

THE
Present State
OF
IRELAND,
AS DELINEATED IN THE
HONOURABLE JUSTICE FLETCHER'S
CHARGE
TO THE GRAND JURY OF THE
COUNTY OF WEXFORD,
TOGETHER WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS ON
MR. PEEL'S ACTS.

By Maurice O'Regan,

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Present State of Ireland, &c.

SELDOM has a single publication produced an effect so powerful and instantaneous as the Charge lately delivered by Justice Fletcher to the Grand Jury of the County of Wexford. It has electrified the nation. Proceeding from a person of highly respected legal talent, of acknowledged independence of spirit, it presents a double claim to general attention: the reader is induced to give equal credit to the purity of intention with which it was framed, and to the correctness of view by which the writer was guided. The candour with which the sources of his information are developed, adds still more strongly to the confidence with which it is perused. He arrogates to himself no extraordinary or secret means of information. In forming his estimate of the state of public feeling, he avows the *data* on which it is founded; so that no uncommon share of sagacity is wanted to appreciate the value of his conclusions, when they can be so easily traced to the sources whence they are drawn.

The principal emotion arising in the mind, from the first reading of this document, is a pleasurable sensation arising from the assurance it gives, that the country in general, is at present, in a state of perfect tranquillity. Ireland, it is well known, has, until lately, been much exposed to the dangers of internal convulsion. The powerful irritation of the French revolution upon the feelings of a sanguine and ignorant multitude, produced a state of excitement, which, after a lapse of more than twenty years, was thought to be hardly yet allayed. The severe lessons taught by the sufferings of Europe, the still severer warnings of domestic experience, were deemed insufficient to allay the restless spirit of turbulent discontent that instigated the lower classes to look upon every enemy of England as a friend to themselves, and to estimate the value of the expected friendship, by the virulence of its hostility towards the British government. This unhappy perversity of sentiment, was industriously fomented by artificial means. A large portion of the periodical press of Ireland was almost solely devoted to the one object of augmenting the public discontent, by magnifying the privations and grievances necessarily arising from a war unparalleled in length, and in the acrimony with which it was waged; or else, by exciting a gloomy apprehension of such evils, where they did not exist. The spirit of disaffection, thus artfully cherished, was still farther supported by a fallacious hope of procuring redress by means of the greatest enemy to the power and existence of Great Britain. The plans of our own government were censured and derided: those of the enemy were extolled as master-pieces of political wisdom and national beneficence. Our military operations were cried down; our generals censured; our losses magnified; our victories discredited: while the courage, the skill, and the success of the French

forces, were the themes of constant undisguised admiration. The people, relying upon the assurances of those self-constituted political calculators, fondly and foolishly looked forward to the day, when the British government would either be wholly overturned, or, at least, completely paralyzed by the superiority of France; calculating with equal confidence, that such an event was to be the immediate precursor of some extraordinary, though unknown change in the state of Ireland, that would free them completely and for ever from all their grievances. How far they had any just reason for calculating on an amendment in their situation from the preponderance of French power, its effects upon others can best determine. There is not a single nation that at any time courted French assistance, from an idea of being thus relieved from any of the oppressions, whether real or imaginary, they had hitherto laboured under, but was soon taught to mourn its error in tears of bitter repentance, and the first shock given to the apparent stability of the military despotism of France, was the signal for every one of those, who from willing allies had become slaves, to run to arms, throw off the yoke, and aid in taking vengeance on the oppressor. Fortunately for this country, the occurrences of the late war have not verified the calculations of these political theorists; equally fortunate is it for their disciples that its event has also prevented them from tasting the reality of the blessings of French protection.

On reflecting on the great industry and ingenuity employed in disseminating such doctrines, it cannot be matter of surprize that they produced a powerful impression on the public mind. The abdication of Bonaparte has at length dissipated the delusion: it has revealed the intrinsic worthlessness both of the man and of his government. It was not however to be expected, that the general feelings so long wrought

up to a high degree of feverish intensity, could at once revert to a wholesome temperature. The state of habitual restlessness could not instantly subside: and though, since the termination of hostilities, it can fix upon no settled point to which to direct its hopes, yet the agitation still perceptible in a greater or less degree throughout the European confederacy, and which cannot be wholly tranquillized until the general relations of its various parts are ultimately settled, tends to support the uneasy cravings that prompt to pine after some unknown blessing, by a change of public affairs equally unknown and unexpected.

Such, to a mind disposed to reason from facts to consequences, must appear the present state of public feeling in Ireland. To those, who know that the hope of a change in the political relations of this country, was not only anxiously fostered, but confidently expected, it was natural to suppose, that the first effects of a disappointment equally sudden and decisive, would not immediately produce a state of real tranquillity; but that the same sentiments which had until so lately openly displayed themselves in the undisguised hope of a total change, would now be secretly employed, under the deceitful veil of calm inactivity, in endeavours to alleviate despondency by devising other means for the accomplishment of their favourite scheme of policy. Hence, a suspicion would naturally arise in the minds of those who really wished well to their country, and who felt that its happiness depended wholly on its internal union and tranquillity, that the present appearance of torpid silence might conceal the agency of dangerous machinations; and when such a suspicion was confirmed by reports of lawless actions, to be attributed to no other cause than the sudden bursts of ill-repressed malignity, there were still better grounds for uneasiness. The real friend of peace

felt as if he stood over a suspected mine: every sound that came upon his ear, struck his fancy as the effect of the working of some unseen enemy below; every trifling agitation shook his mind as if it were the first burst of the expected explosion.

To be relieved from such a state may be truly called a blessing. To be told from an authority, whose private character is intitled to our esteem, whose public office commands our respectful confidence, that our fears are unfounded, must excite a sentiment truly pleasing; such a declaration is doubly welcome at the present time, because it comes at a period when the actions of those supposed to have the best private information of the operations of the discontented are at variance with it. Yet when we find the government of the country passing laws evidently indicative of a belief, that the seeds of disaffection are not yet eradicated, and at the same time hear a person vested with one of the most sacred and confidential situations under the same government, openly proclaiming that there are no grounds for apprehension, no necessity for new laws or severer restrictions, however unshaken our confidence in the talents and virtues of such a person may be, we cannot but pause and ask ourselves—"how these things can be?" We cannot but recur to the document in which this extraordinary contrariety is expressed, peruse it with fresh interest, examine it with attention, revise, analyze it, balance it against the weight of public authority by which it appears to be borne down, compare it with the information derived from other sources, and thus endeavour to procure a satisfactory knowledge of our real situation.

