

W. Pitt Rivers

A
FAIR STATEMENT,
OF THE
ADMINISTRATION
OF
EARL FITZWILLIAM,
IN
IRELAND;
CONTAINING
STRICTURES
ON THE
NOBLE LORD'S LETTER
TO
EARL CARLISLE.

London:
PRINTED FOR RICHARD WHITE, NO. 173, PICCADILLY.

1795.

Houses of the Oireachtas

A FAIR STATEMENT, &c.

HIS Lordship first supposes all his dismissals and measures, (but particularly his conduct on the Catholic question) to be the grounds of his recall: He then asserts that the Catholic question has nothing to do with it, and that the dismissal of Mr. Beresford alone is the real cause of his disgrace: lastly, he rejects these grounds altogether, and ascribes his removal to an original determination in Mr. Pitt, at the time of the coalition, to discredit him and his friends. It is a proof of weakness to shift the ground of defence; but it is a still greater proof of weakness to fly from facts to insinuation, from argument to personality.

Lord Fitzwilliam seems to have omitted no possible mode of defence, since he has even revealed the secrets of his sovereign, and disclosed the confidential correspondence of the cabinet. Had such a disclosure justified his lordship, it would even then be difficult to excuse it; but as it palpably condemns him, he is in every light unpardonable.

This breach of official confidence is made for the purpose of shewing that he acted from authority in his conduct

on the Catholic question, and that it was not the cause of his recall. Let us examine his Lordship's proofs.

He first mentions that he had proposed in cabinet, that "additional indulgences to the Catholics should be offered from the throne; but that to this proposal objections were stated that appeared of sufficient weight to induce the adoption of another plan." He then states, that "he consented not to bring forward the subject on the part of government, but rather to endeavour to keep it back until a period of more general tranquillity, when so many material objects might not press upon government."

Thus it appears that Lord Fitzwilliam was instructed to keep the Catholic question back till a peace, and that he had consented to do so if possible. Yet at the very period of his making this engagement with the cabinet, his own confidential minister, Mr. Grattan, was bringing the Catholics forward, and teaching them to petition for a repeal of every restrictive law from every parish in the kingdom. On his lordship's arrival on the 4th of January, he finds that "the Catholic petitions to parliament were prepared, but that he was happy the business was in the hands of Mr. Grattan;" nevertheless he writes on the 8th to the cabinet, that he would obey their instructions, and "use what efforts he could to stop the progress of it."

Every man in Ireland knew early in December, that Mr. Grattan was to be Lord Fitzwilliam's minister; every man knew that about the 15th of December, he had meetings with Mr. Byrne, and others of the Catholic committee, wherein it was settled that the Catholic body should come forward with petitions to parliament; and every man had read the proceedings of the Catholics of Dublin on the 23d of December, wherein it is resolved to demand the repeal of all restrictive laws whatsoever.

Was

Was Mr. Grattan, as minister to Lord Fitzwilliam, authorised to bring the Catholics forward? If he was, Lord Fitzwilliam is convicted on his own statement: If he acted without authority, did Lord Fitzwilliam disavow him? And if he did not, with what sincerity did his Lordship write on the 8th of January, that "he would use every effort to keep the question back? And on what pretence could he say, that "he was happy to find the question in the hands of Mr. Grattan," who had thus committed him without his authority, and against his instructions?

But Lord Fitzwilliam must have surely known what passed in Ireland previous to his leaving London; for Mr. Grattan saw Mr. Byrne, and settled every proceeding with him about the 15th of December, and he could hardly have failed communicating the steps he had taken to Lord Fitzwilliam, to whom he was Minister: so that Lord Fitzwilliam must have known what had passed in Ireland before he left London, which was not till the last day of the year.

As to the idea of Lord Fitzwilliam "giving a handsome support to the measure if it could not be kept back:" this admission is no excuse whatsoever, if he used no efforts to do so; and can merely be construed, that he was to support the measure, if it could not be resisted after every effort made.

How then does the fact stand? The actual bringing forward of the question was the work of Lord Fitzwilliam's Minister: this Minister was not disavowed. When Lord Fitzwilliam received the address of the Catholics, he gave the most encouraging answer to their hopes, and the most decided approbation of his Minister. It will be allowed that these were *efforts*, but they were efforts not to delay, but to urge on the Catholic claims; they were all contrary

to

to the tenor of his instructions ; nor does his Lordship attempt to produce one single exertion which he made in compliance with them.

