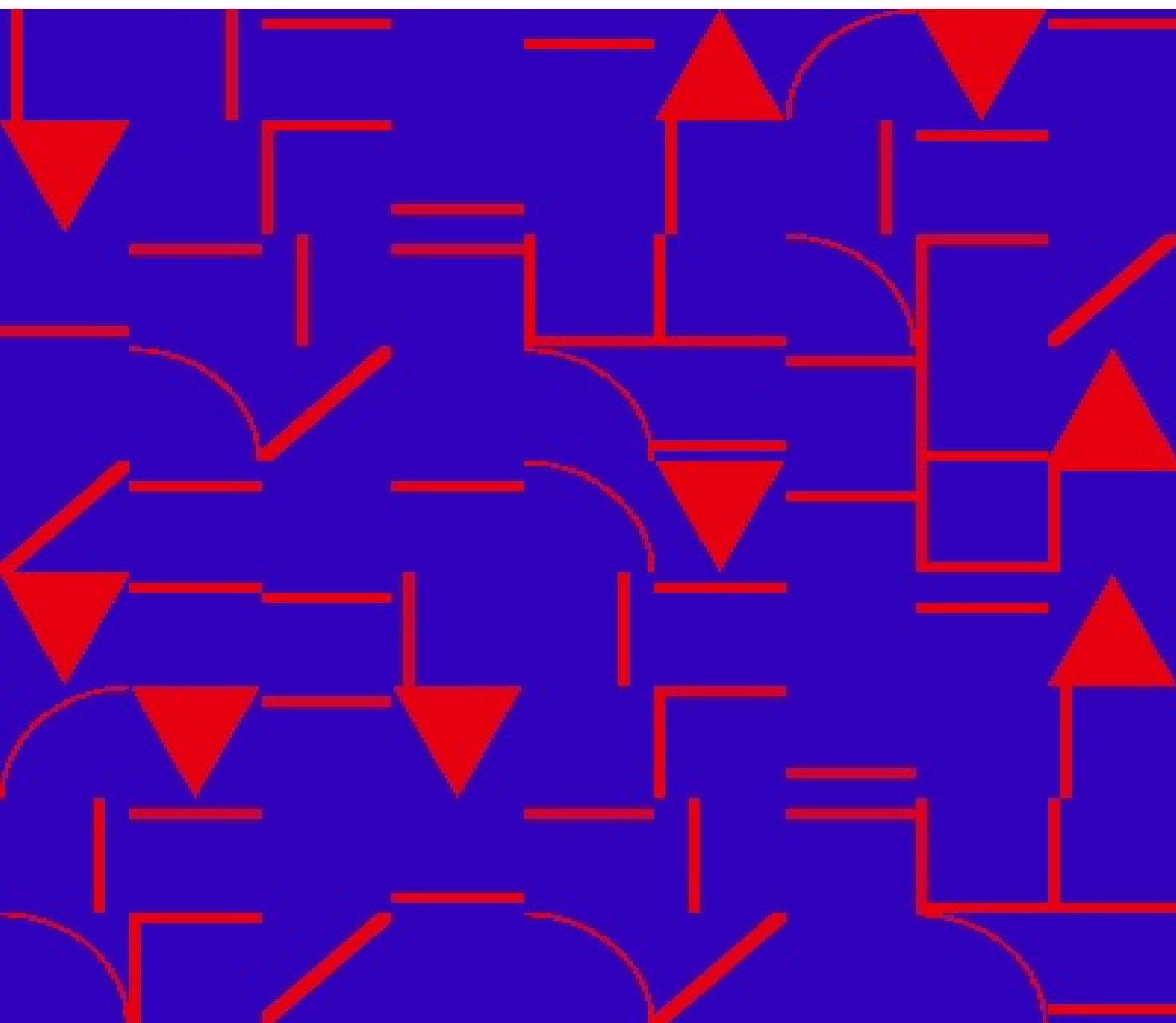


The Causes of the Rebellion in Ireland Disclosed

In an Address to the People of England, in Which It Is Proved by
Incontrovertible Facts, That the System for Some Years Pursued
in That Country, Has Driven It into Its Present Dreadful Situation

Anonymous



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THE CAUSES OF THE

REBELLION IN IRELAND

DISCLOSED,

IN AN

Address to the People of England.

IN WHICH IT IS PROVED BY

INCONTROVERTIBLE FACTS,
THAT THE

System for some Years pursued in that Country,

HAS DRIVEN IT INTO ITS PRESENT

DREADFUL SITUATION.



BY AN IRISH EMIGRANT.

Insita mortalibus natura violentiæ resistere. TACITUS.



LONDON:

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[PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.]



CAUSES

OF THE

REBELLION,

&c. &c.

FELLOW SUBJECTS,

It is always a bold undertaking in a private individual to become the advocate of a suffering people. It is peculiarly difficult at the present moment to be the advocate of the people of Ireland, because there are among them men who have taken the power of redress into their own hands, and committed acts of outrage and rebellion which no sufferings could justify, and which can only tend to aggravate ten-fold the other calamities of their country. Deeply impressed, however, as I am with a conviction that these difficulties stand in my way, I shall yet venture to state to Englishmen the case of Ireland. In doing so, I rest not on a vain confidence in my own strength, but on the nature of the cause I plead; for I am convinced, that when the train of measures which have led that miserable country into its present situation shall be fully disclosed, it will be but little difficult to rouse the people of England not merely to commiserate a distressed country, but excite them to exert their constitutional endeavours, as head of the British empire, to avert the destruction of its principal member.

There is another circumstance which gives me hope. The people of England at this hour feel themselves much more interested in what concerns Irishmen, than they have ever done at any former period. Whatever mischiefs may have resulted to human society from that kind of philosophic illumination by which modern times are distinguished, one certain good at least has been produced by it—men have become better acquainted—the bond of a common nature has been strengthened—and each country begins to feel an interest in the concerns of every other. It is not to a more extensive personal intercourse, or to the creation of any new principles of political union, that this is to be attributed. It is owing solely to an increased communication of sentiment and feeling—to a knowledge which has diffused itself through the world that the human mind is every where made of the same materials, and that on all the great questions which concern man's interest in society, the men of every country think alike. Hence has arisen an increased sympathy between nations—if not between those who govern them, at least between those by whom they are constituted; and hence too has it followed, that those national antipathies which had so long debased and afflicted mankind, are now become less strong and rancorous; and, it may be reasonable to hope, will one day be known no more.

It is not, however, on the influence of this nascent principle of philanthropy among nations that I ground my principal hope, when I call on Englishmen to hear with an ear of kindness and concern the complaint of a sister-country. I resort to a still more powerful principle—I shall call on them as a people famed even in barbarous times for those feelings of generosity and compassion, which are inseparable from valour—I shall call on them as a FREE people, to watch with caution the progress of despotism toward their own shores, stalking in all its horrors of murder, pillage, and flames, through the territory of a neighbour—I shall call even on their INTEREST, to save from utter ruin, political, commercial, and constitutional, the most valuable member of the British empire! If Englishmen look with horror on the enormities of France, I will call on them to let crimes of as black a dye perpetrated in Ireland meet their

share of detestation. If they who subvert the good order of society—who overleap the bounds fixed by the law of Nature itself to guard the liberty, life, and property of individuals against the spoiler, be fit objects of reprobation, I shall turn the eyes of all the good and wise in England toward that faction by whose counsels and whose deeds the fairest island in the British empire has been made a theatre on which lawless outrage has played its deadly freaks!

When I speak in terms thus strong of that system under which the people of Ireland have suffered for some years, and by which they have been goaded into acts of folly and madness which no good man is either able or inclined to defend, let me not too early be charged with declamation. There are some cases in which no language can be declamatory because no words can aggravate them. If I shall not shew before I conclude this address that the case of Ireland is one of them, let me *then* be branded with the epithet of empty talker!

It will not be necessary for me, in stating to the people of England the calamities under which Ireland smarts, and the causes which produced them, to go farther back than that period at which she became, nominally at least, an independent country. What remains of her history before that period the honour of both countries calls on us to forget—a mistaken but overbearing principle of domination and monopoly on one hand, fed and strengthened by a servile and base acquiescence on the other, constitute the outline of the sketch—an idle and beggared populace, a jobbing legislature, proscriptions, penal laws, &c. &c. are the disgusting materials with which it must be filled. That Time should quickly draw his veil over such a scene, and cover it with oblivion would be the natural wish of every British and Irish heart, were it not that scenes still more disgraceful to both countries and more calamitous to one of them have succeeded—scenes which force the mind to revert with regret to those days of poverty and peace, when, as there existed little wealth to excite avarice, and little spirit to aggravate the ambition of party, that little remained inviolate, and the miserable cabin, though filled with objects of disgusting wretchedness, was yet the secure covering and castle of its humble owner.—How different his present situation! when in laying down his head at night he fears lest before morning he shall be roused by the cries of his family in flames, or dragged from his bed by military ruffians, to be hanged at his own door!