The most prominent circumstance that presents itself, on reading Justice Fletcher's charge, is the cheering assertion, that throughout the circuit in which he presided, he had discovered, or observed

no serious purpose or settled scheme of assailing his Majesty's government, or any conspiracy connected with internal rebels or foreign foes : and, also, that he could discern no grounds for exciting any unusual alarm, or deviating in any manner from the accustomed forms of the administration of justice. From the first of these obligations, few, if any, will be found to dissent. Even such as may be inclined to suspect that a taint of the old leaven still exists, that the spirit of disaffection still lurks unseen, will concur with him in believing, that it has not worked itself up into the maturity of treason : because, whatever may have been the secret practices of the enemies of the British constitution during the prosperity of the late French government, they must have been totally overwhelmed in its fall, nor have sufficient means, as to time or circumstance, been since afforded to digest any new plan of disaffection.

On recurring to the latter part of this assertion, that the internal state of the country did not warrant any extraordinary exertion of the powers vested by the constitution in the government, it is consolatory to reflect, that it proceeds from a person of undoubted legal information, and equally undoubted independence of mind ; as also, that it has been adduced as the result of an investigation into the quantity of crime actually calling for punishment, in what has been considered the most disturbed part of the country. It is however the duty of candour to acknowledge that implicit confidence in the truth of these conclusions must be weakened, at least in some degree, by collateral circumstances. Among these the most striking is the melancholy exhibition of national character there exhibited. For on surveying such a long and gloomy catalogue of causes, each of which must be followed by commensurate effects, the inference forces itself upon the mind, that the

actual disturbances proceeding from such a mass of discontent and depravity, must have been overlooked, or uninquired into by the writer; unless we can induce ourselves to believe that a stock of of the materials of corruption can exist without producing a correspondent quantity of depravity and disturbance. The apparent inconsistency may be accounted for, either by supposing that want of time or opportunity may have prevented this writer, when traversing the country in a judicial capacity, from gaining true and accurate information, or that he has taken too gloomy and desponding a view of these alledged causes of dissatisfaction. On reviewing the charge more accurately, the former of these suppositions appears more probable, because though it commences with a gratifying assurance, that the country presents an appearance of unusual tranquillity, yet in the developement of these causes, he speaks of them not only as likely to produce discontent, but as having been already attended by this natural consequence: he dwells upon the real misery, depravity, and turbulence they have occasioned, and calls upon his hearers, in the most solemn and impressive terms, to aid, as far as they can, in suppressing them, and to remove the stigma with which this country has been branded by its enemies abroad, and by its traducers at home.

This self contradiction must cast a shade of doubt upon the correctness of Justice Fletcher's representations; and this shade will be darkened by farther observation. It must now occur, though perhaps our implicit reliance upon the writer's sagacity might have caused it to have been hitherto unnoticed, that though the office of Judge affords the fairest and most extensive view of the quantity of crime brought forward for punishment, it furnishes no peculiar means of ascertaining what has been perpetrated, yet cannot be brought home to any individual offender: murders

may be committed, property destroyed, arms collected, banditti marshalled, yet unless the actual commission of these atrocities can be traced to the persons implicated, the calendar still remains unsullied: the eye of public justice is unprovided with the means of investigating the course of guilt through its secret mazes: the cry of blood may be loud in the streets, yet must the sword of the law rest unsullied in its scabbard, as in the times of profoundest tranquillity. That the writer of this eloquent charge was at least in some degree misled through want of due consideration of this circumstance, may be inferred from recollecting, that many crimes committed by unknown hands are so publicly known as to be detailed even in those journals which appear most inclined to give a false colouring to the true state of public affairs; nay, that a murder of this description, heightened by circumstances of peculiar atrocity, was stated by the Lord Lieutenant's chief Secretary, among the reasons for bringing forward one of those acts, which Justice Fletcher alludes to with strong marks of disapprobation in the latter part of his charge. A knowledge of what constitutes one of the most striking traits of the Irish Peasantry, might also have induced this Judge to pause before he rested an assertion of so much consequence, on proofs so unsatisfactory; to suspect that much disease might lurk within, though all was healthy on the outside. The lower classes of the Irish are remarkable for the fidelity with which they adhere to their private engagements to each other, particularly when directed against those whom they call enemies and oppressors: previous to the late rebellion in 1798, the great difficulty to be surmounted by government was to procure information; and in the insurrection of 1803, scarcely a cloud was perceptible on the public horizon, till the bolt fell. Hence it is that in many parts of the country, crimes may be

frequently and almost publicly committed, without a possibility of procuring evidence to establish their existence in a court of criminal justice. Justice Fletcher seems to have been in some degree aware of this; he seems as if to have struggled with an internal conviction, that the view he was enabled to take of the country through which he was carried in his judicial capacity, was not adequate to afford that correct and intimate acquaintance with the state of public morals on which alone assertion should rest. For he is particularly guarded in declaring, and in recurring to the declaration, that his knowledge of the real state of the country, is derived solely from the calendar.

So extraordinary does such an assertion, resting on such foundations appear, when coming from a person vested in the most sacred character that the constitution can bestow, that the mind is almost tempted to encourage the singular opinion, that he thought it necessary to employ an innocent artifice, in order to arrest more strongly the attention of his hearers; that he wished to commence, by dazzling their imaginations with a golden prospect of unreal tranquillity, in order to lead their minds to the more patient examination of those discontents and immoralities, whose origin he was under the necessity of referring principally to that class of persons whom he was then addressing. But the known character of the man must repel such a suspicion; his unbending rectitude of spirit could never stoop to truth through artifice. He must have full credit for speaking as he thought, or at least as he felt. He may have been mistaken; his love to his countrymen may have induced him to take up an opinion in their favour, on grounds too slight; his attachment to the regular forms of legal proceedings, those outworks of justice raised by the constitution, and retained by the reverence of long established utility,

may have warped his mind into an aversion against any deviation from their usual course ; but artifice or deception, however excusable, are motives never to be laid to his charge. It may therefore be laid down, that such was his opinion of the state of the country, and also, that his knowledge was derived from the source to which he attributes it, and to no other, and that, therefore, full dependence may be laid upon his exposition of this interesting fact, as far as these sources could supply, but no further.

But though from these reasons, this lawyer's opinion may not produce equal conviction on the minds of all, yet the subsequent parts of the charge afford documents sufficient for the impartial investigator to deduce copious and well founded inferences. In the detail of what has fallen under the cognizance of his own senses, he is entitled to full credit. An honest man will not pervert or falsify facts. But, in drawing conclusions, honesty is not sufficient. Even vigour of intellect, capable of conducting judgment through the abstrusest intricacies of doubt, may be, and often is, frequently accompanied with equal strength of prejudice, which distorts the intellectual vision, and renders the purest intentions useless. As far therefore as facts are concerned, the words of a man of acknowledged integrity are sufficient ; in drawing conclusions, every one must employ his own powers.

