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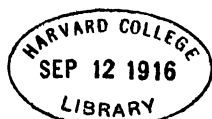
THE SUBSTANCE
OF THE
SPEECH
OF THE
MARQUIS WELLESLEY,
ON THE 31st JANUARY, 1812,
IN THE
HOUSE OF LORDS,
ON THE MOTION OF
EARL FITZWILLIAM,
RESPECTING THE
PRESENT STATE OF IRELAND.

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THE SUBSTANCE OF THE
S P E E C H
OF THE
MARQUIS WELLESLEY,
ON THE MOTION OF
EARL FITZWILLIAM,
&c. &c.

On Friday, the 31st of January, EARL FITZWILLIAM made a motion, that the House of Lords should resolve itself into a Committee, "to take into consideration the present state of Ireland."

MARQUIS WELLESLEY said, that the subject, which had been presented to the attention of their Lordships was worthy to engage it. The state of the affairs of Ireland was so intimately connected with the general prosperity and strength of the empire, that the hereditary counsellors of the crown could never be employed more usefully to their Sovereign, or to their Country, than in examining the situation of Ireland, her resources, her internal administration, her hap-

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piness and welfare, and above all, the condition of the great body of her population. But although these topics must ever be present to their minds, the ancient usage, and established practice of Parliament required, that their Lordships should consider deliberately the manner, and the season, in which this inquiry was pressed upon them. The magnitude and importance of the questions proposed, their general claim to attention, would not induce that House to enter hastily into the Committee, without previously adverting to the professed motives and objects of the intended inquiry, to the probable consequences of its progress, and to its ultimate result. Nor would their Lordships advance one step in the course recommended by the Noble Earl,* until they should have carefully examined what might be the operation of their vote upon the strength and honour of the Executive government in Ireland, upon the due administration of the law in that country; upon the law itself; how the temper of the people and of contending parties might be moved by this proceeding; and what might be the influence of the Noble Earl's proposition, even upon the very point of his solicitude—the interesting cause of the Roman Catholics of Ireland.

* EARL FITZWILLIAM.

The first ground, on which the Noble Earl had rested, was the supposed misconduct of the Executive administration in Ireland, and the necessity of censuring its acts; and of arresting its career, in an alleged course of violence and injustice.

What had he placed in the front of this great argument? A vague report from a newspaper of that morning, imputing to an officer of the Irish government some interference in the return of the pannel of a jury. Until he (Lord W.) entered the House, this report had not reached him, and even if it had fallen under his observation, in a form so unauthentic, he would not have deemed it of sufficient importance to constitute the ground of any proceeding in that Assembly. But from further enquiry, he found that the Court of King's Bench in Ireland, after solemn deliberation, had actually dismissed the complaint on which the Noble Earl rested this important branch of his proposition: nor was there any reason to apprehend, that any other circumstance in the trial now depending before that Court had afforded a just motive of alarm for the safety of any principle of justice, of law, or of the Constitution. Neither the dignity of the Noble Earl's character could admit of any further attention on his part to that ground of his motion; nor could their Lordships deem such a transaction to be a sufficient

cause for entering into the proposed inquiry, without any authentic fact, without even any public rumour of criminality, and with the knowledge, that the Court of King's Bench in Ireland had dismissed from its bar, as trivial and groundless, the charge on which the Noble Earl required their Lordships to proceed to a Committee of Inquiry.

From this particular charge, the Noble Earl had advanced to a more general and enlarged accusation, and had imputed to the Irish Government a perversion of the law of Ireland, for the criminal purpose of obstructing the Roman Catholics of Ireland in the exercise of the sacred right of petition : and this accusation was to form a principal object of inquiry in the Committee proposed to their Lordships. If any reasonable ground of suspicion had existed to justify an apprehension that the government of Ireland had presumed to interfere between the subject and the crown, or between the people and the Parliament ; or had dared to prevent or to embarrass the legitimate right of petition ; to prejudge the merits of any petition ; or to affix the authority of the Lord Lieutenant to any opinion upon the claims of the Roman Catholics ; then indeed inquiry would have been indispensable ; and if the charge could have been substantiated, their Lordships must have addressed the throne, for