Forgetting then the many causes of discontent with the people of England which existed in Ireland prior to the year 1782, I shall call the attention of this country to only those transactions which have taken place since that time—and indeed to many of those transactions it would not be necessary to advert at all, were it not for that minute and elaborate detail which has been made of them by a well known public character in a late publication,^[1] for the purpose of proving that Ireland deserved what she suffered—that she has been always sottishly discontented and basely ungrateful. But I call on Englishmen to judge impartially for themselves—nor let the confident assertion or bold recrimination of an accused man pre-occupy their decision on the merits and the sufferings of an unhappy people.

It will scarcely be denied at this day, that the people of Ireland did right in calling for the independence of their legislature in the year 1782, and in pressing that claim on the British minister, until he yielded to its force.—It is admitted that Ireland, on that occasion, while she armed herself to repel the foes of Britain, while her population poured to her shores to resist the insulting fleet of the enemy, and preserve her connexion with the empire, acted with the proper and true spirit of a brave and loyal people in calling on the British Parliament for a renunciation of that claim to rule her which was originally founded only on her weakness, and was supported by no other argument than power. While this then is admitted, let it be remembered, that they who opposed this just claim of Ireland to be free, must have been the advocates of a slavish system—and that the people of Ireland might fairly entertain doubts of the sincere attachment of such men to her cause.—Let it be remembered, that the men who said to a country struggling for the

legitimate power of governing for itself, "You have no right to make your own laws—you are materials fit only to be governed by strangers," were not men in whom that country, when she succeeded in the struggle, could place much confidence. In fact, she did not confide in them. It was thought necessary to watch attentively the measures of men who had reluctantly assented to the manumission of their country, and who were believed to have such a deeply rooted attachment to the principles of the old court, that they would lose no opportunity of re-inducing upon the nation those bonds which she had broken only by a combination of fortunate circumstances, concurring with her own efforts.

In this consciousness of the danger with which they were surrounded from false friends, originated that doubt which is now charged on the people of Ireland as a first proof of wanton discontent—I mean a doubt about the validity of the simple repeal of the 6th Geo. III. as an act of renunciation. Discontent on this subject arose and became general in Ireland almost immediately on the repeal of that obnoxious statute; and from the zeal and warmth with which it was attempted to *beat it down*, did for a time put the kingdom in a ferment. The men who have since that time scourged Ireland with a rod of iron, charge this as the commencement of the crimes of the country—the first overt act of her intemperance and violent propensity to discontent. Whether it deserves that epithet Englishmen will judge, when they learn that this doubt was first suggested by some of the best lawyers—the warmest friends and the most enlightened and able men whom Ireland ever knew—by Walter Hussey Burgh—by Henry Flood, and by the brilliant phalanx of constitutional lawyers who at that time graced the popular cause—men "to whom compared" the most proud and petulant of her present persecutors "are but the insects of a summer's day." These gentlemen had been the long-trying friends of the country—they had been found pure in principle, and in intellect superior to their contemporaries. Where, therefore, was the wonder, that the people should adopt an opinion sanctioned and inculcated by such venerable names? What was there strange or criminal in believing, that a country which only retracted in silence a claim for more than half a century enforced and acted on, did but suspend for the present a right which she believed to exist, and which she would not fail to urge again in more favourable circumstances? The partisans of the Irish Chancellor act with as much confidence on *his* opinions in cases where common understandings have less to guide them: why then should the people of Ireland be branded as seditious and disaffected, for following, in a matter of law, the counsels of men whose integrity she had tried, and whose talents were acknowledged?

It is true, indeed, there was on the other side of this question a name to which Ireland owed much, and to whose subsequent exertions in her cause, though fruitless, she owes perhaps still more—Mr. Grattan. *He* thought the simple repeal of itself a valid and full renunciation. But it may be said for the people of Ireland, that Mr. Grattan, when this question was agitated, stood in circumstances which deducted much from his high authority. He had but just come from the Treasury, after receiving 50,000*l.* for his past services—and it was too generally known in Ireland, that there was some quality in Treasury gold, however acquired, which attracted the possessor powerfully towards the Castle. The private judgement of Mr. Grattan might also be reasonably supposed to have a bias on the question, from the circumstance of being himself the adviser of the simple repeal—the idea of an explicit renunciation not having been started when Mr. Grattan's principal exertions, seconded by the voice of the people, triumphed over the old system. There was another reason—Mr. Grattan's influence was weakened, if not lost, by the fallen character of those with whom he then acted. The people of Ireland were naturally jealous of those men who had uniformly supported the dominating principles of the British party in Ireland, and who had as violently opposed (though by more legitimate means) the exertions of the popular party to obtain an independent legislature, as they now do to prevent the reform of the legislative body. And finally, the opinion and authority of Mr. Grattan, however respectable were not thought an adequate counterpoize to the weight of those very numerous and most respectable opinions which were on this question in opposition to his. Under these circumstances, the charge of sottish discontent, which has been so

confidently made against the Irish nation, will appear to be one of those foul calumnies by which a desperate and enraged faction strive to cover their own enormities. Englishmen, and the world, will see, that had Ireland at that critical moment adopted the advice of those who had always acted as enemies to her best interests, and rejected the counsels and opinions of those to whom she owed the most important obligations, she would *then* indeed have been incorrigibly sottish.

The next *crime* with which the Irish nation stands charged, is their early and zealous efforts for parliamentary reform.—It has been enumerated as one of the causes which have produced the present horrible system of administration in Ireland, that shortly after the establishment of their legislative independence, a convention met in Dublin, consisting of representatives from the different Volunteer Associations, by whom the country had been saved from the common enemy, and who were supposed to have contributed much to the establishment of her independence. This convention had been constituted on the same principle (but with more circumspection and order) as that which was so well known by the name of the Dungannon meeting—an assembly, which though perfectly military, so far as its being constituted by armed citizens could make it so, did more towards asserting the independence of Ireland and procuring for her the most important advantages of constitution and commerce than any other which ever sat in Ireland. To the Dungannon meeting, however, no exceptions were taken—they were suffered to meet—to resolve—and to point out in the most decisive tone the grievances under which they supposed the country laboured. Their remonstrances were carried even to the foot of the throne, and the father of his people, uninfluenced by that romantic sense of dignity, which has since produced such lamentable effects in Irish Parliaments—graciously received, and wisely attended to their remonstrances.—The jesuitical or Machiavelian distinction between citizens in red clothes and in coloured ones, had not yet been thought of—it was considered sufficient to entitle an address or petition to a respectful hearing, if it was substantially the sense of a great body of the property and population of the state, no matter whether they spoke in the character of volunteers associated to defend the constitution, or as freeholders assembled only to exercise its privileges.

It is not for me now to defend the convention of that day from the imputation of false policy and imprudence, in preferring the character of soldiers to that of citizens in their deliberative capacity, but I cannot help observing—First, that the Irish administration have never manifested any dislike of military bodies—real, mercenary, foreign soldiers,—expressing publicly *their* sentiments on great public questions, when those sentiments coincided with the politics of the Castle—witness the manifestoes with which the Irish newspapers have for the last year or two been crouded, from Scotch and English mercenary troops, in which these zealous advocates for religion and liberty declare themselves friends to this or that measure, publish their determination to support them—and sometimes conclude by letting the Irish public know—*they had not come thither to be trifled with.*—Secondly, I must remark, that tho' the great objection to the volunteer convention was its being armed, and consisting of the representatives of an armed body, yet opposition equally violent has been since made to other representative bodies *not* military—instance the calumny with which the servants of the Irish administration have blackened the Catholic committee—and, above all, instance the Athlone convention, the meeting of which administration were so solicitous to prevent, that they ventured on a law to prevent for ever the meeting of any representative body—the House of Commons excepted.

By these circumstances it seems sufficiently clear, that the inconceivable aversion entertained against this body, and the memory of it, was founded not in its being military, but in its being representative and popular—not in its constitution, but in its object.—With respect to its being a representative body, I profess, for my own part, I cannot conceive why for that reason the Irish government and the Irish Chancellor have held it so much in abomination. You, Englishmen, who understand that constitution of

which you are properly so proud, will be surprized to hear that representative bodies are unconstitutional.—If you heard this asserted with much confidence by a lawyer, you would say he had studied special pleading rather than the British constitution.—If you heard this doctrine swallowed implicitly by an assembly of legislators, you would say they were still unfit to govern themselves. What is it, you would ask, that forms the general and pervading principle of the British constitution, if not the representative one? Every petty corporation, you would observe, elects representatives to act for them in their Common Council—the council elect Aldermen, and these again their Mayor—all on the same principle—that of having the sense of the multitude concentrated, and their business dispatched at once with ease and order. Nay, every Freeman is himself but a representative, not indeed of other men—but of his own property.