The dispatch of the 8th of January has been mentioned, wherein his Lordship states, " that he should immediately use every effort to keep back the Catholic question." The Cabinet of course conceived that his Lordship was sincere and determined, they felt, perhaps, confident (and they had every reason to feel so) that if his Lordship exerted himself according to his promise, he would have been successful ; and of course due credit is given to his Lordship, and no answer is returned to a letter which did not require one.

On the 15th of January his Excellency writes another dispatch, states his answer to the Catholics, in which he conceived " he had kept clear of all specific engagements," but " urges the grant of all the Catholics wished ;" and he gives notice, " that if he received no very peremptory orders to the contrary, he should acquiesce." He then, with apparent justice complains, that no answer was returned to him till the 8th of February. His Excellency omits stating first, that his dispatch of the 15th of January (being delayed in Ireland by contrary winds) did not arrive in London until the 27th of January ; and 2dly, that Lord Milton received a letter from a Cabinet Minister (Mr. Windham) on the 2d of February " giving intimation of discontent among his colleagues in England." Where is now his Lordship's ground of complaint ? Five days after his dispatch of the 15th arrived in England, notice was sent that his *conduct gave discontent* ; and on the 7th of February a final Cabinet on that conduct is held, and positive orders are sent him on the 8th to adhere to the original instructions he had received, and which, from his
letter

letter of the 8th of January, it appears he fully understood; and his Lordship is acquainted, that his putting off the Catholic question until the peace, "may be of more essential service than any act of any Minister since the Revolution, at least since the Union." On receiving this dispatch, merely confining to his first instructions and original engagements, does he make any effort to comply or obey? Does he call for advice of the King's servants? Does he apply to his friends for support? Does he endeavour to check the Catholics? So far from adopting such measures, he gives not himself a moment's time to consider and deliberate—he answers the dispatch with precipitancy and passion, by return of the post, "expresses his surprise at being now pressed for the first time," (although it was his original engagement to do so) "to defer the question; positively refuses to run the risk," and in the most violent language, declines "to be the person," (so he is pleased to state) "to raise a flame in the country, which nothing short of arms could be able to keep down." On the arrival of this letter, the Cabinet finding his Excellency resolved to resist their instructions, and not knowing what might be the consequences of his continuing in Ireland, (for Mr. Grattan had on the 12th of February moved for leave to bring in the Catholic Bill, had refused a Committee on the Catholic , and declared he would pass the bill before the a. . . the Cabinet, I say, thus circumstanced, are reduced to a decisive measure, and on the 21st they recall him.

Can any chain of evidence hang more completely together than the above statement? Yet his Lordship insists that the Catholic question did not enter into the causes of his dismissal: because, after the dispatch of the 8th February enforcing delay, the Duke of Portland enters upon the subject

subject at length, in his letters of the 16th and 18th of February: that is, his Grace not having received Lord Fitzwilliam's determination to decline the commands of the Cabinet, acts under the persuasion that his Lordship would obey them, till he is informed by Lord Fitzwilliam's dispatch of the 15th that he positively will not, and then his Grace unavoidably concurs in his dismissal on the 21st.

It would be easy to detect many other inconsistencies in Lord Fitzwilliam's statement, if necessary: for instance, in his first letter, he says, "If the only point referred for consideration was the time and manner; and if it was not implicitly left to his consideration to judge of that manner and time:" What is this, but saying that the time and manner were reserved, and at the same time were *not* reserved to the British Cabinet? If Lord Fitzwilliam was judge of the time and manners, those points were not reserved; and if they were reserved, he was no longer the judge of them.

But his Lordship's inconsistencies of statement are not the object of these observations: they are made to prove that *under his own shewing* his recall was necessary. He was sent with instructions to keep back the Catholic question; after promising to do so, he countenances the person who brought it forward, continues him as his Minister, and having encouraged the Catholics in his answer, he orders that Minister to move their Bill in the House of Commons, to refuse a Committee on their petitions, to declare that he will pass this Bill before the Assizes; and then being desired to delay the measure and adhere to his first instructions, he positively refuses altogether, and rejects the command of the Cabinet.