the removal of a government, so unfit for its high trust. But no impediment had been opposed in Ireland to the right of petitioning the Crown or Parliament; no vestige could be traced of a project so arbitrary and desperate, in any act of the government, in any argument of the Law officers of the Crown, in any opinion or decision of the Courts of Law. The question had not involved the right of petitioning, or the merits of the claim of the Catholics; it had arisen merely upon the form and constitution of a particular description of assembly of the people; and upon the application of the provisions of the Statute Law of Ireland to that form and constitution. The right of petitioning could not have been denied, for it had not even been argued; that great constitutional privilege was not now even a matter of argument; it was placed beyond the reach of all question; but even that exalted privilege was to be exercised according to law; in Ireland, according to the law of Ireland: and the question at issue in Ireland had been, not whether the Roman Catholics should freely petition the Crown or Parliament, not whether their claims were just, but whether the description of assembly, which they had elected, and in which they met, was conformable to the law of the land: upon this question, solemnly argued, the decision of the Court of King's Bench in Ireland was

directly in favour of that construction of the Statute Law of Ireland, which the Lord Lieutenant and Council had enforced by proclamation, with the advice of all the Law Officers of the Crown, and for which the Law Officers of the Crown had contended at the bar of justice.

In the name of his Majesty's servants, on the part of the Irish government, and of its respectable and honourable advisers, Lord Wellesley denied every part of the Noble Earl's charge. The Irish government was not authorised to question or to obstruct the right of petition, or to touch the claims of the Catholics. The Irish government had not attempted any such violence : such an attempt would have been repugnant to every sentiment of the honest heart of the Noble Duke, who represented His Majesty in Ireland, and who would have repudiated, with indignation, any instruction or advice tending to interpose his noble name and high authority between the people of Ireland, and their gracious Sovereign, or the Legislature of the United Kingdom. The *person, who held the highest confidential charge under the Noble Duke in Ireland (and in that person's honour and fame Lord Wellesley naturally felt a cordial and affectionate interest,) was too well grounded in the principles of the Constitution, and in ha-

* THE RIGHT HON. W. WELLESLEY POLE.

bits of reverence for the law; too deeply interested in the prosperity of Ireland and affectionately attached to her welfare, to advise any violation of the rights or liberties of the people of Ireland.—That person was also of a firmness of mind, and a fortitude of spirit, that would never decline a resolute assertion of the laws of his country. In fact, the government of Ireland had committed no crime and no error, unless the firm and temperate assertion of the law of the land was criminal or erroneous.

The Act, denominated the Convention Act in Ireland, was a law of prevention, founded on long and perilous experience. The object of the law was to prevent the formation of a peculiar description of assembly, which experience had proved to be dangerous; unnecessary for the representation to the Crown or to Parliament of any just or legitimate popular grievance; calculated exclusively for mischief; a proper organ of disorder; a ready instrument of confusion; but useless and unmanageable for any good, honest, or lawful purpose. This law does not inquire, what may be the object of the convention, to be ascertained by its previously declared purpose, or by its acts when convened; the act of election, the act of meeting in such an assembly, for whatever purpose, are the crimes prohibited by this statute. The criminal intention, the "*malus animus*,"

is by this law plainly declared to be, the intention of forming such an assembly as the statute describes. The government of Ireland therefore was not only authorised, but required by law to prevent the election of such an assembly, or if elected, to disperse its meeting, and to prosecute all persons, who had violated the statute, either at such election, or in such assembly.

The policy both of the statute, and of the proceeding of the government of Ireland has been arraigned. These points could not form the question upon the Noble Earl's argument. But Lord Wellesley approved the policy of the statute, and thought that the Lord Lieutenant was well advised, when his Grace enforced it. The enforcement of the statute was salutary, not only for the tranquillity of Ireland, but for the peculiar interests of the Roman Catholic cause. He remembered some of the early conventions in Ireland, of which the experience had led to the enactment of this law. At the distant period of 1783, in the administration of the Earl of Northington, (although opposed in parliament to the government of that day,) he had in Ireland resisted the establishment of a convention, and his conduct had been sanctioned by the applause of Mr. Fox, then Secretary of State. Lord Wellesley had always continued to disapprove this description of assembly, and

had concurred most cordially in the wise policy of the Irish statute of 1793, which was intended to prohibit the formation of all such assemblies, and to protect the tranquillity of the country from the precarious chance of the proceedings of a body, which could not even be constituted without a violation of the established order of the state, and which could not act without danger to regular authority. The very existence of such a body was perilous; its acts, if otherwise innocent, must be injurious to public order, because they must tend to disturb the respect which is due alone to the lawful Sovereign and Legislature of the realm.