But it is impossible that this should have been the real ground of objection to the Convention, however it might have been urged as the ostensible one—for it is obvious, that if the principle of representation be a fair and useful principle to adopt in collecting the sense of the people with respect to laws or taxes, it must also be a useful and fair principle to resort to, in every other instance, where great bodies of men are permitted to express their common sense as they are *unquestionably* in petitioning for redress of grievances, &c. No, Englishmen! it was not because the Convention was unconstitutional as being representative, but because it was chosen to recommend, as the sense of the Irish people (for the Volunteers of that day were people of Ireland,)—a parliamentary reform, and to consider of a specific plan. It was this that the corrupt part of the Irish Government dreaded. They had been stunned by the unexpected blow struck by the people in asserting the independence of the legislature: for whatever credit the Parliament of that day may assume for the part which they acted in that business, it requires no argument to prove to a discerning man, that they were passive instruments in the people's hand—they only re-echoed the voice of an armed nation which they conceived too loud to be smothered, and were hurried on irresistibly by that enthusiastic sentiment for national independence, which the ability of *one* great mind, aided by a fortunate concurrence of existing circumstances, had excited. But at the period I now speak of, the party of the British Minister had recovered from the astonishment into which the successful and prompt energy of the nation had thrown him. He now began to reflect on the extensive consequence which must follow from the restoration to Ireland of the right of legislating for herself. It was soon felt, that there now remained in the hands of the court faction in Ireland, only one instrument by which the effect of the recent revolution could be checked or frustrated; and that was, the borough system. It was seen, that whatever nominal independence the Irish legislature might have attained, yet while a majority of the Commons' House was constituted of members returned immediately by the crown influence, the will of the crown or the will of the British Cabinet must still be the law which would bind Ireland. To preserve the borough system then, at all hazards, became from that moment the great object of the dominating faction. The Convention was an engine which seemed to threaten its immediate and complete overthrow; it was therefore resolved, by all means, to effect its ruins. The staunch hounds which had fattened for years on the vitals of the country, but had been for some time kept at bay by the universal energy of the public mind, were again hallooed into action. In addition to these were introduced new forces from every quarter, but principally from the old aristocratic families, who had monopolized for a century the power and wealth of the country. On the memorable night when Mr. Flood presented to the House the petition of the Convention, was made the grand effort which was to decide whether the will of the nation or that of the old faction should govern. The latter was victorious. The people, with the characteristic levity of their nation, repulsed in this great effort, for the present, at least, shrunk back from the contest. The victorious party, possessing means of the most extensive and corrupting influence, strained them to the utmost; and gaining ground from that moment on the sense of the nation on that main point, have continued triumphantly and insolently to prostrate the people of Ireland. Every thinking and steady Irishman, however, retained his opinion as to the necessity of reform, and continued by the few

means in his power, to promote it. At this point, then, commenced the separation between the Irish administration with their partisans in Parliament and the Irish people, and from that time they have gone in directly opposite directions.

Such, Englishmen, is another of the crimes with which we are charged, and for which the highest law authority in our country has declared we merit to be deprived of all the benefits of the British constitution! For this we have been called a sottish, an insatiable, and tumultuous people—and to punish us for this offence the world has been told we deserve all those horrible calamities which, year after year, since that time have been inflicted on us!

I have already said, that the people and the parliamentary supporters of administration separated from the moment when the Irish House of Commons extinguished the public hope on the important measure of parliamentary reform. The grand argument urged by the House of Commons against a reform at that time was, that it would be a surrender of the dignity and independence of the legislature to adopt a measure proposed to it on the point of a bayonet. The Convention proved the malice of the argument by the manner in which they bore the insulting rejection of their petition: having discharged the duty which they were created to perform, they dissolved, not only without a threat but without a murmur. The people, with a patience and moderation of which perhaps few more laudable instances are to be found in the history of any country, acquiesced, or submitted in silence to the decision of the legislature on this their most esteemed and favourite application. No doubt they hoped that a Parliament who refused to receive the petition of the people when presented as soldiers, would listen with a more patient ear to their claims when presented in another character. But this hope having been tried for five years without effect, was at last relinquished. The pertinacity with which all applications on the subject of reform were rejected, put it beyond doubt that reform was an object which by ordinary means could never be obtained. It was, however, a measure too big, when it had once gotten possession of the public mind, to be let go without a struggle. Accordingly, whatever of intelligence, of zeal, or of public spirit the country possessed, continued to be directed toward the acquisition of this great object. Among other modes which had been devised for giving greater efficacy to the public will on this subject, was that of forming societies which should have for their sole object to animate, to direct, to concentrate, the exertions of the people in the pursuit of this favourite and vital measure. Of these societies the first was formed in Dublin, of a few men whose talents, principles, and character, moral and political, gave such weight and popularity to their union, as soon swelled its numbers to a great magnitude, which, while it gave hope to the friends of the popular cause, excited in the administration very lively alarm. But it was yet more the principles of this body than its numbers which alarmed administration. The original members of the society, men of minds not only firmly attached to the political interests of this country, but superior to the influence of bigotry, which had been the most powerful instrument in the hands of the Court faction for dividing and weakening the people, made it a radical principle of their union to promote an abolition of all religious distinction, and to procure for *all* the freemen of the state, whatever might be their religious sentiments, a participation in *all* the privileges of the British constitution. A reform in Parliament, accompanied by such a principle as this, became a measure in which every man in the country was interested; and the catholics, who constitute the great majority of the people, more interested than others. The consequence was, that men of every description of religion, men of every rank in life, not immediately under the controul or influence of the Castle, adopted the principles of the society, or solicited admission into the ranks. The fear and the hatred of administration was soon manifested. Every art was used to blacken the principles of the society—its principal members were pointed out as the agitators of sedition—the enemies of social order—and men who aimed at nothing less than a subversion of the constitution and separation from Great Britain, under the pretext of reform and emancipation. The prints which were in the pay of the Castle vomited out daily the most gross, the most malignant, and irritating calumnies; and even the senate itself,

now really forgetting its dignity, condescended to become the scurrilous aggressor not merely of the society at large, but of particular, and, in many instances, inconsiderable members of it.

It was this despicable conduct in the prevailing faction in Ireland that laid the ground work of all the mischiefs which have since affected our unhappy country. The Irish Minister who paid the money of the people to cover their name with infamy and their principles with dishonour, him I charge with having first implanted in the minds of the multitude that invincible detestation of the system by which they were governed, that has since ended in assassination and treason. His subordinate agents, who in the folly and venom of their hearts at one time charged the great body of the Catholics with disaffection, at another held up to ridicule and odium the names of individuals of the most respectable and unsullied characters—at one time sneering at the merchant, at another insulting the tradesman, them I charge with having irritated the people of Ireland wantonly and wickedly, by calling forth the personal feelings, the pride, and sensibility of individuals, into a personal and revengeful opposition to the British name and British connection. What would Englishmen have felt, how would Englishmen have acted, had two or three individuals, strangers to their country, despicable in point of birth or talents, and considerable only from fortuitous elevation to offices which they were unfit to fill, ventured to insult their national character—to accuse of treason every man who dared to complain of his sufferings or his privations, or assumed the courage to exercise the humble privilege of petitioning for redress? If the saucy hirelings of a foreign Cabinet should publicly avow contempt for the men who uphold the strength and consequence of the state by useful industry, and tell the merchant and manufacturer that it was not for such fellows to deal in politics, to seek for rights, or talk of constitution—would not the spirit of the nation rise against their insolence, and make them feel how much more valuable *he* is who promotes the comfort and welfare of society by commerce or by labour, than *he* who lives upon the spoil of the community in something worse than idleness?

It was this arrogance in the Castle servants, the result of their conscious strength in corruption, that scouted with contempt and insult, out of the Irish House of Commons in 1795, the petition of three millions of Catholics, fully and impartially represented. Was not this an aggression of administration against the people? And yet the partisans of that administration—nay, the first mover in it, has had the confidence to assert, that the discontents and tumults of the people *preceded* the measures of which they complain. Englishmen will determine, whether the Irish nation, consisting principally of Catholics, had or had not reason to be disgusted with the administration of the government under which they lived, when by the influence of that administration not only their wishes were not consulted, not only their general sense disregarded, but even their supplications spurned without a hearing from that body which professed to be, and which ought to be, their representatives.

