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A

SKETCH

OF THE

STATE OF IRELAND,

PAST AND PRESENT.

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Imperaturus es hominibus, qui nec totam servitutem pati possunt, nec  
totam libertatem.

TACIT. Hist. i. 16.

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Houses of the Oireachtas



TO  
THE MARQUIS WELLESLEY,

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

I request you to peruse the following pages. Our sentiments probably may not, in every instance, accord; but I trust I shall convince your Lordship, that the state of Ireland not only deserves your attention, but imperiously calls upon you as a Statesman and an Irishman to exert your great and increasing influence in her cause, hitherto so constantly mismanaged and so often betrayed.

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1. AN author ambitious of fame should write the history of transactions that are past, and of men that are no more: desirous of profit, he should seek it from the prejudiced liberality of a party: but he whose object is his country, must hope for neither, and shrouded in disinterested obscurity, should speak of sects and factions not what they desire, but what they deserve, to hear: to his impartiality his own times should be as those of Charles or James, and the ministers, bigots, and demagogues of his day, as Laud or Prynne, as Fitton, Hamilton or Tyrconnell.



And this style of writing—least popular, least profitable—is the most difficult, the most dangerous: power, always quick in revenge, is quickest in reaching its literary opponents; and the populace is never more slanderous than in arraigning his motives who could curb their violence.

II. These disadvantages—great every where—are in Ireland oppressive, where impartiality seldom thinks and never writes—party the only distinction, passion the only incitement; where the faction in and the faction out—orangemen and defenders—coercers and revolutionists—the English administration and the Irish directory, have divided between them the press and the nation.

I am therefore aware that my undertaking is a rash and imprudent *novelty*, attractive neither of the light nor of the grave—of this junto or that. To speak what I feel—tell what I see—to sketch with a true but transient pencil, the states of Ireland—and, in considering the evils and the remedies—to deliver an unbought and unbigoted opinion on the measure of catholic emanci-



pation—to doubt whether I shall be heard—to be assured that, if heard, I shall offend—to do my duty without hope, but not without fear; those are my objects, this my situation;—the inevitable fate of contemporary truth.

III. From the date of the English establishment 1169. in Ireland, first effected—afterwards extended—finally secured—by domestic treachery and the foreign sword, there was till the last century, no civil government. The king's deputies, and the deputies of the deputies, were strangers and soldiers—needy and tyrannical; their duty conquest—their reward plunder—their residence an encampment—their administration a campaign. The capital and a small neighbourhood, emphatically called the PALE, the seats of the English, acknowledged the theoretic existence, but not the practical benefit of laws. As the superior arms or arts of the settlers changed turbulent neighbours into rebellious subjects, the PALE was enlarged, but they had no laws to dispense, no civilization to communicate.

IV. I will not wade through the blood of a continual rebellion and intermittent massacre—



nor through recriminations nearly as odious, and retaliations quite as bloody. Prized should the land be, every foot of which has been fought; and fertile the country manured by the indiscriminate slaughter of her sons and her step sons! Suffice it to say—the riotous discontent of the half-subdued, drew down the suspicious severity of the half-established, and the subjugation of the former, effected by degrees the degradation of both.

1646. We pass over the alternate ravages of Charles and Cromwell, to arrive at the almost Theban  
1688. contest of James and William—the lawful, but intolerant and intolerable possessor of the throne, and the unamiable but enlightened and necessary instrument of his expulsion.

Of the Irish there had been no reformation; illiterate, they could not find their own way; and poor, they had little to tempt the missionaries of Henry the VIIIth: all therefore in Ireland, that was Irish, was papist—almost all that was English was protestant. James was a papist, and William a politician, much more than they were Christians;—the blind devotion of the



former recommended him to the love and loyalty of the natives—and to the fear and enmity of the settlers. Hence a war perhaps not yet concluded; and feuds confessed to be unextinguished.

V. Offended, neglected, and despised by their respective princes, the two parties evinced a generous attachment to their fortunes. But the greater merit is here with the adherents to James. He, to insult, and neglect of his followers, added weakness, and meanness, and cruelty, and cowardice, and defeat; while William, though the friend only of Holland, and the enemy of Ireland, was a conqueror and a hero—had won three kingdoms, and deserved to win them.

Between such men it was not fortune that decided; the courage of James fled at the battle of the Boyne, and even his hopes expired in the treaty of Limerick—by conquest and by capitulation the triumph of William was complete—as complete as he desired—Ireland indeed was not tranquillized, but his throne was secured—with war enough at home, she had none to invade the



shores of her neighbour—William seized her as an outwork of England, as he took Namur for the safety of Holland.

VI. Reprehension might have satisfied his glory, his prudence required submission. Though James had abandoned the Irish, the Irish had not abandoned James: Against his undisturbed predecessors, they had maintained desultory but implacable war—to him expelled and outlawed they exhibited, as were their character and custom, a perverse loyalty—like their perverse rebellion—blind to its object, atrocious in its measures.

1689. While James and his power lingered in Ireland, he assembled a pseudo-Parliament: he had chosen the members; he chose the measures—the act of repeal, justifying all rebellion, breaking all faith—the act of attainder proscribing thousands by name, and millions by inference—the act for liberty of conscience, licence to the papists, hardship to the reformed—the whole closed with the subversion of established institutions—dilapidation of churches—spoliation of bishopricks—denunciation, plunder, and oppression of the whole protestant community.



VII. From the papist—thus lately tyrannical, now subdued—the protestant thought it justifiable to subtract all power. Obsolete penalties were revived; and new restraint enacted—of their ambition from the senate—their partiality from the magistracy—their force from the field; that influence, often misused, should not be regained, possessions were forfeited—acquisitions 1703. forbidden: that disaffection—as it was natural—should be impotent, weapons of offence were stricken from their hands, and the means of resistance removed, as its causes were multiplied.

The retaliation was complete: not so its justification. William had ratified the articles of Limerick and broke them: a policy useful to him and his near successors, fatal to us, ensuring temporary tranquillity and lasting dissension.—Contempt would have extinguished the catholic superstition, proscription has perpetuated it.

The sword had failed, while both had swords—the law had failed while it existed but for one—the alliance of the law and the sword effected something. It has been called a peace, and a truce—it was a pause—“to the catholics” said



Mr. Grattan eloquently, “a sad servitude,—to “the protestants a drunken triumph,”—but, had James prevailed, it had been to the protestants neither sad nor servitude—but death!—to the catholics a triumph, not drunken, but bloody!—This experience deduces from the ferocious bigotry of that sect at that day—this, history writes or warrants—this, Mr. Grattan, in his candour and intelligence, does not doubt.