The law, therefore, which was of general application, equally affecting Protestants and Catholics, was a wise and salutary statute, of preventive policy. It was prudent in the government of Ireland to enforce it, more especially against a plan of Catholic convention, which could not be carried into effect without aggravated danger to the country, nor advance one step without aggravated mischief to the Roman Catholics themselves.

How was this salutary law carried into execution?— Was no warning voice heard from the executive power in Ireland? Was no friendly admonition uttered, before the strong hand of the law was extended to vindicate the King and the Country against the assailants of public

order? Their Lordships should know, that the Lord-Lieutenant had abstained, with a degree of forbearance, verging upon indiscretion, from the exercise of his legal powers, until the intention of electing and of convening the assembly, prohibited by the statute, was plainly avowed. Even then, the first step taken was a private and most amicable admonition to the leaders of the Catholic body, apprising them of the illegality of the course which they were pursuing, and, at the same time, intimating the determination of the government to enforce the law. This admonition having proved ineffectual, a proclamation was issued by the government, declaring the law, and announcing an intention to execute its provisions.—The elections to the proposed assembly proceeded; the violation of the law continued; and the government of Ireland found no alternative, but to suffer the law to be violated with impunity, or to disperse the Convention, under the provisions of the Act of 1793, and to prosecute, at the bar of the King's Bench, the persons concerned in violating that act. They followed the proceedings at that bar; their Lordships would be instructed by studying those proceedings: they would admire the powerful eloquence of the Irish bar, and the learning, temper, firmness, and dignity, of that most respectable, pure, and upright Court, which had sanctioned, by a

solemn and unanimous judgment, the legality of the acts of the Executive government in Ireland, and had established the law, which the Lord Lieutenant had vindicated, by proclamation, by the interference of the magistracy, and by public prosecution.

Where, in the whole course of this transaction, could the Noble Earl find a resting place for his accusation? Neither in the original object of the law of 1793, nor in its letter, nor in its spirit, nor in the candour and clearness with which its provisions were explained and declared, nor in the moderation and lenity with which they were ultimately and reluctantly enforced, nor in the unanimous judgment of the court of King's Bench, confirming the just interpretation of the law, after long and assiduous argument, and patient and solemn trial.

Where was the semblance of a suspicion, that the right of petition had been invaded? Were not all the legitimate, accustomed channels of petitioning open, free, easy of access, and ready, even with the aid of his Majesty's representative in Ireland, to speed the prayers and wishes of his people to the foot of his Throne, and to the bar of his Parliament? Was every channel of petitioning dishonourable, excepting that which was unlawful? Was it undignified to address Parliament, excepting through a mock Parliament, formed

in contempt of the law, and whose very constitution would insult the legislature, which it affected to petition? Their Lordships could not admit, that on these points the Noble Earl had established any justification of his proposed inquiry.

Had the Noble Earl proved, that the government of Ireland had endeavoured to frustrate the claims of the Catholics, or to prejudice the cause of that respectable body, by checking the precipitate career of those who managed, or rather mismanaged that great cause in Ireland? No greater injury could be offered to that cause, than by presenting it to the Sovereign, or to the legislature, in the odious form of a wanton violation of the law, an outrage upon the legal authority of the crown and the state, and an insult upon the established government of the realm. The greatest enemy to the Roman Catholics of Ireland could not clothe their petition in a garb more repulsive. An illegal Convention was not the natural parent of a respectful petition. The Lord Lieutenant, therefore, had acted most amicably towards the Catholics, as well as most prudently towards the State, when His Grace had advised their leaders to relinquish the insane project of petitioning by convention, and to resort to the ancient ways of the law and Constitution, consecrated by the usage of ages, and leading to the

venerable fabric of liberty and order. The government of Ireland also deserved well of the Catholics for having enforced the law against their leaders, and for having by law abolished an assembly, which could not have continued, without exciting just alarm in every loyal and patriotic breast, and without involving the general cause of the Catholics in the character of that representative body, to which they had entrusted their affairs.

But if their Lordships should agree to the Committee on the argument of the Noble Lord, they must be prepared to declare that this plan of a convention was not only legal, but laudable and meritorious.