If it be granted that such conduct in the popular representation of a nation was calculated to excite discontent and destroy confidence, what followed that transaction must have had a much more powerful tendency to alienate the affection of the people, and produce those direful consequences which are now boldly said to have arisen unprovoked. When the Irish Catholics perceived, from the manner in which their petition for the elective franchise was treated, that in the Irish House of Commons they were not to look for friends, they resorted to the Throne. The supplications which had met only with contumely when addressed to the Irish Commons, was received with favour by a British King, acting with the advice of a British Cabinet. In the next session, the speech from the throne recommended to the Irish Parliament to take into their consideration the situation of the King's Catholic subjects. No sooner was this hint received from the British Cabinet, than those very men, who but last year pledged their lives and fortunes to perpetuate the exclusion of the Irish Catholics from the privileges of freemen, because to admit them to share those privileges would be a subversion of the constitution and establishment, surrendered that

opinion with as much promptness and facility as they had shewn violence and rancour in taking it up. Without any petition from the Catholics, without any change of circumstances, except the declaration of the will of the British Cabinet, that privilege which was last year refused with so much harshness and disdain, was this year spontaneously conceded!

Will any man who knows any thing of men and of the feelings and motives which actuate them, assert that there was any thing in this concession which should attach more firmly the Irish Catholics to the Irish House of Commons? Will he say that this was one of those gracious measures which an enlightened legislature would adopt to soften the exasperation of national discontent? Probably he will rather say, it was fitted to evince more strongly than ever the necessity of reforming the constitution of that assembly, which, from the inconsistency of its measures, appeared evidently the instrument of a foreign will, not the authentic organ of the national sense.

Let him, or them whose hot folly, whose rank bigotry, or whose petulant and stolid zeal led the Irish Commons into this disgraceful and contemptible situation, feel the blush of shame and confusion burn their cheek, when they reflect on these scenes. Let them, while it is yet in their power, atone to their offended country for the fatal consequences of their advice, before those records which are to inform future ages impress on their names for ever the indelible character of—PUBLIC ENEMY.

In speaking of these transactions I have not attended to chronological accuracy. There were other measures to which the administration of Ireland had resorted to prop up their power, and form a substitute for that legitimate strength which is to be found only in the cheerful support of a contented people—there were other measures which they adopted to beat down the public voice, and overbear the general sense of the nation. Among these were wanton prosecutions of innocent and respectable men, sometimes for libels, which all publications were construed to be that dared to talk of reform as a good measure, or of constitutional rights as things to be desired; others for crimes of a deeper die—for sedition and for treason. The evidence adduced in support of these charges were often the vilest of the rabble, whose testimony on the trials was discredited even by themselves, and the prisoners discharged, to the honour of themselves and the detestation of their accusers. Such was the case of the Drogheda merchants, on whose trial came out proofs of subornation and perjury which would shock credibility. These, however, were but venial errors, compared with those more mortal sins against the constitution and against common right, with which the Irish administration stands charged—sins, which including a violation of general and vital principles, may be fairly reckoned among those great and leading causes which have reduced Ireland to the dreadful state of discontent and disorder in which she now stands.

Of these, one was the Convention Bill—a measure proposed by administration, and adopted by the Parliament of that day, for the avowed purpose of preventing the Catholics from collecting the sense of their body on a petition to Parliament, or to the Throne, for the elective franchise. This bill, if it did not annihilate a popular right, certainly narrowed it to a degree which, in a great measure, under the then existing circumstances, destroyed its efficacy. It had been one of the special pleading tricks of the Irish Court, when the people expressed their sense on particular measures, if there happened to be any variations of mode or sentiment in the application of different bodies, to take occasion, from these variations, to reject the whole as inconsistent. This scheme had been practised with much plausibility on the question of reform. No reform, they contended, was practicable, which would content the nation; because of the many petitions which had been presented from the different counties, cities, and towns in the country, and of the many plans which had been proposed, no two were found perfectly to correspond—as if when the general sense of the people was fully expressed, no attention should be paid to it, because there was not to be found in the various expressions of that sense that perfect coincidence which

on a general question of morals or politics it is absolutely impossible to attain. It had also been boldly and shamelessly asserted by administration, in opposition to the most general and public declaration of the Catholic body, that the claim of the elective franchise was only the suggestion of a few turbulent agitators, and that the great bulk of the Catholics had neither solicitude nor desire about the matter. To give the lie to this hardy and absurd assertion, the Catholics resolved upon a measure which would put the matter beyond doubt, and by collecting into a focus the sense of their body, and expressing that sense in a simple and explicit manner, would take from their enemies the two great arguments by which they had defeated the popular applications for reform. Administration, however, were too vigilant to suffer the Catholics to get hold of this powerful weapon. The Convention Bill, by which all representative assemblies were made illegal, and punishable with the severest penalties, proposed in haste, and passed with precipitation, deprived them of the only means of giving to the legislature that simple and indubitable declaration of the general sense, which, however, the legislature insisted on as a necessary preliminary to hearing their complaints.

Here certainly was another of those measures which without any crime in the people of Ireland was levelled at one of their most valuable privileges. Let the people of England judge, whether under the circumstances I have mentioned, it was not likely to wound deeply the feelings of three-fourths of his Majesty's Irish subjects—and, combined as it was with the insulting rejection of the Catholic petition, and the subsequent concession, at the instance of the British Cabinet, of that favour which was refused to Irish supplication—let Englishmen say, whether it may not fairly be reckoned among the wanton and unprovoked causes of the present discontents.

The Convention Bill, however mischievous it may have been by aggravating the discontent which had already spread through the mass of the people, was yet more mischievous by stopping up that channel through which popular discontent discharges itself with most safety—that of petition and remonstrance. So little effect had been found to result from the petitions of individuals in the legislature on any of the great questions which in any degree interfered with the system adopted by administration, and in which they seemed resolved to persevere, that it was thought futile and absurd to resort to that mode of stating complaint or soliciting redress. If a corporation petitioned, they were answered only by an observation on the manner in which the petition was obtained, by contrasting it with other petitions procured by Castle influence, or by some sarcastic remark on their profession or character. If a body of citizens petitioned, they were porter-house politicians or bankrupt traders. There remained, therefore, no way in which the people could lay their complaints before the legislature, with any hope of relief, but in that general way of a representative body, which, while it gave weight and consistency to their application, obviated those pitiful arts by which the Castle continued to elude and frustrate the wishes of the people. The Convention Bill, by rendering that mode impracticable, compressed the public discontents, and while it encreased the irritation, left no vent to its violence but in assassination and conspiracy.

That such would be the consequence of this measure, administration were solemnly warned. It was urged on them, but without effect, that in every country where the freedom of remonstrance and complaint was denied, secret conspiracy or open insurrection took the place of angry but harmless petition. Italy was mentioned; and it was said, rather with the spirit of a prophet than a politician, that if this bill passed, Ireland would become more infamous for private assassination than Italy itself. The Society of United Irishmen was not yet become a clandestine or an illegal body—but it was foretold, that this bill would create clandestine and seditious meetings: for it was easy to see, that when discontented people were prevented from uttering their complaints, they would substitute other modes of redress for angry publication. But with the administration of Ireland, or the Irish House of Commons of that day, advice and remonstrance were vain. They boldly ventured on a measure of which these consequences were foreseen,

yet now profess to wonder why such consequences have happened. On the folly of their counsels, then, the people of Ireland are justified in charging the assassinations—the sedition—the conspiracy, which have disgraced their country: they are not the native growth of her soil! They have been begotten only by insolence and injury upon the stifled indignation of a volatile and feeling people!

But the Convention act was not the only measure to which the party abusing the powers of government in Ireland resorted, to tame or to irritate the Irish people. The Gunpowder Bill, prior in order and time, which deprived the Irish subject in a great measure of the constitutional power of self-defence, prepared the minds of the people for receiving the full impression of the Convention act, which narrowed another of his rights. The attempt to annihilate the independence of the country, by insisting on the right of Britain to choose a regent for Ireland, and the subsequent attempt of the same kind in 1785 to substitute a commercial boon for the right of self-government, had already gone far toward producing a tendency to irritation in the people, which these more vital attacks completed.

Nor did even these measures, insidious, violent, and unconstitutional as they were, produce so much discontent as the tone and the spirit in which they were tarried into execution. The most insulting imputations on the loyalty, and even on the intellect of the nation, were daily made by the needy adventurers, whom chance, or perhaps infamous services, had raised to a place in the administration. The public prints were polluted by the foulest calumny against every man who had the virtue and the courage to oppose a system which he foresaw must eventually terminate in the ruin of the country. Some of the basest of mankind, distinguished, however, by more than usual talents for perversion and invective, were appointed to conduct those publications which were paid by the public money for abusing the national character. The Whig Club, consisting of noblemen and gentlemen who, by possessing large property and extensive connections in the country, felt themselves bound to oppose the mad measures of men who, as they were mostly foreigners, had no interest but to turn the present moment to most advantage, were held up to the public, both in and out of Parliament, as enemies to the tranquillity of the state, and anxious only, at all events, to raise themselves to power.