1698. VIII. Where the warfare of the nation ceased, that of the parliament began: The English to assume new, or to assert ancient superiority—the Irish to deny the latter, and to resist both. Then Molyneux wrote his “Case of Ireland,”—valuable for its matter—important in its effect—interesting as the dawn of political discussion. It shook the presumption of one parliament, and fortified the confidence of the other. Hence a more modern policy: The seat and style of the discussion was changed; the contest was no longer between the senates themselves, but between the adherents of each in the Irish parliament.

A supremacy more complete than she dared to claim as of right, England now established by



*influence*—a courteous name for profligacy on one side, and prostitution on the other. Hence a degraded population, a hireling aristocracy, a corrupt government—hence the low intrigues, meanness and misery of three generations.

From the reign of William to that of George the III<sup>d</sup>.—a long pause in the annals of our turbulence—during two Jacobite invasions, while 1715. half England was basely hesitating, and Scotland 1745. had treasonably decided between the protestant prince and popish pretender, Ireland was tranquil—in allegiance, sullen perhaps, but unbroken. But this is all the historian has to tell—the rest was the squabble of petty pretenders to power, unimportant even in its day, contemptible in ours; youth became age, and age sank into the grave in silence and ignorance; for our glory nothing was atchieved, for our improvement nothing attempted: almost a century is almost a blank.

IX. With one great exception.—On this gloom one luminary rose, and Ireland worshipped it with Persian idolatry: her true patriot—her first, almost her last. Sagacious and intrepid—he saw, he dared; above suspicion, he was trusted;



above envy, he was beloved; above rivalry, he was obeyed. His wisdom was practical and prophetic—remedial for the present, warning for the future: he first taught Ireland that she might become a nation, and England that she might cease to be a despot. But he was a churchman. His gown impeded his course, and entangled his efforts—guiding a senate, or heading an army, he had been more than Cromwell, and Ireland not less than England: As it was, he saved her by his courage—improved her by his authority—adorned her by his talents—and exalted her by his fame. His mission was but of ten years; and for ten years only, did his personal power mitigate the government; but though no longer feared by the great, he was not forgotten by the wise; his influence, like his writings, has survived a century; and the foundations of whatever prosperity we have since erected, are laid in the disinterested and magnanimous patriotism of Swift.

1724.

1734.

This is not digression—it is instruction; justice to the dead—example to the living:—it is the debt we owe, and the precept we should incul-



cate;—when he is emulated, his country is redeemed.

X. The accession of George the III<sup>d</sup>. is to 1760. Ireland an æra, not of her independence, but of the diffusion of principles, which twenty years after effected, and, in twenty years more, destroyed it.

Of the injustice of England towards America, the retribution was signal, and the result universal. Ambition was foiled, obstinacy subdued, and oppression on one, conferred freedom on both shores of the Atlantic. While her right arm was employed in scourging or curbing America, the reins and rod of Ireland were forced from the other; and distress resigned what generosity would never have bestowed. Ireland thought that she had attained the maturity, at which the pupillage of a people should cease, and she undertook, in the pride of heart, the management 1782. of her own revenues, the regulation of her own family, and the maintenance of her own rank in the society of nations.

Of this revolution—bloodless, or only bought with American blood—Mr. Grattan was the



leader. *His* history is now identified with his country's, and even his character may be assimilated to her's. A mind impetuous and determined—views not always correct, but always generous—an eloquence peculiar and popular, in a delivery somewhat fantastical, but most impressive—gentle manners, a feeling heart—undaunted spirit: in private most of what is amiable—in public much of what is great.—Flattered and reviled alternately and intemperately, he has been worshipped and branded, as saviour and traitor—that exaggeration, this falsehood. What he sought for Ireland he did not always obtain—much of what he obtained has reverted—much of what has not reverted is injurious—this is not *salvation*. True to his party, he too warmly opposed in days of peril whom he thought the authors of that peril, and denounced in the senate whom he thought the aggressors in the conflict—when all had failed, he injudiciously retired. This was not *treason*. But thus living characters are drawn.

The lifetime of our independence was short; its author is still living—his measure already dead—"He sate by its cradle—he followed its "hearse." Murmurs against this dispensation



of Providence have arisen—but unjustly. The being “*from its mother’s womb untimely ripped,*” was faint and feeble; the dissolution, though sudden, was natural—though early, not premature.

Totally separated from England, an independent existence was, perhaps, possible—I do not decide—but while the connexion, however modified, subsisted, it was visionary. The claim of right was extinguished—but the activity of influence was subtilized and invigorated. It was in nature that the greater should rule the less; it was in nature too, that, intoxicated with fancies of freedom, Ireland should revolt at the reality of dependence; too powerful for a province—too weak for a rival—the consequences were inevitable—Rebellion and Union.

X. In force for nearly a century of quiet, the popery laws had been lately mitigated. *Elated* at this favour, while independence was in progress, the catholics expected to be *triumphant*, on its establishment—not unreasonably. Of Great Britain and Ireland they were an inconsiderable sect—of solitary Ireland an important majority; in its narrow scale of politics,

1778.



they hoped for place, perhaps preponderance; in vain—the independence was nominal, the connexion real. Disappointment ensued, and dissatisfaction. Nor were these confined to the catholics. The volunteers, a great body of all religions, heated by popular discussions in military assemblies—confiding in their arms and numbers—bold in their impunity, and infected with licentious politics, they wished what they dared not speak, and would gladly have taken what it were treason to demand,

1783.

XI. In this tumult the catholic was again exigent, and the protestant indifferent, or favourable; further relaxation ensued, and more general tumult.

1784.

Minds became unsettled—the state feeble—insurrection strong; in the north, an armed parliament discussed and despised the laws; but confined itself to speculative treason. In the south there was actual war: midnight insurgents seized whole counties at the close of the day, the populace rose—and all was confusion, and cruelty, flakes of fire and streams of blood, till the dawn; evils real or imaginary, the excuses—evils monstrous and inevitable, the



consequences. They evaded the law—they escaped the sword; at last they defied both. The nights were nights of plunder—the days of punishment—and both of horror. 1787.

Then, as now, the disease was referred to the severities of the popery code, and to the system—the remedy suggested in the repeal of both. But the alleged grounds of Irish insurrection are seldom real. The rebellion is raised first, and the grievance found afterwards: as between individuals of our nation, the quarrel often precedes the ostensible offence.

XII. While further indulgences to the catholics were granted, and others in progress, the French revolution, having filled its own country brimful with misery, began to overflow upon ours. Much of that event Ireland had already anticipated—for the rest she was prepared. She had had her national convention—her national guards—her reform—and her constitution; she too was doomed to have her rebellion—her desolation. The course somewhat less bloody—the event more fortunate—but neither totally dissimilar. 1792.



1793.

Again, the claims of the catholics, and again, the concession of the government ; the offensive code repealed in *more* than they desired—almost all that it contained ; nothing reserved but the command of armies—the dignities of the law—the senate and the throne.

And thus the question now stands!—where will it rest?