The statement of the causes of the discontent and immorality, whose existence Justice Fletcher acknowledges, reveals a gloomy retrospect. They are numerous, destructive, and deeply-rooted—some of them originating in circumstances of long standing, and confirmed by old and habitual prejudices—some resulting from the unusual position in which the British Empire has been placed during the late convulsions of Europe—all, certainly, much to be deplored, and not of easy remedy. This writer, how-

ever; does not rest in the mere recapitulation of grievances: he proceeds further, and points out what seem to him to be their best correctives. A brief inquiry into the correctness of his detail of grievances, and into the probable success of his remedies, compared with what has actually been done, will be useful. By such a scrutiny only, can the true resources of the country be developed. We therefore commence the inquiry, taking Justice Fletcher for our guide as to matters of fact without hesitation, and proceed in the first place, to the enumeration of the circumstances to which the discontents that all deplore are imputable.

These are stated in the charge to be—The rise of land—the paper currency—a magistracy either too active or too inert—Orange Societies, or as he afterwards corrects the expression, party associations—County Assessments—Absentees—Tythes.

The rise of land, originating in an increased demand for the fruits of the earth, produced by an increased consumption, has so far enhanced the profits of the immediate holder, as to make land itself a purchase eagerly sought after. The causes of the increase of consumption, may be traced partly to the rapid increase of population in Ireland, which has doubled itself within the last 30 years, partly to the prodigious export encouraged by the war. As these causes have continued to operate during late years, in a regularly increasing progression, an opinion was lightly formed, that they would still continue to do so; hence an extravagant bidding for land took place, which had the unavoidable consequence of bearing heavy upon the holders of small farms, who had not money either to procure their renewal when out of lease, or to purchase the implements of agriculture necessary to render a farm at a high rent profitable. This undoubtedly has excited discontent. But it is pleasing to reflect, that one at least

of the causes has ceased on the termination of the war. The evil, therefore, it is probable, will soon remedy itself. It is well it should be so, for otherwise, it would be extremely difficult to devise a remedy for it. Had the price of land continued at its former rate, its value would have been actually declining, in proportion to the rise of every article of general consumption: thus, while every person who derived their means of support from the produce of the land, was enriching himself by the change of circumstances, the owner would have become gradually poorer: rents must rise to maintain him in his former rank. Besides, it is observable, that in the undisturbed parts of Ireland, for every part is not affected by a spirit of turbulent discontent, the farmer is no less able to pay the high rent, than formerly the low: on the contrary, his situation still appears the most comfortable and thriving of any member of the community. One point is certain, that it is a case in which government cannot interfere. Land is a marketable commodity, and like all others, its value must fluctuate according to the demand. The holder may occasionally demand too much; if he does, himself is generally the loser, and the commodity soon finds its own level.

The paper currency, which, as Justice Fletcher well remarks, has given rise to a new species of crime that now much enlarges the calendar,—the forging and uttering forged bank notes—is also referable to the war. The restoration of general tranquillity will soon restore the circulating medium to its ancient state, and thus remove every temptation to a crime now too frequent. It must not however be unnoticed, that the return of specie, while it abolishes the crime now complained of, will revive another which a reference to the annals of our criminal courts will prove to have been equally common, that of counterfeiting and debasing the legal currency of

the kingdom. A coiner was a character, at least as common heretofore, as a bank note forger is at present.

The state of the Magistracy has afforded just grounds for animadversion: but as the remedy of this cause of discontent is recurred to at the latter part of this essay, the consideration of the subject may be referred thither. In its cause and remedy, it depends almost wholly on the country gentlemen. They alone can reform abuses, which, however general and well grounded, are not easily brought to the knowledge of the public functionaries of Government. Justice Fletcher seems to be aware of the difficulty of detecting and punishing delinquents of this species. After stating a case of glaring misconduct, he contents himself with reprobating its commission, thus evidently confessing that the punishment was beyond his power. If indeed the Magistracy be generally corrupt, its operations must be carried on with such a close connection of interests and feelings, nearly bordering upon what in the lower classes is called combination, as almost to set detection and punishment at defiance.

The Orange Societies have been a much more copious theme of discontent, though evidently as to their means of injury, far less mischievous than that which has just now been mentioned. Their existence has been traced back to the petty dissensions, falsely stiled religious, that prevailed between the different sects in a populous district in the North of Ireland, soon after the termination of the American war. But the system, in its present state, originated about the year 1795. It is now clearly ascertained, and universally acknowledged, that there then existed in this country, an extensive and deep-laid conspiracy to overthrow the British Government, and by means of an intimate connection with France, to establish an independent state in Ireland, whose

internal government was to be regulated by the will of those who directed the conspiracy, and who expected to maintain their influence after the revolution. The chief means employed to extend their numbers, was to gain over every one to their party by a system of terror. Whosoever refused to take their secret oaths, was denounced as an enemy to the cause. The same horrid means of extermination now carrying on in some parts of Ireland, to a smaller extent, and for different purposes, were employed to terrify the peaceable into acquiescence. The mystery in which all the concerns of this conspiracy were involved, the secrecy with which their plans were formed and executed, and the steady fidelity that cemented the members of it to each other, rendered its operations most fatally successful. It was not enough, that the independent country gentleman, or the industrious farmer remained neuter at home. He must join the union, or be branded as an enemy. The slightest expression of attachment to the constitution was treason to the party; even silence was suspicious; and suspicion soon ripened into dreadful certainty. The usual precautions for self defence were useless. The tenant whom he fostered, the servant whom he fed, were often the worst, because the most unsuspected enemies. The sanctity of home was no longer a security: the silence of the night, often betrayed the unguarded repose of the family: the confidential inmate was the guide to the midnight assassin. No resource existed for the peaceable and loyal, but the military protection afforded by government—a resource, in such a widely extended evil, far from sufficient. One still remained to be tried—by uniting in a solemn band of fellowship the loyalty, which, however depressed, still existed through the country, to establish rallying points, where the peaceable inhabitant might find refuge in case of a threatened

attack from their sanguinary enemies. The immediate consequence of this system was, that wherever Orange Societies existed, during the period antecedent to the rebellion, the secret machinations of the disaffected were crushed, their powers were paralysed by the resistance of a force combined, compact and secret like their own, collected round the standard of loyalty, prepared to watch their movements, and capable of resisting their encroachments. Such was the history of the Orange Societies during the period of Irish calamities, a history not to be found indeed, or looked for in the fiery declamations of party writers, whose hearts and pens were guided, not by a genuine feeling of patriotism, but by a spirit of aversion from every establishment which afforded no prospect of power or emolument to themselves, and has been gradually hardened by repeated disappointment, into a determined venomous hatred of British connection,—men who have testified the continuance of this feeling, as long as it could be done, by the unqualified approbation of the lately fallen enemy to British greatness and European independence. From such writers truth is not to be expected; as long as they entertained views of success, by aggravated cases of grievance and oppression, and by delusive hopes of a better order of things, falsehood was necessary: what then was the result of a crooked policy, is now the natural effect of long confirmed habit. Let the person who wishes to know what these Societies really were, and what were their effects, go through the country and enquire of the respectable part of the population, he will find many ready to give their open and hearty testimony that to the Orangemen, the orderly inhabitants of the parts of the country in which their Societies existed are indebted for the security of their properties, and the preservation of their lives; that in every threatened danger they had recourse to them

