehended result, that I was induced to recommend Petitions to the Throne itself. Such proceeding might compel the party in power to recommend to the Royal breast an amelio-

rated state of things, and would put to the test, the sincerity of the party, who are not; there would be less debate—but more progress in Irish affairs.

On the Veto question, I observe that in the Lords there has been evinced total confusion on both sides of the House. The Ministerialists appear to have triumphantly rested on the insuperable nature of the obstacle; the Oppositionists seem to have as completely abandoned, as they formerly unthinkingly and rashly urged the question. One noble Earl, whose benevolence and exalted way of thinking are great, said, that a bond from Presbyterians might as well be required as the Veto from Catholics. Thus, between hostile construction on one side, and inconsiderate laxity on the other, this great point is left like a galvanic charge which is misrepresented as being exceedingly dangerous by some, or unthinkingly deemed nugatory by others.

The interminable conflict on Catholic affairs, existing since the Union, rolls upon the error of one party taking too wide—another too narrow ground. One side argues in defence of general principles not impugned, and confounds policy and morality together; so much that not appearing able to bring forward any thing specific, they are perpetually challenged to speak plainer, and never do so; the other entrenched in prejudices still popular in England, and standing on the cool argumentative ground of prudent and wary policy, have advantages which they know perfectly well how to use. Thus the result of all such debates has been hitherto agitation to Ireland and strength to Ministers. The Veto, constantly

forms a feature in these debates, and proves of singular use to Ministry; but of this the Irish Catholics have not been of late enough aware, and yet are the more to be commiserated and respected. The standard of feeling, squares not exactly with that of judgment, and the Irish are too much considered in England, as incompetent to judge of political affairs; so that whilst the former imagine that a difficulty no longer exists, the latter have gravely decided the point against them. This phenomenon arising from Union, is not the least remarkable of its results. The English have, besides, drawn a difficulty upon themselves they are not aware of, in altering the Constitution of Ireland. Admission to the benefits of their own at home, is now sought by Irish Catholics; and although a consummation of the Union is warmly desired by each of the conflicting parties, no person of them, I think, except Lord Grenville, has come to the point. He declared that the concession of the Veto, and other arrangements, were in his contemplation as belonging to the Union, even before it was carried.

I shall at present give no opinion on the true difficulty of the case, but think a mode might be devised to gratify Irish Catholics, satisfy Irish Protestants, and quiet the alarms of England. Certainly, however, it is not Lord Grenville's ideas I follow. I study the dignity and repose of England and Ireland; and believe, that unless Statesmen devise some expedient to quiet the perpetual fluctuations of demand and refusal, better than they seem yet to have thought of, that which all apprehend, may finally happen, and without the great consolation, that the best means had been tried to avert it.

The mode I contemplate of granting Emancipation has not occurred to the Regent's Ministers or their opponents; but whether it might not be deemed too favourable to Irish liberty, I shall not venture to decide.

In a recent Speech, Mr. Grattan lays down two positions touching the Veto and Pope, not maintainable, and therefore better abstained from, viz. that the Pope is inaccessible, and his authority extinct; and secondly, that the Veto is where Ministers put it. The first position is quite unfounded in fact, as the Catholic clergy know—the second is also marked by unaccountable obscurity and political timidity. Of this last stumble, the Ministers made a triumphant use. I greatly prefer a decided meeting of a point, and openly defending the just independence of the Catholic Hierarchy, to this fencing; but alas, the Party with which Mr. G. acts, could not tolerate such Irish presumption. Sir John Cox Hippesley brands all Irishmen who desire to withhold the Veto, as separatists, and explicitly declares, before there is legislative relief, the Veto must be given up. The worthy baronet seems to view the independence of the Catholic Hierarchy, then, as an element of separation. I believe on the contrary, that courage and policy in English Legislators, might make it the strongest bond of Union.

I do not know how far the approbation of the Catholics of Kilkenny and Clare, lately evinced in the resolution of thanks to Lords Grey and Grenville, goes—whether they imply satisfaction at the late letter to the Regent, and make common cause with them on the *undefined* ground there taken,—or whether they admit the policy and jus-

tice of the same Lord's view of the Veto in 1810; but the Catholics of Ireland are deluded by party cunning, if they think that the Grenville and Grey party are less in earnest than hitherto against the Veto. An English Aristocracy, would grant less upon the point, than the Monarch; but they look to time for a better opportunity and a better moment for the prostration of the Catholic Hierarchy's independence, at the feet of English Power. The part taken by the Librarian of the Marquis of Buckingham is more than presumptive proof, that my opinion is justified, and cannot be refuted: the silence of the party, and the activity of the Agent seem the gloom surrounding the illuminated mountain top—the concealed abyss is not yet displayed, but the warning light, tells us how great is its depth,

I have throughout this short exposition of my thoughts endeavoured in conformity to an opinion once expressed to me from an exalted quarter abstained from declamatory writing, as much as I could. Declamation in truth is a dangerous material, and often overheats the Orator and Author, as well as an Audience; it borders on oratory and poetry, but wants their solidity.