XIII. In obtaining these concessions, Mr. Grattan was aided by the Lords Mountjoy and O'Neil, the earliest friends of the catholics—the first victims of the rebellion. Against them stood—sometimes alone—Fitzgibbon, Earl of Clare : a man not to be omitted in even a *sketch* of Irish history. Of extraordinary endowments, great acquisitions, and transcendant arrogance. Bold and voluble in his speech, daring in his counsels, and fixed in his resolves, the stature of his mind overtopped his associates, and collected upon him the eyes of all—the shafts of many : an humble origin could not moderate his pride, though success and almost supreme power seemed to temper it. In wrath, less violent—than sudden ; in revenge, not frequent—but implacable ; he deserved more political friends—fewer



enemies : but there was something in him that would be obeyed, and his opponents fled, and his party fell before his victorious and envied ascendancy. As chancellor,—like Shaftesbury—he had no enemy, and administered justice with undivided applause. In private he was amiable ; to his family, his friends, and his followers—indulgent, faithful, generous, and kind. In peaceful times he would have been beloved—and lost.—In days of ferment, if a demagogue, he would have subverted, as, when minister, he supported the pillars of the state.

The popish religion he thought unfavourable to freedom and knowledge—its professors hostile to the government and constitution. Hence, his opposition to all indulgences of that sect ; always consistent—often imprudent.

As Mr. Grattan is called traitor—so is Lord Clare—tyrant ; with equal falsehood : When prejudices shall be buried in the graves of these illustrious rivals, we shall probably confess that both were sincere, both fallible ; both honest—both mistaken ;—human in their errors and parties—immortal for their virtues and patriotism.



1798.

XIV. The hordes of petty rebels, that for twenty years, under twenty barbarous names and pretences, had harassed the land, now sank into one great union against all civil and ecclesiastical institutions—the legacy of the American contest paid by France. The conflagration was general; war on every side—in Ulster of politics—elsewhere of bigotry. The dissenter fought—the papist massacred—the loyalist cut down both. Some provocation there may have been—much vengeance there was; but where most, if any provocation, least slaughter, no cruelty: where no previous oppression, most blood, much torture. The details of this rebellion—realizing all we read of 1641—I bequeath to the bigotry of both parties—its objects however are interesting to the enlightened; that of the dissenters—a republic; that of the papists—popish ascendancy; of both connexion with France, separation from England: Its results are too important; union with England, separation from France, and both, it would seem, eternal.

XV. From the principles of 1782 sprang inevitable connexion with France, or union with England. The late atrocities decided and acce-



lerated the choice—not without hesitation. A haughty aristocracy and a proud people did not easily resign their power and their name; nor an aspiring gentry their hopes; all about to be lost in British ascendancy. The aversion was almost unanimous, and twice victorious. But Mr. Pitt was undaunted: enlightened and intrepid, he saw that this vital measure, once proposed, must be carried, or the country lost. On the object he was fixed, and of the means not scrupulous—deceit of the good—intimidation of the weak—exasperation of parties, and a wide corruption.

Nor did his opponents, while denouncing, decline to imitate his practices; both parties, let us own, addressed themselves to the best passions of mankind, and to the worst; but with different success—the honest preferred England to France, the base, possession to expectancy, and the act of union was passed—strange to add, without bloodshed. But the parties had been rather enthusiastic than cordial. Each feared its own success; the opposition theirs, as dangerous—the unionists theirs, as degrading—to the country. The victory was without triumph, and the defeat without dejection.



XVI. The earl of Hardwicke's succeeded the union administration. His manners were gentle, but insincere—his mind elegant, but vindictive—his intentions, if pure, perverted. His councils,—by his friends alleged not to be his own,—were, towards the end of his administration, weak and double. By his public and private gentleness—some ostentatious charity and the universal purchase of the press, the shadow of popularity was acquired--and with this shadow he was contented, and England deceived, and Ireland darkened. Inactivity on the one part, was mildness and conciliation--sullenness on the other, content and gratitude. On this calm of conciliation and content 1803. burst forth another rebellion—short in its duration—contemptible in its actions—but serious in its unsounded depth and unknown extent. The policy of that day under-rated the danger—and the peril of Ireland was forgotten in a squabble between the Governor and the General.

XVII. In aid of the union the catholics had been courted—but the ministers had promised what they could not perform, and absconded from their offices to save their credits. They had now returned to power—and the holders of the pro-



mises demanded their amount. The minister did not refuse, but asked time, to pay. He would have temporized, but England is not tolerant of popery, nor Ireland of suspense; both parties hastened on to a discussion, in which the catholic was successfully opposed by some, who had, two years before, favoured—and violently supported by others, who, two years after, sacrificed him. Such are the inconsistencies of faction.

1805.

Ireland sank back into her silence—and all again was mild and grateful and hollow, till the departure of Lord Hardwicke, bequeathing to his successor insurrection in five counties, and discontent in twenty.

XVIII. That successor was John Duke of Bedford, amiable and honourable, but by party connections unfitted for the station of viceroy. He was the heir of the influence of his brother Francis, the inconsistent Duke, whose democratical folly Burke has immortalized; he inherited likewise his politics and party; that party Mr. Fox—that great and weak, that amiable but mischievous man—conducted in England, and the Ponsonbies in Ireland. In opposition at the time of the

1806.



French revolution, they naturally and unfortunately connected themselves with the friends of that event. But that event was too strong for them and for itself. Revolution became subversion—entangled in its anarchy they could neither restrain their associates, nor disengage themselves, and Europe saw with wonder a British aristocracy interchanging praises and principles with the democrats of France.

XIX. Heartily they repented, but in private; and, until they had given ministerial proofs of their conversion, they possessed the disgraceful confidence of the disaffected in both countries. At their exaltation the intemperance of their late associates in Ireland knew no bounds: The advent of the Whig viceroy was hailed by the voices that had before hailed the coming of the French. To his first levee crowded, in the levelling audacity of their joy, persons of every rank except the highest—of every description but the loyal: from their concealment or exile suddenly emerged the unexecuted patriots of 1798, bearding and insulting the very magistrates before whom they had been convicted: Some indiscreet legal promotions, some ill-advised civil appointments



raised to confidence the hopes of those fanatics ; but raised only to overthrow. The viceroy, awakened to his sense and dignity, and the chancellor,\* illustrious by his birth and talents, were disgusted at the vulgar fellowship, and alarmed at the traitorous insolence. They did something, and should have done more, to the repression of both ; but they wished not, or dared not to exasperate an unforgiving faction, and by their want of decision lost one party without gaining the other : all were disaffected or dissatisfied.

May I here indulge a private sentiment, and hope that the ancient and eminent house of Ponsonby has finally resumed its pride and station—that baseness and ingratitude have not shown themselves in vain—that delusion private and political has vanished for ever—that the tranquillity of our native land may again be its triumph, and the hatred of our enemies its popularity.