and were never disappointed ; that at the moment of peril, they found them at their post for the suppression of treason, and the defence of the Constitution. This Society is now held up to censure and abhorrence. It could not be otherwise. Their adherence to a cause now triumphant has excited too many enemies, ever ready to raise an outcry against them, and seconded by a still more numerous crowd ever ready to echo the favourite cry of the moment. The necessity of their existence is now happily not so imperious in the present state of society, when every exertion is making to restore the public mind to permanent tranquillity. Like the volunteers of a former day, they have done their duty. Like them, they stood forward at a season of universal alarm and despondency. Both took up arms at the call of Government for the defence of the Constitution ; the former to protect it from the insults of a foreign enemy ; the latter, to secure it from the still more dangerous machinations of an internal foe.

However, though the outcry against these Societies be loudly and perseveringly kept up, it is far from universal. It is said, that their existence is the cause of much discontent. Among whom ?—certainly not among the loyal : to another description of character, no doubt, their appearance must excite recollections sufficiently painful and humiliating. It is said, that they have given occasion to much riot and bloodshed. Many judicial inquiries have taken place in consequence of such allegations, and it has been ascertained upon solemn and repeated trials, in the counties where such deplorable events occurred, that they universally owed their first origin to the party which had set itself in array against this public display of loyalty. One fact of late occurrence tends to prove with some degree of certainty, that public opinion is not so generally inimical to the existence of Orange Societies as might be imagined

from the clamours of a party which endeavours to supply by noise its deficiency in numbers, strength, and consequence. Notwithstanding its utmost endeavours to obtain signatures to a petition against these Societies, it was presented to the Imperial Parliament last Session, sanctioned by a list of names equally contemptible in numbers and respectability. But if their continuance be dangerous, the law is open. Every act against secret combinations bears upon them. The judges, and among the rest, the respectable author of the pamphlet under discussion, have declared, that if their suppression be deemed necessary in the country, they are within the scope of the law as it stands at present. There is no occasion for new acts or petitions. If brought before the Courts of Justice, they are amenable to their jurisdiction. Yet, the fact is, and it is worthy of serious notice, as affording a decisive proof that they are not generally looked upon as being such odious combinations as those who have smarted beneath the vigour of their spirit would fain represent them; the fact is, that there is not a single instance upon record, in which legal proceedings have been taken against Orangemen, merely on account of their being so. This combination of proofs clearly evinces, that they are not that atrocious knot of turbulent fanatics which some would paint them; it also evinces, that the general opinion of those parts of the country where they are best known, is not hostile to them—But, as has been observed, the time of their services is past: and if their continuance be in any manner detrimental to the future quiet of the country, if it afford a plausible pretext for disturbing it, if it excite unpleasant sensations in the minds, even of those who were at one period most hostile to the present order of things—it were better they should be discontinued*.

* Vide Note, last Page.

The heavy county assessments, imposed often without sufficient necessity, and always pressing most severely on the poor land-holder, is another and a well founded source of complaint. The cause and remedy are both to be found in the interior administration of the county; a trust, which the constitution has lodged in the hands of the country gentlemen, and in which government can scarcely make any material changes, without breaking in upon that constitution, which it is their chief duty to maintain inviolate.

The drain on the resources of the country, together with the neglect of the public duties of Society, occasioned by the permanent absence of the leading noblemen and gentry of property, is a grievance equally to be deplored, and still more difficult of redress. Any remedy which the legislature could apply, must militate against one great principle of civil liberty, the right of transferring ourselves and our properties whithersoever we please; it also militates against the progress of national improvement, by tending to restrain the wealthy part of the community from visiting foreign countries, where by observing at their leisure, the various processes of science, arts, or manufactures, or by investigating the effects of different moral and political institutions, they can at a future period return home, stored with the seeds of national prosperity. It is one of those great dilemmas in legislation, in which it is hardly possible to unite expediency with justice. The only perfect remedy, would be a revival of public spirit in this class of society, so that a steady principle of patriotism might be a corrective to an excessive thirst for pleasure. It is however a singular fact, that in the two populous and wealthy counties of Down and Antrim, there are but few absentee landlords, their grand juries and country meetings, always exhibit a respectable list of noble-

men and gentlemen of property, yet in no other part of the kingdom have the other sources of complaint already enumerated been more copious: lands have risen prodigiously in value; the number of private banks, and consequently the quantity of paper currency, increased greatly; the people ever discontented with the conduct of their magistrates; Orange Societies prevalent; county assessments extremely heavy; tythes rated high, and every year encreasing. Hence it may be inferred, that the presence of landlords, is not such an effectual check upon other abuses as might at first be imagined. It is also worthy of notice, that this cause of grievance often corrects itself. Absence produces increased expenses, in consequence of which, many of the extensive properties hitherto in the hands of men who were acquainted with them only in their rent rolls, have been transferred by purchase either wholly or in part, to others who have not yet surfeited on the sweets of domestic residence. Thus the property of the country gradually reverts to resident landholders, and the evil proportionally diminishes.

Tythes are the last on this list of grievances, and confessedly the greatest. On this subject, it will be sufficient to quote two great, though opposite authorities, Lord Castlereagh and Mr Grattan. The former of these statesmen declared in his place in Parliament, that it was the wish of Government to make some permanent arrangement on this subject, that might do away the uncertainty of their operation, and silence the murmurs they occasioned, that it had often come before them for this purpose, but that it was attended with difficulties so hard to be surmounted, as rendered the hope of any equitable compensation very unpromising. The latter, in the same solemn manner, publicly imputed the whole of this grievance to the unjust and narrow policy of the country gentlemen of Ireland. The state of the