The conduct of administration to the Whig Club, indeed, deserves peculiar confederation, as it evinces, in the fullest manner, that it was not the irregular or unconstitutional proceedings of this or that body of men—of the Volunteer Convention, or of the United Irish Society—but the measures which these bodies recommended, against which the influence and force of government was turned. The Whig Club had formed themselves on the most constitutional and moderate principles. Their object was to obtain for the people of Ireland, by a concentration of their parliamentary influence and exertions, those laws by which the British constitution was guarded, against the encroachments of the executive power; and by the want of which in Ireland, her constitution seemed to have but a precarious existence at the pleasure of the Court. Such were a Pension Bill, for limiting the influence resulting to the Crown by an indefinite power of granting pensions—a Place Bill, to secure the independence of the House of Commons, by making the acceptance of office by a member a vacation of his seat—a Responsibility Bill, by which the men intrusted with the management of the public treasure, or enjoying high official situations in the government of the country, should be responsible to Parliament for their conduct and advice. These were the measures which the Club undertook at their formation to press upon minister. They subsequently adopted others on which the sense of the people became too generally known to be at all doubtful. The question of reform and Catholic emancipation they did not take up, until the nation called for them in a manner which proved the concession of them to be essential to the peace of the country.

Of the constitutionality of those measures which the Whig Club originally espoused, no man could entertain a doubt. They were the law of England. The manner in which these measures were urged by the

Whig Club was equally constitutional. They brought them before Parliament by bill and by motion, supported by arguments which were answered only by majorities consisting of those placemen and pensioners, those borough members and irresponsible officers, against whose parliamentary existence they were levelled. This constitutional pursuit of constitutional measures—how did the Irish administration treat it? By imputing the worst motives to those by whom they were proposed—by impeaching their loyalty to their Sovereign—by the most open and bold avowal of the existence, and the necessity of corruption in the government—by the most contumelious indifference for the public voice, and, finally, by affixing the most disgraceful and irritating marks of suspicion on every nobleman and man of property in either house of Parliament, who dared to support those pretensions of the people to the benefits of the British constitution. The removal of that good and estimable character, the Earl of Charlemont, from the office of Governor of the County of Armagh—an office which might be considered as hereditary in his family, and to which his estate in that county gave him a kind of indefeasible right, is one instance of a number. It will ever be remembered as a damning proof of the foolish and wicked malignity of the Irish administration against the friends of the Irish people.

These arts of the Castle, however, were unable to counteract or repress the persevering effects of the Whig Club. It is not necessary in this place to enter into a defence of the motives of that body in thus contending for the interests of the public. It is sufficient that the measures which they patronized were in a high degree beneficial to the Irish nation; and whether they urged them from a wish to raise themselves to office, or from a principle of pure patriotism, was to the public immaterial. That they supported them zealously and faithfully, from whatever motive, was indubitable. So zealously and faithfully indeed did they exert themselves, that the very same men who had for years made a constant and violent opposition to those measures, exhausting every epithet of reprobation which the English language afforded, both against them and their supporters, yet at last found themselves obliged to concede them to the unrelaxing vigour of these gentlemen, supported by the general sense of the country. It is the concession of these measures that the friends of the Irish junto call "CONCILIATION!" These are the favours which they say Ireland has received, and which they contend ought for ever to have silenced popular complaint, and put a period to the demands of the country! Had they been yielded at an earlier time, before the long, long irritation which the obstinate refusal of them for several successive years had produced, they would have been received with gratitude by the nation, and the effect would have been general tranquillity and content. But the Irish administration knew neither how to concede nor withhold—their resistance was without strength, and their concessions without kindness. Like the Roman King and the Sybils, they withheld the price of public content, until the people, aggravated by refusal, insisted on still higher terms; and, indeed, rose in their demands, beyond what an administration, bankrupt in character and confidence, were able to grant them. What a Minister of comprehensive mind and enlarged views would have granted to the people with magnanimity at once, and what if thus granted, would have taken the tongue from discontent, and left disaffection no handle to use against the peace of the country, the Irish administration conceded piece-meal—one little measure after another—reluctantly and with hesitation; thus teaching the people that what was granted could not be withheld, and that the same means which had extorted one concession from the weakness of government would be equally successful in extorting others. Nay, at the very moment when they were yielding those measures to the perseverance of opposition, supported by the public sense, they continued to load those very men by whole exertions they had been obtained with scurrilous and foul invective; and while with one hand they affected to conciliate the people, with the other they scattered the seeds of disaffection widely through the land by the most inflammatory and ill-judged libels upon the country and its claims. Thus, in the hands of those men, the benignity of the Sovereign was perverted into an instrument of discontent, and those rich concessions which, if judiciously administered, would have bound Ireland to Britain by indissoluble ties, were made means of exciting in numbers of the inhabitants

of that country a deep hatred of the British name and connection.

When Englishmen contemplate for a moment this picture of the "conciliation" which the Irish nation has received with so much ingratitude, it is possible they may conclude that nothing has happened which might not have reasonably been expected. Possibly they will think it not unnatural that the people should have received, with little sense of obligation, measures which were never conceded until they came to form only a small part of what was demanded as rights—and that they should rather feel indignant at the insult and abuse heaped on them by a few contemptible and obscure adventurers, than acknowledge gratitude for benefits long kept back, and, at length, reluctantly yielded.

I have dwelt thus long on the early conduct of the Irish administration for two reasons—the one to vindicate the people of Ireland from the insolent charge made against them by their enemies—"That conciliation had been tried in vain with that sottish and discontented people—that they had not intellect to understand, nor gratitude to acknowledge benefits—and that, therefore, the present system of unconstitutional coercion and deprivation was resorted to of necessity:"—the other was to shew, that whatever discontent has been recently shewn in Ireland, whatever crimes have been committed for political purposes, had their remote origin in that system by which the powers of government had been abused in Ireland for several years back. Whether I have succeeded in this attempt, I leave to Englishmen, who know and value freedom and constitution, to determine. For myself I shall only say, that my mind is incapable of feeling a greater degree of moral certainty, than that the people of Ireland are innocent of causeless discontent and of ingratitude; and that all the evils which now lacerate that unhappy country, (for the mere suppression of present discontents will not end the danger,) and threaten the mutilation of the empire, are the necessary and inevitable effects of the wicked system adopted by the weak, hot-headed, and petulant men to whom the administration of Ireland was entrusted, operating upon a generous and loyal but irritable and warm people.

But had the Irish junto rested at the point to which we have now come in describing their system, Ireland would not now have to appeal for pity or for aid to the British nation. It is the subsequent measures to which they resorted, and for which no precedent is to be found in the history of this or any other country pretending to laws, or rights, or constitution, that we complain of. It is by these that Ireland has been lashed into madness, and driven to crimes and to follies which her sober reason would have looked at with detestation. It shall be now my business to advert to those measures—to shew that they have generally preceded those crimes of the people which are alledged to have produced them—that they have been severe and desperate beyond what the necessity of the case called for—that their probable result will be a military despotism—that they cannot tranquillize the country but by the destruction of every degree of constitutional liberty—that, therefore, the people of Great Britain are interested in preventing the progress of that system in Ireland—and, finally, that if the two great objects of the public in Ireland were honestly and fully conceded, and if the people were re-instated in the blessings of the constitution by the establishment of a mild and just administration, peace and content would be restored to the country, disaffection would vanish, and the connection of the two islands become closer and more permanent than ever.

I have already mentioned the Convention and Gunpowder Acts, and the discontent which these laws had excited. Administration felt, that on these questions there was but one opinion amongst the people of Ireland. They perceived, that though these acts were of the strongest kind, their operation would not be adequate to the suppression of the existing and encreasing discontent; and they therefore resorted to a device, which, having been but too often and too successfully tried in Ireland on former occasions, would, it was hoped, be equally successful at present. A religious feud was excited, and suffered to rage without

check or intermission, until it nearly desolated a whole county. Some petty quarrels had, a considerable time back, taken place in the county of Armagh, between a few Catholics and Presbyterians, which, however, produced no serious mischief, and were almost instantly terminated either by the interposition of the magistrates, or by the mutual compromise of the parties. Subsequent to this, the county of Armagh enjoyed the most profound tranquillity, until about this period a party started up on the sudden, without visible motive, without provocation, and, to the surprize of the people in Ireland, commenced a most outrageous and unaccountable persecution of the Catholic inhabitants. It would shock the ears of an Englishman, and, perhaps, exceed his belief, were I to give a minute detail of the ferocious barbarities which were committed by this party. It may suffice to say, that under the name of Orange-men, and under colour of attachment to the constitution and affection for the Protestant establishment, they not only burned the houses and destroyed the persons of numbers of the unfortunate Catholics in the heat of blood and fervour of outrage, but with a cool and settled system proceeded to banish the whole of them. Entire districts were proscribed in a night. Labels were affixed on all the Catholic houses in a village, with the words "To Connaught or to Hell!" Nor was the threat vain;—for in numberless instances where the unfortunate inhabitants refused to obey the mandate, their habitations were pulled down or burned by these bravadoes of the constitution, happy if they thus escaped personal destruction. In many cases these outrages were accompanied by plunder; but plunder did not seem to constitute any part of the system under which the Orange-men acted, unless perhaps the plunder of arms, to deprive the Catholics of which was one of their proposed objects.