XX. The intreaties and intrigues of the ministry, their late partizans, and the adverse opinion of many of their own sect, could not dissuade the catholics from another parliamentary

\* George Ponsonby.



appeal for indulgence. I cannot blame their resolution; I did not think it untimely; I can never think it unjust; but I blame, I denounce, as traitorous to the constitution, and ruinous to their cause, the speeches then published by their pretended and pernicious friends—fatal advocates—if, indeed, their object was catholic emancipation, and not catholic insurrection.

To stifle this appeal, that threatened it with dissolution, the ministry proposed a substitute—an expedient—to buy the catholic cheaply, to deceive the king safely, to establish themselves permanently. It had a double face, this measure; and I scarcely know by which to describe it: It was represented—to the catholic, as opening to him every rank of military honour—to the king, as giving nothing new, but merely raising the *English* catholic to the *Irish* level: In Dublin, it was a triumph to Ireland; at Windsor, it was justice to England: but the fraud met its fate; the British king refused to decorate the Roman triumph. Scorned by the sovereign, the catholic, and the protestant—the ministry were driven from the cabinet, and at the ensuing



elections hardly found their way into the senate.

I regret, not the loss of this bill, but that it—or a more liberal—was not candidly proposed, and honestly carried. I lament, not that the ministers have lost their places, but that their deserved failure has disgraced and endangered a good cause, and disappointed and disturbed an unhappy people.

XXI. Thus far we have walked in the footsteps of time, and heard the voice of history—Events lead us to experience, experience to improvement; there remain then for inquiry the present evil—the future remedy.

Nations have moral as well as physical climates, and no good is practicable—no institution can be permanent, that is not fitted to the national temperament. The plant of the east withers in the west, the animal of the north degenerates in the south. We have but lately and imperfectly learned, that political modes which exalt one country may debase another.



The self-confidence of England in her system, is wisdom at home and folly abroad : she would have Corsica and India, like Wales or Devon, and has lost one and risked the loss of the other. France, by a contrary species of the same madness, introduced foreign principles into her government, and lost herself. Humanity rejoices that she has risen from the grave of democracy ; and those even, who think worst of her Deliverer, assent to my reasoning, by attributing his success to the wise congeniality of his institutions.

Ireland—and in a greater degree than other countries—has feelings that must be flattered ; and prejudices and habits, that, to be conquered, must be soothed. She must not be stretched on the procrustan bed, or lopped or lengthened to an iron scale. Those that legislate for her should know her, and their system should be elastic and accommodating.

Thus impressed, I trace the outline of our manners freely, and, if I can, truly.

XXII. Its popular character and customs distinguish and disincline Ireland from England.



Varieties have been sought in the national disposition, referable to the double origin of the people: in vain: however differing in rank, party or ancestry, they bear the indelible mark of a common nativity. Restless yet indolent, shrewd and indiscreet, impetuous, impatient, and improvident, instinctively brave, thoughtlessly generous; quick to resent and forgive offences, to form and renounce friendships; they will forgive injury rather than insult; their country's good they seldom, their own they carelessly pursue, but the honour of both they eagerly vindicate; oppression they have long borne, insolence never.

With genius they are profusely gifted; with judgment sparingly; to acquire knowledge they find more easy than to arrange and employ it: inferior in vanity only to the French, and in wit superior even to the Italian, they are more able to give, and more ready to receive amusement, than instruction: in raillery and adulation they freely indulge, and without malignity or baseness. It is the singular temper of this people that they are prone equally to satirize and to praise, and patient alike of sarcasm and flattery.



Inclining to exaggerate, but not intending to deceive, you will applaud them rather for sincerity than truth. Accuracy is not the merit, nor duplicity the failing of a lively but neglected and uncultivated people. Their passions lie on the surface unsheltered from irritation or notice : and cautious England is glad to recognize the Irish character only by those inconsistencies and errors, which her own novercal government has produced or perpetuated.

XXIII. In their domestic life, the gentry and traders differ from the English of equal rank, not in essentials, but in modes. Here are less neatness and œconomy, more enjoyment and society. Emulative profusion is an Irish folly. The gentry would rival the nobility; the merchant affects to surpass, and the shopkeeper to approach, the splendour of the gentry. Hence patrimonies are dilapidated; hence capital is diverted from business to pleasure; the profit of one enterprize is not, as in England, embarked in another, but sunk in a villa or an equipage. The English trader bequeaths, the Irish enjoys; but his enjoyment is not often elegant, nor always secure.



The nobility and affluent gentry spend much, or all their fortunes and time in England; leaving their places to be filled, in the country, by hired agents—in the city, by a plebeian aristocracy: the former, solely engaged in encreasing and collecting rents, can have little conciliatory power with the people; and the influence of the latter tends rather to encrease than diminish the political danger.

A great evil. Not because the country is drained by remittances, but because she is widowed of her natural protectors; the loss is, not of money, but manners—not of wealth, but of civilization and peace.

XXIV. The condition of the peasant was of late utterly, and is still almost, barbarous. What the Romans found the Britons and Germans, the Britons found the Irish—and left them: neglect or degeneracy of the colonists, and obstinacy of the natives, have preserved even to our day living proofs of the veracity of Cæsar and Tacitus: Of this, many will affect to be incredulous—of the Irish, lest it diminish the character of the country—of the English, because it arraigns the wis-



dom and policy of their system. But the experienced know it to be true, and the impartial will own it.

The cultivator of the land seldom holds from the inheritor; between them stand a series of sub-landlords and tenants, each receiving a profit from his lessee, but having no further interest or connexion with the soil; the last in the series must provide for the profits of all—he therefore parcels out, at rack rents, the land to his miserable tenant. Here is no yeomanry—no agricultural capitalist; no degree between the landlord and labourer; the words “peasantry” and “poor” synonymously employed.

XXV. Their dwellings are of primitive and easy construction—the walls and floors of clay, the roof of sod or thatch: within are two unequal divisions; in the smaller, filthy and unfurnished, you will hardly suppose the whole family to sleep; in the larger, on a hearth, without grate or chimney, a scanty fire warms rather by its smoke, than its blaze, and discolours whatever it warms. —Glazed windows there are none, the open door amply sufficing for light and air, to those



who are careless of either. Furniture they neither have nor want;—their food and its preparation are simple, potatoes or oaten cakes, sour milk, and sometimes salted fish. In drink they are not so temperate: of all spirituous liquors they are immoderately fond, but most of whiskey, the distilled extract of fermented corn. In many districts, by an ingenious and simple process, they prepare this liquor themselves, but clandestinely, and to the great injury of national morals and revenue. Were they allowed, by private distillation, to indulge their taste for inebriety, their own vice would more effectually subdue them than centuries of war.