After

After such a direct and formal disavowal of the authority of his Majesty's Ministers, his continuance in the administration would have been a dissolution of the unity of the Government. He was therefore unanimously recalled, as his Lordship states from the Duke of Portland's dispatch, "for the preservation of the Empire."

If Lord Fitzwilliam has not been fortunate in the justification of his conduct as to the Catholic question, he has been less happy in the subject of his dismissals. His Lordship quotes a Letter from Mr. Pitt, in which his Lordship is charged "with having acted inconsistently with that principle by which alone the full advantage of the union which had taken place in England could be extended to Ireland." He thus tacitly admits his having adopted and acquiesced in this principle, and proceeds to vindicate his conduct as strictly conformable to it.

Adopting therefore, with his Lordship, this principle of union as a leading maxim of his Government, let us apply his conduct to the rule: The whole of his Government, was mere Party, of the most narrow and contracted kind; as to measures, confined to a very few, and as to patronage, to a single family, his Lordship's cousins. There was not one old Servant of the Crown in the real confidence of Government; and if two or three were occasionally consulted on specific points on which their assistance was absolutely necessary, scarce any of them escaped some mark of indifference or slight. In order to secure his Lordship steadfast to party views, he was encompassed with every forbidding form and ceremony; was closely watched and guarded by partizans, and was secluded from any general intercourse with the leading characters of the kingdom: He submitted to draw all his informations and opinions from one set of men only—to them he became subservient in

in the most unexampled degree; hardly any gentleman was received with common civility that was not a friend of his connections; all the friends of the former Administration seemed upon that account to be set aside, and the old supporters of Government were in continual expectation of being removed for having supported the Crown. Party was carried to such an extreme, that it was avowed in Parliament that the Administration intended to go back to the Regency, and overturn the arrangements which at that period were adopted.

Such is the unexaggerated picture of the line of conduct pursued by Lord Fitzwilliam in compliance with the principle of Union on which he accepted the Government.

But let us attend to Lord Fitzwilliam's pathetic Appeal: "Am I then (says his Lordship) so little known to my friends, that whilst I pretended the public good and the King's service, I am insidiously consulting my private interest, and instead of my country have only my connections in view?"

To judge of this Appeal a few leading facts must be stated:

Mr. W. Ponsonby was to be Secretary of State for life,	
at - - - - -	£. 1,700
Mr. G. Ponsonby, to be Attorney-General, -	2,400
Mr. Curran, a creature of Mr. Ponsonby's, as stated by	
Lord Fitzwilliam, - - - - -	2,000
Mr. L. Morris, a near Friend of Mr. Ponsonby's, to be	
Under-Secretary in the Civil Department, -	2,000

Total, £. 8,100

Such was the first Family arrangements for the good of the country. It was indeed natural and fair that Lord Fitzwilliam should attend to the claims of his Cousins with

with an honourable partiality; but to state that the removal of Mr. Wolfe to make way for Mr. George Ponsonby, the removal of Mr. Toler to make way for Mr. Curran, and of Mr. Hamilton, to accommodate Mr. Morris, were measures adopted merely for the public good, and the King's service, is rather extravagant.

Does his Lordship mean to assert that his threatening to dismiss Mr. Wolfe, if he would not accede to his terms of removal, one of the most upright Servants a Monarch ever possessed, the first Lawyer at the Bar, a Character of the greatest weight and dignity in Parliament, of tried consistency and consummate integrity, was a measure adopted merely for the public good and the King's service?

Does his Lordship mean to assert that the bribing of a Judge to retire (against his will) by a pension of 300l. a year to his family, and 1200l. a year to himself, in order to make Mr. Curran Solicitor-General, and to force from his situation one of the oldest, ablest, most attached and most resolute of his Majesty's Servants, and the determination of palming such an odious measure upon the Parliament, was merely for the public good and the King's service?

Does his Lordship mean to state that putting an addition to the Pension List of 1200l. a year, in order to get rid of Mr. Hamilton, who had served his Majesty for fifty years with ability, industry and integrity seldom equalled, and never excelled, in order to accommodate a Gentleman who never was in any habits of business at all, was solely for the public good and the King's service?