There is no question but that upon the important points, I have imperfectly reviewed it ought as much as possible to be discarded. It was in silence and solitude that Solon formed an excellent Athenian Constitution, or, that Demosthenes prepared his powerful and Majestic Oratory.

At this era, the artificers of the Irish Consti-

tution are numerous in both countries, but no man points out how it is to be begun. Ministers do not now deny that it were desirable to renovate the fabric of society in Ireland, and the party adverse to them clamour for an immediate commencement of the work. *Neither have brought their minds to a permanent and well digested plan.* Wherefore? If a building were to be repaired and new modelled, and one party of workmen stood at one side, saying that much must remain and be secured, but they could not tell how; and another party declared, that all should be removed without having made any arrangement to replace the old materials. What prospect would be afforded of accomplishing the work? No party in Ireland can effect it; there is no parliament here,—the effervescence of 1783, was not directed to grand enough objects. It is therefore from the Throne, a plan must emanate, and at no very distant day—giving all Irishmen a just share of liberty—stilling and confounding the clamours of parties—reverencing the national religion of this Island—and not consummating the narrow views of a haughty Aristocracy, but mediating, as it were, between the superior, and the less powerful country, with benignity and wisdom. No other plan can be permanent. For this let Irishmen supplicate the Throne—until it arrives let them beware of injuring their cause by violence—by permitting it to be servilely attached to any English Party—or by abandoning one of the sheet anchors of National Independence.

The summary of every argument on the Catholic claims appears to be this, that under the ill digested

measure of Union, a new Constitution is still required for Ireland. It is certainly with this conception that I have written, and that I have felt the Veto question the more prominently important. Mr. Grattan's extraordinary reply to his own question—*Where the Veto now was?* Is quite unsatisfactory. Ministers never had controul over it, and could not in any manner have affected the independent decision of the Catholic Prelates, in 1808. The opposition, started the game in 1808, but it shrunk receding like the *Mimosa* from unhallowed hands. In 1810 the solemn denouncing finger of Lord Grenville assailed it, with no better effect; but in 1812, most of the opposition pass over it with muffled gloves,—withholding a breath, which might agitate its fibres. Mr. Grattan, whose conception seems never to have been clear on the point, does not now disturb its repose—but I am sorry to add, afforded the Ministers a triumph on the point which another mode of argument had infallibly prevented.

I have no hesitation in declaring, that if the pure unmixed consideration of the practicability and justice of gratifying the Irish Catholics, had occupied the minds of men, instead of the too anxious endeavour to blend the alleged Royal pledge with the delusive dream of embryo power, the advantage of Ireland had been more advanced; nor can it ever be effectually promoted through the feverish workings of disappointed ambition in the sister country. The fury of party must retard, not accelerate its progress, and hurt it more than the opposition of a Minister.

That the head of Government has been assailed in a manner to harrow up all his feelings, and from quarters from whence the barbed arrows must have sped with but too severe effect, is not less evident, than the truth, that the Catholic claims have not come before him in the happiest manner on account of its unfortunately affording the opposition a means of occupation for themselves, and of annoyance for Ministers, they would not otherwise have had,—his mind has been since his accession to power, harrassed by public and domestic cares beyond measure,—private friendship in regard to him has forgotten her duties, and sacrificed to the rage of party triumph, the sacredness of confidence, and the unguarded flow of friendly converse! Such conduct cannot—ought not to please Irishmen—above all it cannot excite any thing but disgust in the breasts of those to whom I have dedicated those pages. To them, versed in human nature, and well acquainted with the workings of human passions, such conduct has doubtless appeared calculated to lower the Sovereign without raising the Subject,—to open the door to calumny, and shut it to fair investigation—as ill fitted to lead to a favourable arrangement of Irish claims, and as adding private vexation to the cares of government. I hope a better era. I write for such. I despair not of Catholic Liberty, because an English Aristocracy is disappointed; nor shall I impute to the movements of party, what must and ought to come from the spontaneous benevolence of the Throne.

NOTE.