XXVI. Their dress is mean and squalid; particularly of the females, whom you would not always distinguish from men by their attire. Of personal cleanliness they have no care. Both sexes wear in winter and summer, long woollen coats or cloaks, derived from, and similar to, the sagum of their ancestors. The children are generally half, and sometimes altogether naked, living, without distinction of sexes, in dirt and mire, almost with the cattle. Yet from this nakedness



and filth, they grow up to that strength and stature for which they are admirable.

XXVII. The peasantry of Ireland are generally of the Roman Catholic religion, but utterly and disgracefully ignorant—few among them can read, fewer write. The Irish language, a barbarous jargon, is generally, and in some districts exclusively spoken: and with it are retained customs and superstitions as barbarous. Popish legends and Pagan tradition are confounded and revered: for certain holy wells and sacred places they have extraordinary respect: thither crowd, the sick for cure, and the sinful for expiation, and their priests, deluded or deluding, enjoin those pilgrimages as penance, or applaud them, when voluntary, as piety. The religion of such a people is not to be confounded with one of the same name professed by the enlightened nations of Europe.—The University of Paris has some tenets, in common, perhaps, with the Irish papist, but does *it* believe that water restores the cripple, enlightens the blind, or purifies the guilty?

XXVIII. In agricultural pursuits they are neither active nor expert: hereditary indolence



would incline them to employ their lands in pasturage, and it is often more easy to induce them to take arms, for their country, or against it, than to cultivate the earth, and wait upon the seasons. Even at this day the sons of the old inheritors are suspected of being more ready to regain their possessions by their blood, than by their labour. Their very amusements are polemical; fighting is a pastime which they seldom assemble without enjoying; not, indeed, with iron weapons, but with clubs, which they always carry, and frequently and skilfully use. When not driven by necessity to labour, they willingly consume whole days in sloth, or as willingly employ them in riot; strange diversity of nature, to love indolence and hate quiet—to be reduced to slavery, but not yet to obedience.

XXIX. Who will call this people civilized, or wonder that they are turbulent?—Who confide in the empiric promising to cure so complicated a disorder by a single specific?—It is but too plain that there is something to be lamented, and, if possible, changed, in the character of the nation—much in its habits—more in the accidental circumstances in which it languishes; and it is



also evident that no individual remedy can reach and reform evils so heterogeneous. Party indeed is blind, and ignorance adventurous, but when the state of Ireland is hereafter discussed in the Imperial Senate, we trust that few may be found of the prejudiced, and none of the ignorant.

XXX. Friendly—on principles and conditions hereafter to be developed—to catholic emancipation, I cannot believe it panaceatic—alone beneficial—alone necessary. It will be a part—perhaps great—probably small—of any enlightened system of Irish policy: but it is not itself a system.

*Who* can be emancipated, and from *what*? At most six Lords—one hundred and fifty commoners—and twenty ecclesiastics—from four or five disabilities, which reach not—interest not the mass of their community. Theorists trace from the political exclusion of the peer, the mental debasement of the peasant—truly, perhaps, in a people affluent and enlightened;—truly in small and polished states; falsely in a great mass of penury and ignorance. Dispel the gloom—enrich the penury, the crowd may then—and not till then—



become sympathetic to the feelings of honour and ambition: Hence, I reason, that to mere emancipation there are previous paramount duties; that enlightening two millions of catholics is more important than indulging two hundred.

But the Irish protestant, has he no grievance—labours he under no disability? has he no cause, or taint of disaffection? Your protestant tenants—few in numbers;—your protestant artizans and manufacturers, a great and pining population—ask them for a description of their exclusive paradise. In all that regards happiness and power you will find them to be catholics, reading the liturgy; as the catholics are protestants, singing the mass. Emancipate *them*, emancipate all;—vivify your country—not in details, but in generals—not in extremities, but at the heart.

XXXI. To catalogue and class the diseases and remedies would be a treatise. I only sketch—happy if what I write hastily be read at all.

Compendiously, then—the springs of our misfortune are five-fold:—1. the ignorance—2. the poverty—3. the political debasement of the infe-



rior orders: 4. the catholic code: 5. the provinciality of the government.

1. Domestic œconomy, agricultural improvement, the love and knowledge of the laws, the detection and expulsion of superstition, the growth and influence of true piety, who can expect them among a people utterly dark and blind? Of four millions—the probable population—one million perhaps can write and read—of this million, three-fourths are protestants and protestant dissenters:—there remains a solid mass of dangerous and obstinate ignorance—not all—but chiefly—catholic. The laws of God they take on trust—of the land on guess, and despise or insult both. The Government publishes proclamations—the rebel chiefs manifestoes—the rebel soldier reads neither—his spiritual or secular leader he follows into *implicit* treason; incapable of discussing motives or being enlightened by results: and thus the folly and defeat of one insurrection do not deter from another.

In all our perils—it is an important truth—the real danger is in those who cannot read, the true security in those who can. Superior knowledge



is one cause and branch of the Protestant ascendancy—from which the Catholics must emancipate themselves.

XXXII. The remedy of this evil must be sought in its causes,—a narrow and sectarian plan of public education,—the mistaken policy of the Popish priesthood,—the absence or indolence of the established clergy,—sources of more and greater evils than Ireland thinks, or England would believe.

To the Government, I should say, “Educate your people;”—I care not by what system, if it be capacious, nor at what cost, if it be productive.

Between systems of public instruction I will not decide; *that*, however, must be preferable, which acts most by incitement, and least by force. I should even—not unhesitatingly—venture to propose, that those only should vote at elections, who could write and read their own affidavits of registry. This principle is not novel in our constitution; our wise ancestors promoted learning by granting, even to criminals, the benefit of clergy.



Would it not be as efficacious, and more just, to extend to a certain proficiency in letters, not pardon, but privilege—not impunity in crime, but advancement in political power? Is it not monstrous in theory as well as practice, that the grossest ignorance should influence the choice of a legislator, as much as the most cultivated understanding—that the enlightened should be overborne in the highest exercise of rational liberty by the rude and barbarous? Yet thus it is, and the primary assemblies of Ireland are swayed by brutal ignorance and profligate perjury.

We have seen in some counties the majority of constituents driven, like cattle, to the hustings. We have seen them—unable even to speak English—attempt to poll in Irish. We know that these miserable creatures are weapons wielded by the gentry against each other at elections, and by demagogues against the gentry in rebellions. Is this to be borne?—From such turbid and poisoned sources can the stream be pure and salutary?

To the Catholic priesthood I should say, “You profess to be ministers of light, not of darkness,



you *should* advance learning, you SHALL not impede it—your tenets shall not be invaded, but your flocks SHALL be instructed—the ointment producing blindness shall be used no longer. If you will not co-operate in a generous system of national education, expect no favour from the nation: you shall have none.”