No—no; the King's service or public good never entered into these arrangements; they were alone dictated by Family considerations, unless another principle conjoined

its influence—the scheme of forming an exclusive party, and disgracing all the old servants of the Crown.

This principle accounts for the removal of Mr. Coke, who had been long employed under successive Governments, and whom his Lordship attacks for disrespect; because he rejected a provision by pension of less than 250*l.* a year, though his Lordship insinuates that he offered him 1200*l.*

Why does his Lordship suppress his adherence to the principle of union in the dismissal of Lord Glemorth from the Clerkship of the Hanaper, and his kind consolation to his Lordship, that he had been particularly recommended to him by Mr. Pitt?

Why does his Lordship suppress his adherence to this principle in the affront he put on the Crown,—, when, without previous consultation, he sent him a list of eight King's Counsel to swear in, although the nomination to that rank is almost invariably left to the Chancellor's judgment?

But his adherence to the principle of union in the removal of Mr. Beresford, is indeed conspicuous—dismissal, misrepresentation, defamation.

Indeed his Lordship's resentment to all the persons he removed is unaccountable, unless the proverb that we never forgive those we have injured, be allowed as an excuse.

However, as the removal of Mr. Beresford is made one of the leading causes of Lord Fitzwilliam's recal, let us consider his Lordship's statement of the subject:

First, his Lordship states, that “he had mentioned to Mr. Pitt, Mr. Beresford's dangerous power, and his apprehensions that he should be obliged to remove him, and that Mr. Pitt did not offer the slightest objections or say a word in his favour.” 2dly, He states, “that he submitted

to

to the odium of leaving Mr. Beresford his full income, through fear of displeasing his colleagues, by infringing the emolument of a person professing great attachment to them, tho' indeed at the same time he had no slight ground of doubting the sincerity of those professions."—3dly, He says, "that for the person whom Mr. Pitt contends so strenuously, he has no regard, and that he doubts whether he will permit him to resume his station at the Revenue Board." Thus does his Lordship state, that neither was Mr. Beresford attached to Mr. Pitt, nor Mr. Pitt to Mr. Beresford; and yet, that the *sole* cause of his own downfall was the dismissal of a man to whose removal Mr. Pitt had stated no objection, for whom he had no regard, and whom he did not intend to replace. The inconsistency of this statement refutes itself. But on Mr. Beresford's dismissal more will be said hereafter. What has been observed is merely to shew that the sole *imputed* cause, was not the only cause, but that it was a general system of conduct repugnant to agreed principles, defined engagements, and positive instructions, which occasioned Lord Fitzwilliam's removal. Lord Fitzwilliam quotes from one of Mr. Pitt's letters, "that Mr. Beresford's dismissal was contrary to engagement;" and cites from another, that "Mr. Pitt felt himself bound to adhere to those sentiments he had expressed before on the subject of arrangements, not only with respect to Mr. Beresford, but to the line of conduct adopted in so many instances towards the former supporters of government. By these sentiments, he must at all events be guided from a regard to the king's service, and to his own honour, however he may sincerely lament the consequences which must arise from the present situation."

Here

Here let us pause: Lord Fitzwilliam admits, that on coming to Ireland, he consented to use every effort to keep the Catholic question back to peace; he admits, that he came to adopt the same principle of union among parties which had taken place in England: his conduct was a continual violation of engagement on these two leading articles, and he was of course recalled. By stating the cabinet correspondence, he has disclosed and admitted every thing that condemns, and nothing which justifies his conduct; and as we are not masters of the whole correspondence, but of such passages only as have been selected for the purpose of his vindication, we must be assured that he quoted those *alone* which were most favourable to his cause, and that if the most favourable passages cannot support his conduct, it is more than probable that the whole of the correspondence would have left him still more indefensible.

Lord Fitzwilliam states, that the Duke of Portland, in his dispatch of the 21st of February, sums up all the reasons why his recall was deemed necessary by the cabinet without one dissenting voice, for the very preservation of the empire; but he does not state those reasons. It has been, however, shewn from his own letters, that in the great points of the Catholic question, and of his dismissals, he acted against his instructions, and without authority; and that being desired to restrain himself within his instructions, he flatly and peremptorily disobeyed.