With what reason the Irish administration were charged with having clandestinely excited, or culpably connived at the excesses of these men, the people of England may determine when they hear that the magistracy of that country remained for many months inactive spectators of these scenes; nay, indeed, in some cases, are said to have given countenance and support to the offenders, by executing the laws with the most inflexible rigour against the Catholics when they happened to fall into any casual error in repelling the attacks of their persecutors, while these latter were left in the enjoyment of perfect impunity.

But this is not the only circumstance which may assist an Englishman to judge how far the Irish administration participated in the guilt of these disturbances—there is another which seems pretty decisive on this point; and that is, that notwithstanding this palpable and notorious misconduct of the Armagh magistracy, not one man was turned out of the commission for his negligence and connivance on those occasions! What apology did the Irish Chancellor offer for not removing those magistrates?—"That better men could not be found in the country!"

This feud, so malignant in its origin, and so destructive in its progress, was possibly expected to have weakened the efficacy of the popular sentiment against the Irish Ministers, by throwing the different religious descriptions to a consideration of their respective and peculiar interests. It produced a very contrary effect. The persecution commenced against the Catholics in Armagh, alarmed the Catholics in every quarter of the country; and when they saw such enormities committed against them with impunity, if not with the approbation of the Castle, they naturally apprehended that a general persecution was designed. They knew, however, that the great body of the Protestants in Ireland were too enlightened to assist in such a scheme—for they had already experienced that the rigour of old prejudices was abated, and that men now began to consider each other rather as men than as religionists.—But they also knew the character of the administration; and the recent transactions in Armagh and elsewhere, taught them, that though they had no reason to fear persecution from the great body of their Protestant fellow-subjects, they were yet not exempt from danger. These fears suggested the necessity of drawing still more closely the bond of union between them and their countrymen of other persuasions. The Protestants met them half way in their advances toward a conjunction of interests—for they perceived, that though the present blow was

struck against the Catholics, yet the warfare of administration was not against them only, but against the constitution, against the people, their privileges, and their interests.

Had these been the only consequences that followed this dreadful experiment, the partial evil would have been compensated by the union which it produced. But this was not the case. The alarm which the Armagh persecution produced on the minds of the enlightened Catholics, and on the lower orders of that description were very different. In the former it produced a desire to unite more closely with his Protestant brethren, in order to form by their conjunction the stronger barrier against the apprehended assault of the Irish Cabinet upon both. In the latter, it excited a fear of extermination, which resolved itself into the most violent and unjustifiable measures, of what they considered personal defence—The Orange-men had deprived the Catholics of their arms—the lower order of Catholics co-operating in many instances with their Protestant neighbours of the same rank, who detested the conduct of Orange-men, betook themselves to retaliate on those whom they considered suspected characters. The robbery of arms became a general measure of safety, and those who exerted themselves in this way obtained the name of Defenders—a body of men, whom that administration which suffered the Orange-men to violate the laws with impunity, followed with the utmost severity of legal punishment.

No man who values the interests of society, or knows the value of peace and good order in a community, can be supposed for a moment to justify the intemperate and incautious conduct of those deluded men. If such licence as they usurped were permitted, human society must be dissolved, and man be thrown back to a state of savage nature. But on the other hand, no man who has any regard for truth, or who enjoys a capacity of distinguishing between different ideas, can deny, that the crimes of the Defenders were provoked by the preceding crimes of the Orange-men, and that those powers which, contrary to justice, were suffered to lie dormant against the one class, whose guilt was original and unprovoked, were exercised without mercy against the latter; whose errors were the ebullition of untaught nature repelling in an untaught way, the most wanton and unparalleled aggression.

There were some collateral circumstances which contributed to give full effect to the impression which the enormities of the Orange society were calculated to make on the minds of the lower orders. The severity with which administration had followed the United Irishmen by dispersing their meetings, seizing their papers, and prosecuting as libels every publication which emanated from them, had driven them to the necessity of meeting secretly, and admitting members into their society in a private and mysterious manner. Between secret meetings and conspiracy the interval is small—between meeting secretly for constitutional purposes and meeting to alter or overthrow the constitution, the interval is perhaps still less. Whether the objects or the United Irish societies were at this period unconstitutional or not, it is certain the meetings were clandestine, and that of the lower class of people numbers flocked to them who were admitted only on condition of taking an oath to be true to the body—*i. e.* to keep its secrets, and to devote themselves to the pursuit of the two great popular objects—Catholic Emancipation and Parliamentary Reform. The impression which the minds of the lower order of the people would be apt to receive at the discussion of these meetings cannot be considered as very likely to mitigate their zeal in opposition to the persecutors of the Catholics, or to form their minds to receive with patient forbearance the severities which were now every where exercised indiscriminately against the United Irishmen and Defenders—terms which, in the indiscriminating language of the senate and the Castle, were considered as synonymous.

In considering the effect which the extensive and secret meetings of the United Irishmen produced on the dispositions of the lower people it is not necessary to ascertain whether the designs of that body were or were not treasonable. It is sufficient that were they precisely limited to their professed objects,

emancipation and reform, the effect of them on the mass of the public by whom they were constituted must be adverse to the system which administration had adopted, and which they now began to force on the nation by means the most unjustifiable.

If this statement of facts, which I have now submitted to the English nation, as demonstrative that the Irish administration were themselves the authors of those enormities which they have since made a pretext for introducing fire and sword through the country—if this statement, I say, be true, and I defy any part of it to be disproved, their guilt and the emptiness of the pretences by which they have endeavoured to screen it, are incontrovertible:

What was the next measure of administration? The Insurrection Act. The outrages which commenced in Armagh, and had been but too successfully, though faintly, imitated in several parts of the country, administration now affected to consider as incurable by any of the ordinary powers with which the law invested the executive authority. A law was therefore propounded and adopted, by which any district which the magistrates of it might think proper to declare in a state of disturbance, or in immediate danger of becoming so, (phrases so vague that it required but little artifice to make them applicable at that time to any county in the kingdom,) was put into such a state of regimen, that any individual magistrate might on his own authority, without trial or proof, seize the person of any inhabitant and send him to serve on board his Majesty's fleet—*i. e.* transport him for life.

In such districts the privileges of the constitution with respect to liberty, and I may add, life, were completely suspended; for whether under pretended authority derived from this act, or from the superabundant zeal of the military protectors of the public peace, who were employed to assist in the execution of it, numbers fell, either by being shot at their own doors, or by the newly-invented process of strangulation, adopted to procure confession of crimes which perhaps had never been committed, or the accusation of others, whose innocence might have made it impossible to convict them by other evidence.

Without entering into a more minute detail of the disgusting enormities or the sufferings to which this measure gave birth, I may safely refer it to the judgement of men accustomed to enjoy the uninterrupted blessings of British law and liberty, whether the infliction of this measure on the people of Ireland was not of itself enough to aggravate feelings already irritated into discontent the most alarming. I do not mean surely to justify assassination or treason, but I appeal to men who have the feelings of freemen, whether to see a father, a brother, or a son, fall, perhaps innocently, under the bayonet of a military executioner, or transported for life from his helpless family and nearest connections—it may be without guilt, because the punishment was inflicted without trial—may not in some degree account for, though it cannot justify, the shocking crimes which have, since the introduction of that measure, been committed by individuals in Ireland? A magistrate who exerts himself in carrying this law into effect, and who, in obedience to the will of the legislature, sends numbers of his countrymen from the soil in which they drew breath, and the connections which make life dear to them, merely because he suspects their loyalty, does that which, being legal, ought not to induce on him either odium or punishment; but while human nature shall continue to be composed of its present materials, there will be found men among the people over whom he exerts such authority, whose vindictive passions will be apt to mark him as their victim. In many deplorable instances has this been verified in Ireland. The Insurrection Act was adopted to prevent such enormities; unhappily it but encreased, greatly encreased, the black catalogue.