tything system, he pointed out to be as follows. When Ireland had become somewhat tranquillized after the great convulsion of 1688, the clergy endeavoured to recover their usual stipends from the produce of the earth: among other articles, they claimed the tythe of dry cattle, termed in legal phrase, the tythe of agistment. Most of the country was at this time under pasture, and in the possession of the great land-holders. They resisted the payment of this species of tythe, and when the clergy shewed a determination to vindicate their right by legal proceedings, they had influence sufficient to pass a vote in the House of Commons—they indeed may be said to have been the House of Commons—declaring, that whoever took any steps to recover the tythe of agistment, was an enemy to his country—for thus was the phrase then prostituted. The clergy, deterred by a threat supported by power which was then almost without control both in the centre of Government, and in their separate country residences, were forced to relinquish the claim. The consequence was, that they were compelled to seek the tythe, their only maintenance, in the little field and potatoe garden of the labouring peasant, who was the only agriculturist of the day. Thus, while the country gentleman, who voted every one an enemy to the country that interfered with his usurped privilege, impoverished the land by encouraging an extensive system of pasturage, he was the actual, though remote cause of oppression to the real friend of the true interests of the country, the petty farmer; while the clergy, resisted by power on the one side, and by poverty on the other, were forced to content themselves with what remained of the small portion of their honest dues. The rapid increase of the prosperity of the country founded on its only true basis, the promotion of an extensive and scientific system of agriculture, has

diminished this evil ; every year's improvement will lessen it : but such a final arrangement, as will prevent any pretence for a clashing of interests between the pastor and his flock will, doubtless, be pregnant with the most beneficial effects, both to the country and to the cause of religion.

The inquiry into the sources of the moral causes retarding the prosperity of Ireland, to which Justice Fletcher proceeds, is not less interesting than that which has been just closed. For if the character of the people be debased by immorality, their discontents will find vent in every species of lawless outrage. That immorality and outrage prevail to an alarming degree, is a truth melancholy indeed, but too evident to admit of concealment. The developement of the causes is, as in the former instance, the best guide to the cure.

The first cause of immorality stated by Justice Fletcher is, that the religious bond of connection between the Catholic Pastor and his flock has been inveighed against by those who call themselves friends to the constitution in church and state ; that it has been in some instances weakened and nearly destroyed. The following observations may induce some to think that too much stress has been laid on this point. It is well known that the greatest degree of turbulence and lawlessness exists at present in those districts which may be said to be wholly peopled by Catholics, where it would be difficult and even perilous in one of a different persuasion, to express a contempt for their religious observances, or to tamper with the religious connexion between priest and people. It is equally notorious, that in those parts of Ireland where the different sects of christianity are more equally blended, and where therefore there would be stronger inducements and more frequent opportunities for such interference, the Catholic population is uniformly more industrious,

orderly and tranquil. The Protestants, or according to Justice Fletcher's phrase, those who call themselves friends to the constitution in church and state, have not many opportunities of interference with their Catholic brethren: when such offer, they are principally employed in disseminating bibles, and such books as may turn them to the study of the great truths there taught, as also in establishing schools where books of this description may be read. Interference of this kind can hardly be deemed productive of immorality. If it separate the peasant from the priest, it unites him to a higher pastor. But the truth is, little is effected in this way. Bibles are distributed, and schools are opened: the lower classes at first gladly receive the bible, and send their children to the schools: the priest issues his prohibition, and so far is the connection from being broken, that the bibles are returned, the schools deserted, and none venture to disobey the mandate, unless at the same time they change their religious profession. Such a separation of the priest from the people, therefore, as is followed by a rejection of every religious tie, is a cause hardly adequate to the effect attributed to it: it may happen occasionally, but its operation is and must be extremely limited.

The two next sources of immorality, for they nearly resemble one another in kind and effect, are the mode of taking the accounting affidavits, by which the county presentments are verified, and the registry of freeholders. To name these pregnant fountains of depravity is sufficient; those acquainted with the usual mode of transacting county business, of which the two cases just mentioned constitute the principal part, if they have any sense of shame would gladly pass them over in silence, were it not that they glare in the face of every peasant in the country. The fault is solely in the country gentlemen: the remedy solely in their power. If men,

to whom a solemn trust is committed, a trust that can be no where else safely deposited,—if such men, conscious of the indispensable necessity there is for their services, will violate that trust, and with a daring shamelessness avow their profligacy and combine in guilt, no law, no administration can control them. A knot of knaves will find a loophole in any law however closely fabricated; a junto of domineering landholders will easily ward off the sword of justice by mutual concealment, or even, at times, by setting its authority at defiance.

The profligacy arising from the manner in which the civil-bill business was transacted before the appointment of assistant barristers, has been for several years done away: its introduction into a list of the causes of immorality actually existing and requiring reformation, seems only useful to augment the list of grievances.

Illicit distillation brings up the rear of this baneful train of vices. Its operation is well traced in Justice Fletcher's pamphlet, to the encouragement afforded by the landlord to the poor tenant, to adopt this as a substitute for honest industry for the payment of extravagant rent. Its consequences are too horrible for detail. In what part soever of the country it finds a lurking place, there desolation spreads her baleful mantle over the land: famine fixes his residence in the cotter's hearth, and idleness scourges his victim to the gallows. The exertions made by the administration to put down a practice equally ruinous to the great financial interests of the Empire, as to the prosperity of the country—the innumerable checks introduced against fraud and collusion—the many acts, and the still more numerous amendments of those acts, in hopes of at length devising some effectual means of eradicating this noxious weed that chokes up the very germ of industry, are well known. The evil is imputed to the right cause by Justice

Fletcher : an iniquitous traffic for an enormous rate of rent, to be compensated by an enormous profit of the land, purchased at the expense of every public virtue and every domestic charity, is deemed by the landholder sufficient reason for stimulating the ignorant peasantry to a practice which the law of God abhors, and the law of man denounces.

On terminating this summary review of the discontents of Ireland, one pregnant source of dissatisfaction appears to be passed by wholly without notice. Yet it is one that has produced powerful effects, and which it might be supposed would have naturally suggested itself to the mind of the writer, when dwelling on the ill consequences of illegal party associations. The Catholic board, or rather the manner in which the proceedings of that society were carried on, tended to excite a spirit of restless turbulence that must have terminated in some dreadful explosion, had it not been counteracted by the natural consequences of a still more fiery spirit of restless turbulence within itself. It is now fallen,—fallen, not by the strong arm of government, but by the united condemnation of all who witnessed the frantic excesses of its pigmy aspirations to legislative authority,—unpitied and unnoticed, except in scorn, even by its former friends. The hand of government was stretched over it in its fall only to terminate its expiring convulsions. It could not have been its non-existence that screened it from this writer's notice: because non-existence has not been a screen to other causes of discontent. The reader must have observed that abuses already entombed and almost forgotten, have been raised from their graves to give solemnity to this exhibition. Nor ought Justice Fletcher to be ignorant that the fragments of this broken cabal were still traversing the country with impotent activity, and collecting assemblages of hearers under the name of aggregate meetings, to whom they

might display the sufferings of their country and their own powers of eloquence. This last attempt of an expiring faction has failed. In vain have a few briefless lawyers made a voluntary circuit to display bursts of oratory that never were heard elsewhere: the good sense of the people, who, however they may be led astray for a time by the practices of designing men, generally judge correctly at last, has taught them to appreciate their intrinsic worthlessness. With respect to their talents, a fair estimate may be formed by considering that those, to whose management in the profession for which they had been educated, no one entrusts a common legal process, are but ill qualified to conduct the affairs of a great people; and as to their integrity, equal means of arriving at a correct judgment may be had by reading their votes of massy services of plate to one another, while their sincere, though ill-advised advocates, to whose services alone they owed their short-lived celebrity, are languishing in prison.