If after this marked defiance he had been continued, he would have established an administration independent of the king and the cabinet; the executive power would have been divided; there would have been two distinct administrations; and the Irish government would have been in the most pernicious situation possible; as Mr. Grattan stated it—it would have been *departmental*. His lordship was therefore

therefore on the principle of his disobedience of orders, (which he not only admits, but asserts) *necessarily* recalled for the preservation of the empire.

His lordship mixes his own vindication with the severest charges on the British cabinet. "One short word (says his lordship) more on this part of the subject. The dismissals;—when were those dismissals made, and when announced to the British cabinet? Before the meeting of parliament. When did their criminality, and the enormity of their offence first commence? It was when, under the credit of my administration, perhaps derived from those very causes, the parliament had submitted to unparrelleled burdens, not solely for the purpose of providing for the internal security of the kingdom by the most ample and formidable military establishments, but likewise by lending its assistance to the empire at large in the hour of its greatest distress, by aids great and munificent beyond all example: then commenced the breach of all faith and arguments on my part, and not till then."

Here is an accusation of the most tremendous kind against his Majesty's Ministers for having broken faith with the Irish nation, and for having duped and betrayed the Irish Parliament: such an accusation is not, we must suppose, lightly made; it is built upon solid proof, not upon vague surmise; the truth of it is certain; at least it is probable; surely it cannot be impossible.

Let us examine his Lordship's arguments: on the 3d of February, Mr. Grattan moved for a vote of 200,000*l.* for the purpose of manning the King's navy; a vote merely equivalent to the supply given at the time of the affair of Nootka Sound, and equal only to a 98th part of the British supply for the present year. On the 2d of February Lord Fitzwilliam states, that a letter was written
by

by Mr. Windham, marking discontent at his conduct: and that on the 7th a final Cabinet was held, in which his conduct was disapproved. Now, by the course of the Mail it is certain, that the account of the vote of seamen could not have reached London until the 8th of February, and the letter marking discontent was written on the 2d; the Cabinet vote of disapprobation of Lord Fitzwilliam passed on the 7th. The general supply was not stated to Parliament till the 9th of February, when 40,000 men, and a loan of 1,500,000*l.* were voted unanimously; the date also of Mr. Pitt's letter, disapproving Lord Fitzwilliam's dismissals, is the identical 9th of February; so that to prove Lord Fitzwilliam's assertion just, Mr. Pitt must have known in London on the 9th of February, by a miraculous intuition, what was at the same moment passing in Ireland.

Thus does his Lordship endeavour upon a suggestion which his own letter proves to be physically impossible, to fix a stigma upon the British Cabinet, to raise a flame in the Irish Parliament, and to create resistance in the Irish Nation against his Majesty's government. And his Lordship makes this charge at a time when, if he could prove it true against the British Cabinet, he must know it to be false, as it respects the Irish Parliament. For, to assert that the great supplies of the present year were voted in gratitude for his dismissal of the King's old servants to favour his Lordship's relations; or that a loan of 1,500,000*l.* was unanimously voted by a Protestant House of Commons, under the express stipulation that it should be Protestant no longer, is so preposterous, that it is hardly credible that the utmost blindness of passion should have adapted such an absurdity.

His

His Lordship states, that "he was charged with the government of a distracted, discontented country:" Alas! the distraction, the discontent were of his own making. Did his Lordship never hear or read of the unanimity of the last Session of Parliament? Did he never hear of the great and unanimous Supply which was then voted? Did he not know, that by the efforts of his Predecessor, Faction was nearly extinguished? That by the benign recommendation of the Crown, and liberality of the Parliament, the Catholics were in a state of satisfaction and content, from which nothing but the efforts of himself and his Partisans could have roused them? Did he not find his own estate flourishing, and without the smallest arrear of rent? Did not he find the Public Revenue rising in almost every article, so that its increase this year has been a fifth over the former produce? Did not he find a general zeal among the Gentlemen to exert themselves in the Militia and in the raising of Levies, and to display their loyalty on every occasion? And if his Lordship was sensible of these circumstances (of which he could not be ignorant) upon what pretence can he justify his libel on the kingdom, by terming unanimity discontent, and tranquillity distraction; and thus attempt to destroy the reputation of his Predecessor, who had established those blessings?