But to the established clergy what shall I urge? The times, momentous to all, are critical to them; their flocks turbulent, their revenues invaded, their very hierarchy assailed;—these are not days for sloth. Ireland is divided into 2500 parishes, melted down into 1200 benefices, on which there are but 1000 churches; the 1200 beneficed clergy of these 2500 parishes, where are they? one-third of them are not resident—absentees from their duties—mortmainers upon the land! The catholic priest, the dissenting minister, the methodist preacher, are they supine or absent?—Are they without proselytes and converts, without interest or influence with the people? A friend to religion, I am an enemy to salaried idleness. To 2500 parishes I would have 2500 parsons; no curates at fifty, nor absentees at two thousand pounds a year; no starving zeal, no lazy



affluence. The establishment, which laymen are invoked to defend, churchmen should support by their presence, dignify by their piety, and extend by their example.

XXXIII. 2. Of the exactions of the owners, and the indigence of the cultivators of land, miserable are the consequences. Landlords without friends or influence—a peasantry, without interest, almost without livelihood in the country—nothing to defend—nothing to love—despairing and desperate—ripe and ready for change.

The evil is plain, the remedy not so evident.

The price of the use of land, can—at least should—never be restrained by law; free competition is the life-blood of commerce, and the relation of landlord and tenant, in the matter of rents, is purely commercial. The appeal therefore is to the good feeling and good policy of the landholders.

In England the law of public opinion, as well as the law of reason, terrifies a landlord from the plunder of his estate—much of it is at



his will; but his will is wisdom, or the wisdom of others restrains his will; and he is glad—or obliged—to content himself with just profits strictly paid, by a thriving tenantry. Where there is a protection on one side, fidelity on the other, and confidence on both, the fairest tenure is at will: rents then fluctuate with the price of produce, and the results are profits duly apportioned. These results theorists propose to obtain by conditional leases, and clauses of surrender and redemption, but unfortunately it is still a theorem.

In Ireland, tenure at will, is indefinite oppression—tenure by lease, oppression by lease; rents are, not the proportions of, but nearly the whole produce. The actual cultivator seldom better paid than by scanty food, ragged raiment, and a miry hovel; nothing saved for exigencies—nothing remitted for capital.—The peasant and the land alike neglected, impoverished and starved.

The theorist says, this, like other commerce, will find its level.



Experience says to the theorist, it will not. The peasant's spirit is broken—he thinks not of independence,—dreams not of property, unless in dreams of insurrection. His wishes have no scope; he is habituated to derive from his land and his labour, only his daily potatoe: and we know, that competitors offer the whole value of the produce, minus that daily potatoe—sometimes more than the whole value is promised, and nothing paid; the tenant, for a few months, appeases his hunger; quarter day approaches,—he absconds; and the absentee landlord in Dublin or London, exclaims at the knavery of an Irish tenant.

In the mere spirit of trade, what can landlords expect from tenants without capital or credit? From impoverishing the fountains of their wealth? From denying their factors even a commission on their profits?

But a landlord is not a mere land merchant; he has duties to perform as well as rents to receive; and from his neglect of the former, spring his difficulty in the latter, and the general misery and distraction of a country. The combinations of the peasantry against this short-sighted mono-



poly, are natural and fatal. Whoever assembles the Irish, disturbs them; disturbance soon coalesces with treason, and the suicide avarice, that drives the peasantry to combine, precipitates them to rebel.

XXXIV. Tythes—the pretence, therefore, and cause of an hundred insurrections—belong to this part of the subject. A tax more vexatious than oppressive, and more impolitic than either: vexatious, because paid directly and in kind, at unequal and fluctuating rates: impolitic, because it is vexatious—because a people, unanimous in this alone, declaim against it—because it might be replaced by a more equal, certain, and satisfactory imposition.

But they are not unjust—not even oppressive—rather profitable to the tenant, computed as a tenth in his bargain, seldom amounting to a twentieth in his payment. Nor are they levied from the popish peasant, for the protestant parson. By the peasant, popish or protestant, they are not in fact paid; for his head-



rent is always diminished by more than their amount. Those who occupy tythe-free lands pay, in the encreased rent, a double tythe—hence follow, that tithes are really the contribution of the landlords; and that to abolish them, without condition or substitute, would be a direct donative to the rich, at the expence of the clergy and the poor.

If abolished, they must be replaced, or the church establishment overthrown—the latter alternative I dismiss from my thoughts: and shall only consider of the fittest substitute. I disregard—as an obstacle—the divine origin of tythes; and disallow the claims of the church to them, as the hereditary property of those, whose clerical character is not itself hereditary. In Levi's family it might be just, that tythes should descend, because the priesthood did; but here they are—as they should be—the property of the state, that pays its ecclesiastical, as it does its civil, military, and fiscal officers, with equal powers of change, modification, and controul.

It has been proposed to replace them—by “a



commutation for glebe," impracticable from its complication;—"a corn rent," more oppressive and vexatious than the present evil;—"an acreable land-tax," less objectionable, but unsatisfactory and unequal, as computed on the unalterable measure, and not on the various and fluctuating values of land.

I propose a system—not perfect perhaps, but preferable. *A poundage upon all rents*; not of a tenth, perhaps not a twentieth, probably of a thirtieth or fortieth.

The clergy, in great towns, are amply and cheerfully paid, by a rate on the estimated value of each house. My proposition would improve and extend this system over the whole country.

In 1787, an intelligent prelate computed the average of each clergyman's annual income, at 133*l.* 6*s.* I will suppose it now to be 250*l.*—the benefices fewer than 1200—the ecclesiastical establishment less, therefore, than 300,000*l.*—But 6*d.* in the pound—one-fortieth—on the rent-roll of Ireland, would produce 500,000*l.* A sum



adequate to the payment of ALL the clergy, protestant, catholic, and dissenting.

I pass over the details, I trust practicable, to arrive at the results, certainly beneficial—the peasantry relieved, at least appeased—the landlord secured—the protestant clergy amply indemnified—the catholic priesthood, the servants of the British empire, not of Rome, their power of good encreased, of evil destroyed, and their present precarious and illegal livelihoods replaced by a constitutional and honourable provision—a chief cause of animosity eradicated, and the country indulged, improved, perhaps tranquillized, by the extension of a principle already familiar and approved.

XXXV. 3. The practical debasement of the lower orders of society, is compounded of their ignorance and poverty, already examined—of the injustice or contumely of their superiors, to discuss which, might exasperate these, inflame the others, and injure all,—and lastly, of the dearth and difficulty of legal redress, not to be passed over unlamented—unreprehended.