To this cause of disturbance—now no more, thanks to the good sense of the people and the well proportioned combination of forbearance and vigour in the administration—may be added another, equally, if not still more notorious, though equally unnoticed by Justice Fletcher—the inflammatory publications with which part of the periodical press of Ireland teems, and which are circulated and read with the utmost avidity by the lower classes in most parts of the country. On reflecting on the description of persons who thus arrogate to themselves the right of instructing their countrymen in politics, the tenor of their lessons may be easily guessed. Men without education or profession, disappointed in their pursuits, unwilling or unable to attain the rank in society which is the real object of their wish by the exertions of genuine ability or honest industry, loquacious railers at abuses in which they do not

share, ingenious devisers of reform which may give them an open for improving their means of subsistence, circulators of whispers, venders of falsehood, or distorters of truth, with no farther rule of distinction between virtue or vice, than as either promotes their own prospects of individual aggrandisement;—such are the patriotic political instructors of the people. Their lectures are delivered to their disciples sometimes in the form of a newspaper, whose sale is maintained by administering to the irritable passions of the multitude, sometimes in the more imposing form of a periodical publication, a compound of vulgar scurrility and indiscriminate invective, where every paragraph would be libellous, were it not all libel. These are bought up with avidity by the ignorant peasantry, who hail every one as a friend that rails against their superiors, and the sale in turn serves to supply fresh fuel to the oven of sedition.—Thus to use an expression in the charge—“these two circumstances operate upon each other like cause and effect, the cause producing the effect; and the effect, by re-action, producing the cause.”

An omission of another kind serves also to increase the doubt as to the accuracy of the inquiry made by this judge into the state of the country. The causes of discontent and immorality are universal; they pervade every part of the country; they may be said to enter into every cottage; yet the effects are by no means so equally or universally apparent. Some parts of the country are in a state of profound tranquillity and obedience to law: others are inflamed almost to insurrection: an investigation into the reasons of this anomaly, this unequal production of effect acting from the same causes, ought to have had a place in an inquiry of this nature. In any other person, such an omission would raise a well grounded suspicion of designed insincerity; in the present instance, it must at least evince a degree of negligence not wholly undeserving of comment.

On turning from this discouraging detail of discontent and profligacy, still more discouraging because well ascertained and widely extended, a more pleasing duty remains. The writer has not dwelt on the abuses alone; he has also touched on their remedies. It is indeed to be regretted, that after proceeding with such minuteness of detail through the more unpleasing parts of his task, expatiating so much at large upon them both in their causes and consequences, he has taken but a slight and superficial glance at what the patriot and philanthropist would love to dwell on. Thus, in proceeding to this part of his investigation, the first remedy suggested by him is, "the removal of the causes of disturbance." Were levity admissible in a discussion in which our dearest interests are concerned, were it allowable to glance the slightest shaft of ridicule against the expressions of a man venerable from his public station, highly respectable for integrity of principle and pureness of intention, this remedy would almost bring to the recollection Hamlet's celebrated instructions to his courtier friends, for playing on the flute. Remove the causes of disturbance—Why! it is to stop the flowing of the tide, to quench the conflagration of an Indian forest, to eradicate by a single effort, the countless shoots of a diseased vegetation, fostered in a fruitful soil, and swelled up by long neglect into the greatest magnitude. To advise such a remedy is but to appal the mind by exhibiting the hopelessness of the attempt.

On such a subject, to deal in general expressions is but a species of mockery which only wants the guilt of intention to swell it into flagrant culpability. It is painful to observe, on proceeding, that all the other remedies, though somewhat more detailed, are in like manner expressed in general terms.—Let the absentees employ some of their property at home—let the magistracy be reformed—let there be a commutation

of tythe—suppress the home consumption of whiskey—establish an equal and speedy administration of justice—let party associations be discountenanced. Such an enumeration of detached expedients can answer no useful purpose: they afford no hold for practical reform; they are in fact included in the previous detail of evils, the recital of each of which cannot fail to suggest the necessity of adopting a contrary method: they are the abortive production of a mind more eager after the discovery of what is wrong, than willing or able to guide to what is right. The professor who confines his political lecture to such topics undertakes a duty easy to himself, and most grateful to his hearers, because to expatiate on abuses is easier than to devise the means of specific reforms, and to listen to a tale of censure is more grateful than to receive instructions on which themselves are to act, or to hear praises in which they are conscious of being intitled to no share.

Instead of entering upon the discussion of topics not treated of in a manner from which benefit can be derived, it will be more profitable as well as more consolatory to examine what has been actually done, and what is doing to allay the spirit of discontent that distracts the public. The farther consideration of Justice Fletcher's remedies shall therefore be passed over with but one remark; which is, that in common with many other reformers, he can admit of no remedies but his own; and in confident reliance on the ultimate success of those prescriptions which are to be administered he tells not how, and are to operate he says not when, he rejects with scorn any correctives that are applied at present to check the progress of the evil, until more powerful applications can exert their full virtues. This practice he supports, no doubt, on the principle with which he commences, that no trace of any settled scheme or conspiracy against the government is discernible,

exhibiting a picture of the circuits in confirmation of this assertion, to prove that the quantity of crime indicates no tendency to insurrection. But when the causes of disturbance are weighty and numerous, disseminated through every pore, and breaking out in hideous deformities on every part of the body politic, must it not be that the seeds of disaffection are shed, and not only shed, but fostered and ready to burst forth whenever a favourable season invites? Rebellion may originate in some temporary discontent, as lately in the manufacturing towns of England; but then it is easily suppressed, and as soon as suppressed, exterminated; but when the whole mass is corrupt, when deeply rooted discontent and immorality brood in every part, there disaffection must be for ever lurking, ready at the first spark to burst into an universal explosion. There it shews itself not in an attempt to remove some single grievance, but in a deep-rooted hatred of every existing establishment. There all may be blooming above, while the smothered fire is raging within the entrails. After such a display of grievances, combined with a laxity, or to speak more correctly, a perversity of morals capable of every excess, to say that there is no danger because the flame of disaffection is not blazing abroad, is to know but little of human nature, and to point at remedies slow in operation and distant in effect, to the rejection of immediate checks and preventatives, indicates still less knowledge of the principles of general policy.