Having for his own vindication falsely accused the Ministry, and libelled his predecessor and the country, the next attack made by his Lordship is against himself; and in this he is as successful, as in his others: he is unfortunate. It seems that Lord Carlisle had recommended to him a discreet and loyal conduct during his continuance in Ireland; to this his Lordship replies, "that whatever it may cost his feelings, he shall not forget the duty he owes to his Majesty, or neglect the trust he has been graciously
 " pleased

“ pleased to repose in him. A sense of his own honor, and
 “ what he owes to himself, will unite with whatever his
 “ country has a right to expect from him.—In imposing
 “ on himself this task he shall omit no personal sacrifice
 “ that may tend to the ease of his Majesty’s Government,
 “ or the advancement of his service, as far as depends on
 “ his influence during the short period of his retaining the
 “ authority with which he so lately condescended to invest
 “ him.”

Such are his Lordship’s sentiments of his duty: what was his conduct! The reverse of these sentiments. From the moment that his Lordship’s measures were finally disavowed, and his recall signified, the confidential agents of his Government were indefatigably at work to stir up discontent in every part of the kingdom; all his Lordship’s newspapers teemed with inflammatory statements and paragraphs; even his Prime Minister came forward in Language little short of treason; and his Lordship himself finishes the climax with the inflammatory appeal to the nation in the shape of a letter to a friend; and at the moment of embarking from the kingdom, tosses from his Majesty’s yacht a firebrand on shore to kindle the island. A few passages shall be quoted.

He states, the instruction of the Cabinet for him to delay the Catholic question as “ a desperate resolution to
 “ change the whole of their system, on a subject which
 “ they knew would involve in its decision the safety and
 “ existence of the kingdom.”

In another his Lordship states, “ that the putting off
 “ the Catholic question will be attended with a certainty
 “ of the most alarming and fatal consequences.”

Again, he trusts "the evil Genius of England will not so far infatuate its Ministers as to induce them to wait for more decisive corroboration of his sentiments."

Again, "he refused to be the person to raise a flame in the country, which nothing short of arms could keep down."

And again, "rather than indulge me must the Ministers of England boldly face, I had almost said, the *certainly* of driving this kingdom into a rebellion, and open another breach for ruin and destruction to break in upon us."

After the temperate addresses formed by his relations and friends, after the mild and discreet answer of his Prime Minister to the Catholics, such is the judicious and conciliating farewell of Lord Fitzwilliam to the loyal people of Ireland.

When Sir Lawrence Parsons brought forward a motion for a three-months Money-Bill, and used unguarded language, nothing could be severer than the rebuke of Lord Milton. He considered the motion and the language as a direct invitation to the common enemy; and he stated that such a measure would give more hopes to the French than any of their victories; that it would counteract all the effect of their supplies; and he represented in the most passionate terms the pernicious effect such language would have at Paris and in the National Convention, where it would be soon read.

If such was Lord Milton's censure of Sir Lawrence, who spoke as an individual, and without authority, what must be his condemnation of Lord Fitzwilliam, who, from the seat of Government and on the throne of deputed Royalty, proclaims to Europe, that his recall will produce almost a certainty of rebellion?

Yet

Yet his Lordship may have formed an excuse for himself, which possibly he did not intend: "am I then" says he, "that light, weak and easy man, that in matters of the highest import to the service with which I have been entrusted, I should have abandoned my judgment, and committed my decisions to others without consulting my own understanding?"

May not this defence be in some degree accepted? Does it not bear an appearance of truth? Does it not coincide with every circumstance of his Lordship's Government?—If, instead of delaying the Catholic question, according to his instructions, he manifestly urged it forwards; if instead of making a coalition of parties, he dismissed many of the King's old servants, in order to establish the power and party of his cousins; if he brought accusations against the British Cabinet, which he proved to be physically impossible; if he concluded his Administration with a statement the most false and inflammatory, at the very moment that he was declaring he would omit no sacrifice that might tend to the ease of his Majesty's Government, and the advancement of his service; if this was his Lordship's conduct, and if thus his Lordship proves, that his measures are contrary to his instructions, his accusations to his proofs, and the expressions of his passion to his sense of duty, let the vindication he has offered he accepted; let us allow him to "have abandoned his judgement," to have "committed his decisions to others;" and never to "have consulted his own understanding:"—It is a poor apology—but it is the only one.

F I N I S.