I ask unprejudiced men, whether these measures, carried into execution against a people who from the recent acquisition of independence felt much of the pride and sensibility of freedom, were not most likely to be attended with the consequences which have followed? What then, I ask, must have been the effect of that measure, at which freedom and justice feels still more abhorrence—a legal indemnity for all crimes

committed against the people, under colour of preserving the peace? Good heavens! was it not enough that a law was passed which left the subjects' liberty and person at the mercy of the magistrates—but must the military or civil tyrant be protected *by law against law*, in the perpetration of acts which even by the spirit of that act would be illegal and oppressive? The first Bill of Indemnity Was designed to protect my Lord Carhampton, who had played the part of a self-created Dictator in Ireland. What the particular measures pursued by his Lordship were, I shall not enumerate. They are known, and I believe will be remembered by both countries. He is indemnified for his zeal; and his measures, instead of quieting, have been unfortunately found to have produced a contrary effect. From that time to the present, Bills of Indemnity have become an established part of the system of government in Ireland; so that he who can contrive means to cover the most malicious and oppressive crimes by the easy pretext of securing the public peace, may rest as firmly on an act to indemnify him in the succeeding session, as the public creditor may depend on the passing of the money bills.

In enumerating these successive steps which have been taken in Ireland, professedly to tranquillize the country, but which have operated only to render it outrageous, I might have mentioned the appointment and the recall of my Lord Fitzwilliam. But in speaking to the people of England it were superfluous to dwell on that event; for with the circumstances of *that, they*, as well as the people of Ireland, are acquainted. I shall therefore content myself with saying, that of the many irritating measures which have goaded Ireland, the recall of my Lord Fitzwilliam was the most mischievously efficacious. With that nobleman, Hope fled from the country. What has since followed has been the counsel of Despair. By that event it was placed beyond doubt, that the Cabinets of the two countries formed a junction against reform—against the restoration of the constitution to Ireland—and against a mitigation of the coercive system. If treason have spread widely through the country—if the friends of the French system have become numerous, it must be since that insulting act of the British Cabinet told the people, that if they felt the pressure of present evils, or looked for a further extension of constitutional rights, their hope must be turned to another quarter than to the influence of the British connection.

By the operation of the measures which I have now described, the Irish people and the Irish administration were put at issue. The system to which the Castle had resorted to silence murmur, had produced outrage—the measures which they took to punish outrage had created conspiracy, assassination, and, in many instances, treason. Throughout the whole process of discontent, I have shewed that administration were aggressors, and that the irregularities which have followed were but the reaction of an high and irritable spirit in the people, compressed by coercion, which left no vent to its feelings but in acts of private or public violence.

At this point the administration found it necessary to pause. The measures which they had already tried to smother the discontents of the people, and to repress those violent and illegal consequences of it, had not only proved ineffectual, but had aggravated, to a most alarming height, the mischiefs which they were sottishly expected to remedy. In almost every part of the country the most extreme disorder prevailed. It was not now a Volunteer Convention, consisting of men of known loyalty and great stake in the country, meeting to petition for reform—it was not now a Catholic Convention sitting in Dublin, pursuing open and constitutional measures to obtain elective franchise, or a full admission to the privileges of the constitution—it was not, I say, such bodies as these that administration had to cope with. They had put down those. Other more numerous and more dangerous difficulties were now to be encountered. The populace of the country was now organized, and an *imperium in imperio* formed, which, from its privacy and the numbers of which it consisted, was truly alarming. The professed objects of this society, the most singular which perhaps had ever been formed in any country, still continued what they originally were—Reform and Emancipation. But papers were found which were supposed to prove, that their designs were

more dangerous and more extensive; and a letter from a Mr. Tone, which clearly expressed a treasonable opinion respecting a separation of the two countries was taken as full evidence that this was the sentiment of the society at large, consisting, as was believed, of not less than 600,000 men. Whatever might be *their* real designs, it was certain, that the conduct of the Orange-men of Armagh had been successfully imitated by the peasantry in many parts of Ireland. The plunder of arms was carried on systematically; the quantity taken was known to be considerable; and in the proclaimed districts several magistrates who had been active in transporting suspected persons, &c. &c. had been assassinated.

In this critical moment, the best and wisest men in Ireland, gentlemen possessed of the most extensive property in the country, and at the same time of character above the slightest imputation of disaffection or loyalty, urged on administration the necessity of changing that system which had been found to produce such horrible effects. They urged, that the great body of the nation was loyal—that even of the United Irishmen the greater part wished only for the admission of the Catholics and reform—and that to concede these would throw such a weight into the scale of government as would effectually tranquillize the country. Administration, however, took up the contrary opinion, and decided on a continuation of coercive measures. They pretended, that the people of Ireland were rebels, and that with rebels conciliation should not be tried. They assumed, in the first place, that all the United Irishmen were traitors—in the second, that that society comprehended the great body of the people, or that those who were not of that body approved heartily of all the measures which had been carried on for some years back by the Irish Cabinet. No account was made of that great and respectable class of men who, while they looked with detestation on those acts of insubordination, of assassination, and treason, which had followed the adoption of the present system, contemplated with the most unqualified reprobation that system itself. Determined, therefore, to scourge the nation out of that ill temper into which the scourge had driven it, what step did administration fix on? They send a military force under General Lake to the province of Ulster, and enjoin him to act at his discretion for disarming the freemen of the North, and enforcing content and tranquillity at the point of the bayonet!

It is not necessary to waste much reasoning on this measure. The constitution prescribes the interposition of the sword only in cases of open insurrection or rebellion. If the province of Ulster was in that state, what indignation must not the two countries feel at the wicked pertinacity of the Irish Cabinet in a system which led to that issue? If it were not in rebellion, what punishment could be too great for those who resorted without necessity to that last and dreadful remedy—a military force vested with discretionary powers, for disorders properly within the cognizance of the civil magistrate? But the administration justify themselves by the plea, that the proceedings of these United Irishmen were too subtle and cautious to be met by the ordinary exertions of the civil power, though they were not yet in open rebellion. They must take the praise, therefore, of having created a new species of opposition to established government, hitherto unknown, by directing, without intermission, the force of the state not against open violence, but against political principle; by warring, not with men whose aim was anarchy and plunder, but men skilled in, and zealous for, the perfection of the representative system.

But I deny that Ulster was in such a state as to justify the measure that was then taken—for it was not in open and avowed rebellion, nor was the system of the disorderly people in that province either too subtle or too strong for an active magistracy, constitutionally aided by the military. The disturbances amounted to nothing more than the assemblage now and then of parties of people on the original principle of the Orange-men (who to the disgrace of legislature, have, in a certain place, more than once, been called the friends of the constitution,) breaking houses and plundering arms; and I contend, that with a proper force left always at the disposal and under the direction of active magistrates, those individual acts of outrage might have been prevented. The pretext, that the magistrates were terrified from acting by frequent assassination, is empty—courage is not exclusively the boast of the military in Ireland; and every country in which the Insurrection Act has been carried into operation has produced numbers of magistrates who dared to meet all the odium and all the danger which the execution of that unpopular act imposed on them.

Under this Proclamation, Gen. Lake deprived of arms not only the traitorous and the disaffected, but the loyal and most zealous friends of the constitution. Where arms were expected and not found, a very new mode of trial was instituted. The suspected or accused person was suspended by the neck until the

process of strangulation was nearly completed. He was then let down, and if he was still pertinacious, the touchstone was again tried, until he either confessed or accused others. In other cases, it was ascertained what quantity of arms should be brought in by a certain village or district—if the full quantity could not be produced by the inhabitants, their habitations were reduced to ashes to detect the concealment. These seem to have been ordinary modes of proceeding under the military system; there were others more irregular and eccentric which the zeal of the soldiers frequently prompted them to indulge in.

Of the system thus steadily pursued by the Irish administration, the Irish legislature expressed their most hearty and zealous approbation.—Throughout the whole train of violent measures to which the Irish administration resorted, the Irish Parliament went with them *pari passu*. Without stopping to enquire whether this co-operation of the legislature tended rather to reconcile the people to the system than to encrease the discontents which it was naturally calculated to produce, it is certain that some very celebrated characters, whose opinions in this case deserve to be respected, had declared the most decided disapprobation of at least that part of it which related to the military. The conduct of my Lord Moira, in the Parliament of both countries, himself a soldier, an Irish nobleman, and one possessed of such a stake in the country as must make him anxious for its welfare and its peace, has already perhaps inclined the British public to doubt whether the enormities practised under that system were tolerable in any country. The manly and candid opinion of the brave old Abercrombie, "That the conduct of the army in Ireland was calculated to make them formidable only to their friends," must have also had its weight in ascertaining the merits of that system. That the feelings and the honour of that venerable officer did not suffer him longer to remain in the command of the Irish army, Ireland will long have reason to lament. The influence of even *one* such mind on Irish politics would have produced the most important benefits.