A short survey of what has been lately done to ameliorate the internal situation of Ireland, will prove to every dispassionate mind that the thoughts of government have been turned to permanent remedies as well as to temporary restraints. A census has been undertaken to ascertain the state of the population, as the best basis for future proceedings, without which, all calculations affecting

the whole island must be vague and illusory.— Illicit distillation has been checked as far as could be done by an administration not only not supported, but often counteracted by those to whom the power of enforcing the laws is committed. National Education has been patronized and carried to an extent, which some years ago would have been deemed impracticable by any consumption of time or labour. Laws diminishing the number of capital punishments have been enacted. The system of imprisonment and correction is improved by the adoption of solitary confinement and many improvements in the interior economy of prisons; though it is to be regretted, that grand juries have in this as well as other cases, shewed much remissness in following up the wishes of the government, and the orders of the legislature. A plan for substituting punishment by hard labour in place of transportation is in forwardness. So lately as last session, an act has been passed at the same time with those so severely commented on by Justice Fletcher, though he passes it over in silence, for the purpose of affording the poor man easier means of redress in cases of assault; forming a step at least to one of this writer's remedies for enabling the cottager to obtain "that justice, which that it may benefit him, must be brought home to his door." These are not the measures of men capable of "devising no remedy but Act of Parliament after Act of Parliament in quick succession, framed for coercing and punishing."—who can apply "no corrective but the rope and the gibbet." Such measures afford a prospect of better times. It is also highly pleasing to observe, as every one who has studied this country for the last thirty years must have done, that the character of the Irish country gentleman, to whom this writer traces the greater part of the present discontents, is every day improving. There was a time when the igno-

rance which now they are ashamed of, was their pride. They are anxious for instruction, and grateful to the person who offers it. Of this Justice Fletcher gives an instance in the case of the Grand Jury of the county of Tipperary, where his well-timed admonition produced a saving to the county of 9,600*l*. The present charge, teeming with censure against the general conduct of the Irish gentry, to whom he imputes, either openly or by implication, most of the evils he deplors, is a still stronger instance that he thinks them at least open to instruction. As their inclination for improvement, so also their opportunities have increased. The advance of useful knowledge has until lately been fettered by the shackles of war. A more intimate and frequent communication is daily taking place between these two islands. Its consequence will be a mutual interchange of benefits: the Irish will learn to appreciate the advantages of English industry and ingenuity: the English will be taught the true estimate of the virtues of the genuine Irish character. They have become acquainted with each other in war: mutual esteem and respect, combined with an unity of interest, will cement their attachment during peace.

Such remedies however are slow. The beneficial effects resulting from operations which are to accomplish a healing change in the whole range of public feeling, from the magistrate to the peasant, must be the result of much time; something more immediate is wanting to check the temporary effusions of restlessness and discontent, which though they do not leave a mark on the calendar, are to be heard of in every newspaper, and have been severely felt in many a private family. The acts so much censured in the charge are of this nature. Their general outline is fairly given by this writer, because, as has been said, whenever facts are at issue, his assertion is entitled to confidence: it is briefly as follows.

Any two magistrates may call a special meeting of the magistrates of any county, where, if their number amount to seven, a petition may be framed and transmitted to the Lord Lieutenant, praying to have the county, or any particular division of it, declared in a state of disturbance; a statement of the grounds on which it is made must be annexed to the petition. If approved by the Lord Lieutenant and Privy Council, a proclamation to the same effect is issued. Its principal effects are the establishment of a permanent sessions in the disturbed district, under the direction of a serjeant at law, or other lawyer sent down for that special purpose, to try all persons charged with offences tending to the disturbance of the public peace, and none other. The following are the offences which come within the jurisdiction of this court.—Inhabitants of the disturbed districts being found out of their dwellings without good cause, at any time between one hour after sun-set and sun-rise—not being found at home during the same hours—taking unlawful oaths—having arms without being duly privileged to keep them—being found in public houses at any hour between nine at night and six in the morning—assembling tumultuously—hawking seditious pamphlets. The punishment is transportation for seven years. The authority of the court and the preservation of the public peace is maintained by a temporary police establishment, consisting of a superintending magistrate in each disturbed barony, (whom the usual county magistrates are to assist,) aided by a sufficient number of extra constables. All the expenses incurred by this new establishment, which is to continue while the disturbances exist and no longer, are to be defrayed by the county or district under proclamation.

This analysis of these bills best explains their nature. They cannot be forced upon any county

without the consent of the magistrates, and remain in operation no longer than the state of disturbance continues. The extraordinary powers of this court extend but to one species of crime, which is well defined and limited, and it is competent to inflict but one species of punishment, a punishment not extending to life or property, and acting also as a corrective, by removing the offender from the scenes and connections likely to maintain the spirit of disturbance, and to fix him for a time in a distant residence where he is necessitated to adopt a course of life, which if steadily pursued, must conduct him even there to comfort and independence, and when the term of his sentence has expired, restore him to his country, with habits suitable to a member of civilized society.

The effects of these acts in suppressing any open symptoms of lawless outrage must be immediate, but they are valuable not only on account of the present good resulting from them, but because they have an almost irresistible tendency to promote the operation of one of those great but tardy remedies, so strongly recommended in the charge,—the reformation of the magistracy. The persons who now occupy this station will gain nothing by the enforcement of these acts : on the contrary, their influence will be diminished, their consequence lessened, and the charges on their properties increased. Their importance as magistrates merges in a great degree in that of the new officer who presides in the court of special sessions : their superintendency over the peace of the county is superseded by the temporary police establishment. When they reflect on those consequences, when they find that their petition will re-act on themselves, they will be cautious how they invite its powers to their assistance. They will endeavour, by a strict, vigorous, and paternal discharge of their office, to prevent its necessity. They will

turn their thoughts from jobs to duties : their minds will enlarge ; they will become acquainted with the real state of the surrounding peasantry ; they will discover that they have a common interest with them ; they will endeavour not to punish, but to prevent disturbance ; in doing so they will search after the true means of rendering the people peaceable, and as surely at they search after it seriously and with sincerity, so surely will it be found.