“ Mr. Canning’s motion to bring forward the examination of the securities requisite for the admission of Catholic claims, though somewhat adverse to his own opinion, that the plan for Catholic Emancipation should come through the hands of Government, demonstrates the miserable imperfection of the mode hitherto adopted of managing the Catholic Question in the English Senate. To move for unqualified repeal, as formerly—or bare consideration, as latterly, shewed a want of logic, and business-like views remarkable enough, but very common in popular, or, aristocratic Party. I have this long time thought, and I do not exclude the year 1805 from my retrospective view, that the Catholic question brought on without plan, was transposing the order of things, and making the fulfillment of a covenant to precede the declaration, if not enactment of precedent conditions. Still, however, I regret that Mr. Canning’s distinguished ability should not rather be employed in devising arrangements in the Cabinet, than be at all auxiliary to that Party impulse, which, these two last years, has added fervour, but not strength, to the Catholic cause. It remains to observe what light Mr. Canning may throw on this arduous and complicated affair. Can Party aid him? Will Government thwart him? To both questions, I say, No.”

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The melancholy and most shocking termination of the Prime Minister’s life, has arrested my pen at the close

of this note. That I considered that eminent Person, as greatly superior in talent to his political adversaries, and not unfavourable to the just claims of the Irish Catholic, is well known by some characters distinguished by genius and knowlege in Ireland. The catastrophe which has closed the career of a Minister, whose ability, moderation, and good fortune, rendered it likely, that the factitious splendour of Mr. Pitt's fame, would have faded before the unaffected lustre of real merit, gives rise to two reflections. What effects are likely to be produced on Catholic affairs, and, how far Party violence will be calmed by it? First, I think it will be a dangerous mistake to suppose, that the late Mr. Perceval was the great enemy to Catholic liberty, and that his removal will advantage the Catholic cause. On the contrary, I incline to think, that he would have befriended it ultimately. His last Speech on their affairs, was marked by moderation and firmness; and he seemed to throw out an invitation to Mr. Grattan, to *meet* the difficulties of the case, and remove them if he could. *Mr. G. made no reply.* How eminently and truly superior in that instance was the man, who avowed his difficulties, and honestly expressed both wish and hope to have them removed, above him, whose sparkling declamation led to no conclusion, and left obscurity in place of a momentary blaze. That there are difficulties, no thinking man will deny; and I am persuaded that he who examines the question with an honest conviction of them, is more capable of promoting it, than one who denies them, or fears to meet them, or seems not to understand them. I hope that the Catholics may view the late awful dis-

pensation of Heaven, with calmness and reflection, and look doubtingly on all newspaper speculation.

If the Regent has decided on his future measures, the loss of one Minister, however valuable to him, will make no change. He evidently has preferred the principle of gradual to immediate concession to the Catholics: Mr. Percival's decease is not likely to tend to introduce Lords Grey and Grenville into his councils, or if it did, they could not long maintain themselves, unless, as formerly, they relinquished the opposition mode of considering Catholic claims. I can thus find no sound cause for altering the foregoing sheets. I am, indeed, tempted to think that the Empire has lost a Minister of singular public honesty, and private worth; and that his successor has need of uncommon qualifications to fill his place worthily; but, if the Regent's Government has framed a decided plan of conduct, no essential change will happen, in the administration of public affairs. The policy of Irish Catholics is, therefore, to prepare their future measures with prudence, and to regulate their present ones, by contemplation of the present moment, abstracted from the party heats and expectations in England.

The second reflection on the shocking event of the Minister's murder which presses on me, is this:—If any thing can give a salutary lesson to party violence, it will be such a dreadful circumstance. I own that the unbounded fury which has spread its waves to the foot of the Regent's Throne, neither sparing authority, or observing common decency in attacking it, has latterly shocked me extremely. This rancorous effusion was diffused every

where, and commercial distress, allying itself with political disappointment—every vile passion seemed to riot at large. The lower orders, and desperate adventurers catch the flame from their superiors, and in their breasts, it generates ideas of brutal revenge. Good men will now shudder and reflect. It is time to be calm, when those who have kindred passions with the mob assassinate.

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I have finally to add that, considering Mr. Perceval to have been a just and honourable man, and of eminent sincerity in his concern for the well-being of society, I am of opinion that no man would have given to the great point of the Veto, more serious and calm attention, if properly brought before him: reverencing the rights of society at large, and practising every domestic virtue himself, that Minister had doubtless viewed this great family question of our ancient and once renowned Island, with the respect its sanctity required, and he had not lightly or rudely (as Lord Grenville) endeavoured to sweep away that which is at once the interesting Memorial of our high antiquity, and the essential pillar of a religion which has regulated this neglected country, when the laws were inefficient, authority feeble, and the ignorance and passions of men had been otherwise but too much at liberty to derange social order, in Ireland.

F I N I S.