For some time the administration boasted that they had at length found the way to quiet the country. In fact, the operations of the military in Ulster did reduce that province to a state of peace, and no disturbance existed but what the army itself created. Less violent and unconstitutional measures would have prevented acts of outrage—but neither this, nor any measure of coercion, could have eradicated discontent. As the infliction of the military system produced a gloomy quiet in one part of the island, the disturbances broke out with much encreased enormity in other parts of the country.—The South, hitherto tranquil, and which at the moment of danger, when the enemy appeared on the coast a few months before, exhibited the most enthusiastic spirit of zeal and loyalty, now became convulsed by partial risings to an alarming degree. The interior of the country, the King's and Queen's County, the County of Kildare, and even the vicinity of the metropolis, the Counties of Wicklow and of Dublin, were now in as bad a state as the pacified North had ever been. Every reasonable man, who believes that nothing can be produced without a producing cause, must attribute this change of temper in the South and other parts of the country to some circumstance which did not exist at the time of the invasion; and that circumstance could only be the introduction of the military system—of the efficacy of which administration had so much vaunted. But powerful as they supposed that system to be, they were not inclined to depend on its efficacy, such as they had tried it. They therefore now resorted to a measure which has hitherto been used only by irritated victors over perfidious and vanquish'd enemies—they sent them troops, not to disarm the inhabitants of a district, or to act with discretionary powers for, what was now a general pretext for violence of every species, the preservation of the public peace; but permanently to live at free quarters on all the inhabitants of those counties which were in what was called a disturbed state. Under this measure, excesses were committed which Ireland, much as she had suffered, had not yet witnessed. It was not the burning of a peasant's house, or the strangulation of one or two individuals in a village, which struck the eye of a spectator—but the houses of the most respectable farmers in the country, nay, houses of gentlemen of large fortune, and, in many instances, of the most approved loyalty, converted into barracks by the soldiery—the females of the family flying from the insults of these new guests, who rioted on the provision, emptied the cellars of their

unwilling hosts, and when they had exhausted the house which they occupied sent their mandate to the neighbourhood to bring in a fresh stock!

At this point I stop—for here the fate of Ireland comes to its crisis. This measure was in operation not three weeks, when the rebels, the traitors, or the people of Ireland, to the sorrow of every friend to peace, to the Irish name, and to the British connection, stood forth in opposition to the King's troops. The scene of blood is now opened. Ireland is wasting her vital strength in convulsion; and whether victory or defeat await them, humanity, loyalty, and patriotism must weep over the event!

When I solicit the people of England attentively to consider that long train of harsh and hideous measures which I have now enumerated, and which have brought Ireland into this lamentable condition—when I call on them to examine with anxious care the motives in which they originated, and the end to which they lead—I call on them to attend to that in which they are deeply interested. In my mind they have been adopted but for one purpose—to raise on the broad basis of CORRUPT INFLUENCE a system of government, which, under the form of the British constitution, should stand independent of, and in opposition to, the sense of the nation. I rest this opinion on two grounds—The one is, because each successive measure taken up by administration to counteract the wishes of the people, carried in it features of despotism, which in a free country the necessity of the case could not call for. Every bill of pains and penalties to which they resorted involved and asserted a general and permanent principle, or gave the Executive a general and extraordinary power, inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution, though the occasions which gave rise to those measures were but partial or transient. I refer for instances to the Convention Act, the Insurrection Act, the Gunpowder Act, and the Press Bill, a measure which, in my enumeration of the violent steps taken by the Irish government, escaped me, though perhaps it is, of all the dreadful groupe, the most prominent and most fatal to liberty and the constitution.—The other reason on which my opinion rests is, because administration have persevered in that system without making any one effort to allay discontent or satisfy the moderate and loyal part of the community by the concession of any of those measures on which the heart of the nation was fixed—because they have gone on in opposition to the sense of the best men in the empire to force the people of Ireland, or the discontented part of it, into open and avowed rebellion, rather than try any means to prevent that catastrophe by conciliating measures—because this intention was avowed and gloried in^[2]—and, finally, because from the outset of their career they have resorted to military coercion in every case where they could find, or create, the slightest pretence for the use of that dreadful engine.

The flame which by these means has been kindled in Ireland can be extinguished but in one of two ways—either the rebels aided by the power of France will succeed in wresting Ireland from the British connection, or the military force with which the Irish government is entrusted will stifle in blood the discontents of the country. Of the first there is happily no danger. The numbers of the insurgents is much too small to endanger the connection, and that moderate and loyal party, which administration have hitherto treated with contempt, is too strong and too much attached to the present form of government, notwithstanding what they had suffered, either to be overcome by the force, or seduced by the artifice of disaffection, to forego their allegiance. There remains then only the other alternative—and of that what will be the effect? Rebellion will be quelled by power, but the existing causes of discontent—those causes which through a long series of petty conflicts have at length terminated in the present dreadful issue, will remain rankling in the bosom of the country. Conscious of its force, administration will, with an high hand, bear still more hard on the constitutional rights of the people—at least against those rights which are calculated to guard them against the tyranny of an ambitious faction. Knowing the hatred which the Irish nation bear to the set who have heaped on her head those calamities under which she now groans, and of which centuries will not remove the effects, will the Irish administration, think you, resign that

extraordinary unconstitutional force which in course of the struggle they have acquired? Impossible! If we can reason at all on the event, it is most reasonable to believe, that the military system which shall have subdued the discontents of Ireland, will continue to govern it. Will it be for the safety, or for the honour of England that her sister country should be a military despotism?

In one event only, then, does there appear to be a gleam of hope that Ireland may yet become a free, happy, and contented member of the British empire—and that is, in a suppression of the present insurrection—in a change of the men by whom the affairs of Ireland have been for some years so abominably administered—and in a change of that system which has hitherto been pursued by them. If Englishmen value their own liberty, which the contiguity of despotism must always hazard, or feel sympathy for the sufferings of an unfortunate people, whose attachment to Britain has been proved during the course of an anxious and changeful century, to these objects will they direct their efforts.

Already thousands of the people of Ireland have fallen in the contest—and yet the standard of rebellion is erect. More of the blood of Ireland must be shed, before Ireland, under the present system, is restored to peace. A military chief governor has been sent over, not to appease but to subdue. He *may* subdue—but is it the pride of a British King to rule a depopulated, a desolated, and a discontented country? Will fire and sword restore content and confidence to the land? Will the slaughter of a hundred thousand of the people of Ireland reconcile the survivors to that system of mal-government which they have risen to oppose? Will the faction which has provoked this scene of slaughter, become more popular by the carnage they have occasioned?

Englishmen!—your fellow subjects of Ireland now call on you to consider the case of a distracted country, as that of brethren united by the tie of a common nature, and by the still closer tie of a common Sovereign; both entitled to the advantages of the same constitution, each depending, in some measure, on the others strength. For one hundred years you have found in the people of Ireland a faithful and firm friend—though for much of that period we laboured under the most distressing disadvantages, destitute of the means of wealth, and aliens from the most important benefits of the British constitution, we have yet borne our sufferings with patient and uncomplaining attachment to a British Sovereign, and to the British cause. In our poverty we still contributed to the exigencies of the empire. When an extension of our means enabled us to give more largely towards the common stock, we poured forth our blood and treasure in the cause of Britain with more than the zeal of brothers. In our fallen state, with an island reeking with blood, and the sword at our throat, directed by an administration in the best and in the worst of times hostile to Ireland, we call upon you to assist in rescuing our country from utter and irretrievable ruin—we implore you to interfere for us with our common Sovereign—to solicit at his paternal hand the removal of those wicked men, who by abusing the confidence of their Sovereign, and sacrificing their duty to his people, to the gratification of ambitious views or native malevolence, have belied the Irish nation; and by their obstinate and relentless cruelty have driven it to madness. We conjure you to think of us as of men enamoured of liberty and animated by that zealous attachment to monarchy, limited by law, which has given immortality to the name of Englishmen—though at the same time, as of men, among whom many have been hurried into unpardonable indiscretions while the great body remain a loyal, though a suffering people.—In a word, we solicit your sympathy as brethren, and your influence as fellow subjects, with the common Father of both kingdoms, to save four millions of people from the insulting tyranny of Ministers who have abused their powers, and, instead of the mild genius of the British constitution, have governed by the galling despotism of a military mob!

FINIS.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Vide Irish Chancellor's speech on Lord Moira's motion.

[2] See Mr. J. Claud Beresford's Speeches in the House of Commons during the session of 1797.

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