The law has never thoroughly mingled itself with Ireland; there lately were, perhaps still are, districts impervious to the king's writs—castles fortified against the sheriff, and legal estates invaded by force of arms—contumacies, not frequent indeed, but from which an enquirer will deduce, not unfairly, ordinary disrespect for the law. This in civil cases. In criminal—how large a share of our jurisprudence—witnesses not unfrequently suborned, intimidated or murdered—juries subdued—felons acquitted. In common transactions, the administration by justices of the peace, sometimes partial—generally despised, and unsatisfactory. The body—in England so effective—of mayors, bailiffs, and constables, unknown, or known as a jest. Parish offices, sinecures: The great man and the strong man executing, the poor and weak suffering, the law.

The blame is not easily apportioned—much is in the pride and folly of the gentry: much in the native perverseness of the people: much in the indifference of the government: something in an indiscreet nomination of magistrates: more, and most of all, in the exorbitant taxation of legal



proceedings, by which the law has become, not a refuge to the poor, but a luxury to the rich. The courts are open to the indigent, only as spectators; the peasant, oppressed or defrauded to the amount of 10*l.*—cannot buy even a chance of redress in the lottery of the law for less than 60*l.* By victory or defeat he is equally and irremediably ruined. This system *must* be amended—abandoned.

I consider the habitual weakness of the law, as the first cause of the habitual weakness of the land, from Henry to George.

The thoughts of those who read for ideas, not words, will fill up my outline. Let us hope that the wisdom of the legislature will soon erase it.

XXXVI. 4. On the subject of catholic emancipation all men speak and write, but few candidly—its supporters and its opponents are equally injudicious or unjust; the reason is, that the parties of the state have divided the question between them; and contest it, not for its sake, but their own: it is the means, not the object of the war.



The Roman empire was divided into two factions, and the green and the blue distracted the civilized world. Did the civilized world bleed for the colour of an actor's coat, when they seemed to do so? No. They bled for their party, not for its symbol. Catholic emancipation is the green and blue of Ireland, the colour of the division, not the cause. This, Emmett and Mc. Nevin, liberal, sagacious, and well informed, have admitted: though Keogh, Newport, and Parnel, furious, shallow, and bigoted, deny it.

How else could half a nation so pertinaciously seek, and the other half refuse an almost empty privilege? How else can it have happened that every concession has produced commotion, and complaint encreased as the grievance disappeared? Twenty years ago there was much to desire, and to refuse, and the catholic code was scarcely thought of: there now remains, unconceded, nothing in which the *people* are concerned. Yet to the catholic code is attributed all our misfortunes. The truth is, the parties have made the question, not the question the parties.



XXXVII. Let us review and refute the sophisms of both; and first of the emancipators. 1. 'The merits of the catholics.'—What merits? They have been loyal in 1745 and 1797: perhaps in 1798 and in 1803: but if they were—as they were not—unexceptionably loyal, what is the merit? Is it a virtue not to be criminal; is, not to rebel, supererogation? Admit, however, the merit: has it not been already rewarded? A century of penalties remitted in half a score of years, is it no boon? Admit, still, that the reward was inadequate; We then ask, was the catholic so much *more* loyal than the protestant, that the latter should be stripped of his ascendancy to clothe the former? The conclusion is, that he, who vaunts his loyalty as a merit, has little merit in his loyalty, and that when catholic merit is pleaded against the ascendancy, protestant merit should be pleaded for it, and a balance struck.

2. The emancipators allege 'the force and power of the catholic body,' and apply the argument doubly; offering assistance—or threatening opposition. What new assistance can we have? Two-thirds of our military are already



catholics; because two-thirds of our population are so. If the proportion of catholic soldiers and sailors be greater, it is and will be so, because they are the poorer sect; poverty, in all countries, takes refuge in the armies; nor would catholic emancipation make one man in Ireland a soldier, who had wealth enough to remain a citizen. Thus vanishes their promised aid. Their hostility I do not fear. The catholic force can never be united against the present establishment of law and property; and, if it should, it would find that physical strength is not the best part of power.

3. It has been alleged that 'all our disturbances have sprung from the hardships under which the catholics labour.' What is this, but to say that they are *not* patient and loyal—that the rebellions and massacres, which we hoped were political, have all been *catholic*; the works of a perverse and pestilent sect, incapable of gratitude, unworthy of indulgence, unfit for toleration. Such is the false and detestable allegation of the partizan, espousing the catholic cause without affection, and calumniating his friends to dupe his opponents. But let *us* not charge upon the catholic as a crime, the frenzy of his advocate.



4. 'The moral injustice of the catholic laws' is vehemently urged, but not easily proved. The papists, when able, proscribed the protestant: the victorious protestant copied the papist statute against its enacters. We may doubt that this was wise, but not that it was just. Who pities the inventor and victim of the brazen bull? 'But it is unjust,' the catholics add, 'that the minority of a people should restrict the majority, which majority we are.' True, numerically, as two exceed one. But if rank, property, education, industry, skill, manners, intelligence—the essence of a nation—be estimated, they are, of Ireland even, a weak minority; as, both numerically and morally, they are of the empire at large.

Finally, their plea should be, not of their force, nor of their numbers, but of their moderation, liberality and innocuous tenets; if they prove the former, without the latter, they prove against themselves.

XXXVIII. Their adversaries have but little advantage over them in the argument. The fear



of the protestant, like the complaint of the papist, comes too late. It strains at the gnat, having swallowed the camel.

I can well conceive why Lord Clare would have strangled papist privilege in its birth; why he feared to make the first plunge down the declivity of concession; why he refused power to the numerous and dangerous. But I cannot conceive, why we should now feel this after-alarm; why, having rushed down precipices, we stop short at a slope; why we indulge the populace, and restrict the few, the rich, the noble, and the loyal.

If we fear the revengeful bigotry of the papist, let us not exasperate, without disarming him. The power of the gentry and priesthood, let us conciliate or unnerve; we are in a practical dilemma. We must resume all that we have granted, or grant all that we retain.

I, confidently, advise the latter course.

XXXIX. Before the union, this perfect tol-



ration was impracticable. No state religion has ever dared to indulge a sectarian majority. France persecuted the protestant; England the papist; and Scotland both; and all succeeded. Scotland becoming *predominantly* presbyterian, France, catholic, and England, protestant, persecution ceased, and toleration began. Ireland is almost the only country in the world, which has not had the disgrace and benefit of active persecution. There was enough to exasperate—not extinguish. But what early intolerance might have effected, the union has accomplished. The established *now* out-number the sectaries, and the catholic assertion of ‘force,’ and the protestant of ‘danger,’ are equally absurd.

Do we fear a papist parliament?—All the freeholders of the empire must first become papists, and then, emancipated or not, the parliament will, and ought to, be papist:—a papist king? it cannot be, till parliament and people are papist; then so should the king—papist judges and generals?—Why not; if upright and skilful. Their talents we may employ, but their bigotry we cannot fear, till the king is papist, and in



that event, however we now decide, there must be papist generals and judges.