Having now taken an accurate and candid survey of this pamphlet, which, from the unusual form of its first publication, may almost be considered as an official document, it is worth while to pause a little, and endeavour to ascertain the motives which stimulated the writer, at such a time, and in such a place, to authenticate with the stamp of public authority and private character, a paper which contains some statements not altogether correct, and some not fairly coloured. On reverting to the commencement, it appears, that he wishes to prove the country to be in a state of profound, or at least, of usual tranquillity ; yet, though he endeavours to establish this point by a recurrence to the state of criminal business during the circuit, he launches out, as has been shown, into a recapitulation of grievances, which could not have continued any length of time, without producing a state of open outrage, or of secret combination. The former of these he at length acknowledges to be the fact, and attributes it to the conduct of the country gentlemen ; yet, evidently, without intending to point at them as the guilty party, for, instead of resting here, he suddenly turns his censure from their misconduct, to imputations against the Government. With a degree of querulous exacerbation unsuitable to his plan, and unbecoming either himself or his rank, he appears eager to fasten on the government at every turn. He complains that the order of the circuits is needless-

ly interrupted; yet, he acknowledges, that in the very second town he names, the gaol was over-stocked; no less than one hundred and twenty names appeared on the face of the Crown Book—whereas he might, with at least equal justice, have praised an alteration that was the means of liberating such a number of accused, perhaps of innocent persons, so much earlier than would have been the case, if the judges had proceeded according to the accustomed order of the circuit—He condemns the framing of act after act in quick succession, as if one of the most prominent duties of the legislature was not to supply speedy remedies where none existed before, or where they were ineffectual. He asks, is there no corrective but the rope or the gibbet, yet, this very administration, in the very acts he condemns, applies a remedy much gentler. He condemns the manner in which these bills were introduced into Parliament. “Almost,” he says, “without observation; and, certainly without public inquiry into the state of the country.” Yet, he does not mention, that they were brought in successively, with due notice; that they met with no opposition; that of all the members from this country, who must have been supplied with much information as to the temper of the districts in which their property lay, but one spoke against either of them; that no intimation was given from any quarter of the necessity of an inquiry. Surely, in such a case, the chief Secretary had no motive for doubting the truth of the information, however acquired, on which he rested the necessity of the bill, nor had the house in general any apparent reason for calling for public evidence, when not a voice was heard from those, whose peculiar sources of information enabled them to ascertain the necessity of such a procedure. The fact was, they were conscious there were disturbances; they also saw, that if these did not exist, the law

could not exert its rigours ; it must remain a dead letter on the statute book. He insinuates, that the expences of the temporary peace establishment, are not imposed impartially—yet, who has a better right to pay such expenses, than those by whom they are invited, whose inactivity has induced their want, and for whose benefit they are incurred? He dwells with infantine peevishness, on the nomination of a sheriff who neglected his bounden duty, of accompanying him through the county with a proper attendance, through motives, as he hints, of parsimony. As if the government, with whom the appointment of the sheriff rests, are to spend their time in previous inquiries, as to the number of livery servants, and led horses, to be turned out on these occasions of state ; or, as if the law did not give a judge sufficient powers to compel a sheriff to the respectful performance of this most honourable part of his duty. Indeed, the close of the pamphlet is tinged with a querulous asperity that gives strong reason to suspect, that private irritation was part, at least, of the exciting cause of this ebullition of splenetic discontent. The name of Justice Fletcher had been some how implicated with the idea of turbulence. An act of childish wantonness had been enlarged, as every story is by distance, into an atrocious outrage. It was recorded and commented upon with sufficient ill nature, no doubt, in the public prints. He felt, or thought himself made a vehicle for disseminating such mischievous reports ; he yielded to the feeling ; and it found vent in this charge. For, surely, had his only motive been a patriotic feeling, that stimulated him to contribute the aid of his experience and observation to remove the miseries he deplored, it would have been more consonant to the dictates of calm dispassionate prudence, when he was impressed with the conviction, that the internal administration of the country, was

cankered with an eating sore, that poisoned the whole system, to have in the first instance stated his observations, his fears, his wishes, and his views to the administration with whom he was acting; and the execution of whose plans for the welfare of the country, he was to a certain degree employed to superintend. The castle, no doubt, is a place suspected by many; its very air is deemed unpropitious to patriotism; but, there are times when a patriot should defy suspicion; when, by such a communication only, he can shew the governed and governors to each other, and enlighten them to a true knowledge of their reciprocal rights and duties. He ought to have pressed the case upon the government; to have pointed out the abuses; for even the knowledge of abuses is much. He ought to have gone farther, and pointed to their remedies; he ought to have called upon them again and again; to have thundered in their ears. The appeal might have been unsuccessful, but he would have been respected; he would then have been authorised, to turn, as he has done, from the castle to the country; to proclaim its grievances, to denounce their consequences, to raise aloud his voice; to publish political repentance, as the only path to political reformation: such an appeal would have crowned him with the honours of patriotism, untarnished by any suspicions of petty jealousy, or petty irritation. This has not been done; he avows by his own declaration that it has not; he avows an ignorance to the secrets of the castle, and he apparently glories in the avowal. Under these circumstances, we are emboldened to assert, that he has done neither what he could nor what he ought, for the removal of those grievances, against which he so pathetically declaims; that while he is joining in the out-cry, the administration has been probing the sore and preparing the remedies; and that whatever merit he may claim for honesty of

intention, his mode of reducing his wishes into practice, can add but little to his character for prudence, temper, or sagacity.

NOTE.

Since this essay was put into the Printer's hands, a letter has appeared from Mr Peel, in answer to an address from the Grand Jury of the County of Fermanagh, which is inserted here, in order to clear up a point that has been made the subject of much clamour and misrepresentation. It has been said, that the Orange Societies are supported by the Irish Administration, and the assertion is attempted to be maintained by reports of Mr Peel's speech on the discussion of the Anti-Orange petition. That the Administration must retain feelings of gratitude, for their past conduct cannot be doubted, but that their sentiments, as also those of Mr Peel, with respect to them have been misrepresented, this gentleman's own words will best prove.

Phoenix-Park, Aug. 19. 1814.

SIR,

I have had the honour of receiving the Address of the High Sheriff and Grand Jury of the County of Fermanagh, which you have been requested to transmit to me.

During the last Session of Parliament, some Petitions were presented, praying for the interference of the Legislature in the suppression of Societies existing in Ireland, denominated Orange Societies, which appeared to me to contain exaggerated statements, and some unfounded charges, and in the course of a discussion, which took place in the House of Commons, the principles and general conduct of those who compose the Societies above mentioned, were, as I conceived, in many respects, misrepresented.

I deemed it but an act of common justice toward them, to vindicate them from those imputations which I thought to be unmerited; and while I disclaimed distinctly the approval of any associations of a political character, that are not under the control of Government, I willingly bore testimony to the loyalty of the individuals who were alluded to, and to the dependance that might be placed upon their services in the time of danger, should the State require them. I expressed also a confident hope, that in their peaceable demeanour, at all other times, would be found a refutation of the charges which had been directed against them, and a proof of that attachment to their Sovereign and the Constitution of their country, which they profess.

I beg leave to assure you of the satisfaction which I derive from the approbation which the Grand Jury of Fermanagh have expressed of my conduct on this occasion, and of the pleasure which I shall ever take in the confidence and good opinion of that Body.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient humble Servant,

ROBERT PEEL.

The Hon. Colonel Creighton,
&c. &c. &c.