History is called in to deceive us, not to enlighten; to bear witness of the popish tyrants John and James—and to omit Harry and Charles. We forget, too, how we *did* subdue John, and expel James, and would again, the imitator of either. Every thing is forgotten, but passion and party, and a great nation wastes its strength and reputation in antiquated follies and differences about nothing.

XL. I conclude, that the catholic lawyer, soldier, gentry, priesthood, and nobility, should be admitted to all the honours of their professions and ranks: That one torch of discord at least should be extinguished: That a nominal but degrading distinction should be abolished in a nation that fears the name of degradation, more even than the reality; That this should be done, because in politics words are things—because wisdom relieves real grievances, and policy, even the fictitious; because evil cannot result from this good, or, if it can, is counter-



balanced, or if not counter-balanced, may be remedied, as before.

Trade; when free, finds its level. So will religion. The majority will no more persist—when it is not a point of *honour* to do so,—in the worse faith, than it would in the worse trade. Councils decide that the confession of Augsburg is heresy; and parliaments vote that popery is superstition, and both impotently. No man will ever be converted, when his religion is also his party.

XLI. But expedient as catholic emancipation may be, I think it only expedient, and concede it, not without the following conditions: 1. That no violence be done to the constitution, by forcing from any of the three estates, a reluctant consent. If obstacles arise, they must be surmounted by time, by patience, and by the law. 2. That the priesthood be catholic, but not popish:—paid by the state—approved by the crown—and independent of all foreign controul. 3. That a wide and liberal system of national education be adopted by the legislature, and promoted by every sect. 4. Either



that my former proposition concerning voters at elections be adopted, or that 40s. freeholders be disfranchised altogether, lest numerous ignorance overwhelm education and wealth.

5. That the concession, general or restricted, be *final*; and that no Roman Catholic shall partake of the advantages, till he shall have acknowledged the immutability of this arrangement.

But if, at last, this measure be found impracticable, others more important and effective may be carried. I have enumerated them: and, I solemnly assert, as my most mature opinion, that without *them*, catholic emancipation would *not* tranquillize the country; and that they, without it, would. From those whom the penal laws would still affect we have nothing to fear: from those whom poverty, ignorance, and oppression brutalize, we have nothing to hope.

XLII. 5. On the defects of the Government of Ireland, this is not a season to dilate. Some of them are inevitable, and the correction of the rest cannot be accelerated—may be retarded, by discussion: what in other times might assuage, would in ours inflame.



Three sources of danger may, I think, without encrease of danger, be noticed.

A quicksand government, that swallows in its fluctuations every venture of reform. In seven years we have had four Chief Governors and eight Chief Secretaries of different principles and parties, each stifling the abortive system of his predecessor by a system as abortive.

In Abbott, active and indefatigable, not intending only, but attempting—putting months to more profit than others years; the Commons may have found their best Speaker, but Ireland lost too soon her ablest Minister.

And Wickham, Nepean, Vansittart, Long, and Elliott, what, in a few months, could they attain of information, or accomplish of reform?

With all their varied and various talents they were impotent; and years have elapsed and administrations reigned, without any change to Ireland but of years and administrations.

Do we think either that local knowledge is unnecessary to an Irish Minister—or that the King can confer it as he does a title?



Wavering is weakness—weakness in Ireland is wickedness. Leave with, or send to us, ministers, knowing us, whom we know : coolly planning—steadily executing : not a secretary with every season, and a system with every secretary.

Not to be forgotten is the madness or malice of parliamentary factions—surviving one senate—disturbing another ; brandishing Ireland against the minister, not the enemy. She complains not less of the neglect of administrations, than of the notice of oppositions—their false friendship—their inflammatory pity—their hollow and hypocritical help.

But a more pressing danger impends from those who have as their object or pretence, the repeal of union : to many of the loyal an object : to all the disaffected a pretence.

When the friend of Ireland, the partizan of France, and the enemy of England may coalesce, the coalition is alarming, however specious the pretext. Treason will shelter itself under its loyal associates, till it dare to cast them off. It will use and dupe them.



My opinion I have already delivered, that, in our circumstances, the union, whether good or evil, was inevitable. The present posture of politics strengthens that opinion. Whatever is not England, must be France.

Will those even who may dissent from this, dare to promise, that the repeal would place us where we originally stood ; that popular commotion can be put under settlement—that 1808 will stop short at the unsatisfactory and litigated boundary of 1782—that the rebellions in Ireland, the revolutions in France, and the subversion of Europe, are without consequences physical or moral ?

If any believe these things, they dream : *for* them there is the barest possibility, *against* them all the probabilities of reason and experience.

XLIII. Here I should conclude, but I dare not ; a solemn impression urges my pen. I have, perhaps, mistaken much—I have omitted much—but that which I cannot mistake—cannot omit—is the



novel and tremendous peril which surrounds us ; most tremendous, because its novelty does not seem to surprize, nor its terror to alarm. The sword and sceptre of Europe are in one hand. Hosts more numerous than the Crusaders ; an empire more powerful than the Roman, talents and force, such as never before were united, all associated against us ! The boundaries, the thrones, the laws of nations are changed ; all is changed, and still all changes ; and every change is intended for our ruin. This is not our crime, it may be our merit : but it is our crime, and our folly, and our danger, that we are not united to avert the ruin ; that our rulers are miserably squabbling about places, and our people disputing about dogmas. The instinct of brutes unites them in a common danger, the reason of man seems to render him an easier prey.

The ministry has exasperated the opposition, and the opposition the ministry. The Protestant is not blameless with regard to the Catholic, nor the Catholic with regard to the Protestant. England has not been guiltless towards Ireland, nor Ireland towards England. On all sides there



is something to be forgiven, and great cause that it should be forgiven. If our internal discords aid the enemy, we shall soon have neither parties, religion, nor countries.

And let us not deceive ourselves ; all our united force against that enemy will not be superfluous. Let us not hope for external aid, for revolts amongst his tributaries, or rebellion in his empire : whilst he lives, there will be neither ; the obedience of France he has insured by peace, and the submission of Europe by war : gratitude and fear will preserve quiet at home, while he tries his fortune and his talents against his last and greatest enemy.

If we are unanimous I do not despair of the event : if we are not, a miracle only can save us ; our navies alone cannot—our armies cannot ; but our navies, and our armies, and union, and toleration in politics and religion, may : I do not say they will ; but if England and Ireland are true to themselves, and to each other, either their triumph will renovate the world, or their fall leave in the world nothing worth living for.



Thoughts crowd on my mind, wishes on my heart, and words to my pen ; but to those who think I have said enough, and to those who feel, I am afraid to say more—

FINIS.



Thoughts crowd on my mind, wishes on my  
 lips, and words to my pen; but to those who  
 think I have said enough, and to those who feel  
 I am afraid to say more—

Houses of the Oireachtas