Some persons were of opinion, that the Roman Catholics ought to be admitted to sit and vote in Parliament, and to every other advantage enjoyed by Protestants ; but, in the interval, were their Lordships inclined to sanction, in place of the protestant Parliament of Ireland, an assembly of the Roman Catholic nobility, prelacy, gentry, and Commons, to sit publicly in Dublin, and to debate and resolve upon all subjects of law, government, politics, and religion? Would their Lordships declare, that this was an excellent institution, calculated to preserve the peace of Ireland, and to maintain the laws and establishments in that country in Church and State inviolate, while we should be employed on this side of the Channel

in deliberating upon the respectful petitions, which that High Council might be pleased to certify, and transmit for our approbation ?

Their Lordships could not agree to the Committee, when the sanction of these illegal conventions was presented as a principal object of the Noble Earl's proposal. Justice to the government of Ireland, justice to the interests of Ireland, and above all, justice to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, precluded the possibility of yielding to the Noble Earl in this part of the question.

From his animadversions on the conduct of the government of Ireland, the Noble Earl had passed to the more important objects of the proposed Committee,—to consider the condition of the Roman Catholics of Ireland; their claim on the justice of Parliament; and the necessity of proceeding to the immediate removal of the civil disabilities of which they complained.

Lord Wellesley declared, that he approached the interesting cause of the Roman Catholics, with a solicitude for its success which could not be surpassed, even by the ardour of the Noble Earl. From the first dawn of his reason, to the present hour, his anxiety for the effectual relief of the Roman Catholics of Ireland had been the warm sentiment of his heart, confirmed and animated by successive experience and reflection, and by the delibe-

rate exercise of his judgment, not unaccustomed to the practical consideration of great affairs of state : He was born, bred, and educated in these principles of rational liberality, equally remote from intolerant bigotry, and from licentious disregard of established order. He had always supported every former proposal for the relief of the Roman Catholics : If for a moment, in a period of peculiar and extraordinary embarrassment, he had suspended the active exertion of his opinions on this subject, the suspense had been to him most painful and irksome ; it had been occasioned merely by a conviction, that more danger was to be apprehended to the Roman Catholics, and to the state, from a premature attempt to urge their just claim, than from a prudent delay of that claim, in submission to the character and circumstances of the times.

It was necessary, however, to explain distinctly the foundations and limits of his opinions on the claim of the Roman Catholics, because he apprehended, that he did not agree with any of the declared champions in this conflict.

The heat of the contention had exaggerated and distorted the true and natural character of this question on both sides of the argument.

On the part of the Roman Catholics, the claim had

been armed with all the violence and terror of indisputable right, spurning all accompanying condition, all previous consideration, all provident, amicable delay.

The demand issued forth in the array of War, and no alternative appeared, but submission or battle.

On the other side, every delay of a peremptory sentence of eternal exclusion was represented, as perilous to our civil, and nearly sacrilegious towards our religious establishments; all conditions were ridiculed, as nugatory or impossible; all previous consideration was deprecated, as an artful plot formed to inflame the expectations and demands of the Catholics, and to damp the zeal of the defenders of our establishments in Church and State.

The restraint imposed by statute on the Roman Catholics was asserted to be in itself a positive good; a venerable and sacred institution; it was consecrated as an essential article of our Faith; not a safeguard to be respected and preserved, merely for the temporary security of the altar, but the very altar and ark of our religion.

These excesses were violent and irrational. The argument must be disarrayed, and brought down from the pomp and ostentation of right on one side, and from the intemperate fury of bigotted passion on the other; and the path of discretion must be sought between the extremes of zeal.

His noble friend (Earl of Aberdeen,) (for whom, from grateful remembrance of revered friendship and of indelible affection, he entertained a sincere regard ; and whose excellent speech would have delighted the kind heart of the illustrious Statesman,* under whose tutelary care he had been educated) had most justly said, that the question upon the claim of the Roman Catholics, was a mere question of state expediency.

This was a correct view of that great and important question, and Lord Wellesley expressed his entire concurrence in that part of his noble friend's sentiments.

Toleration is the intermediate point between persecution and encouragement. The precise limits of the principles of persecution, of toleration, and of encouragement, cannot, however, be accurately drawn by any abstract definition. These boundaries cannot otherwise be ascertained, than by reference to the relative situations of the parties, and to the circumstances of the times, and to the condition of the state.

One maxim is clear and undeniable ; that every state possesses a right to restrain whatever is dangerous to its security : No sect, no individual, can assert as a claim of right against the state, the relaxation of any restraint, of

* Mr. PITT.

which the continuance is required for the safety of the community.

On the other hand, every restraint, excluding any description of the subjects of any state from the enjoyment of advantages generally possessed by the community, is in itself a positive evil; an evil which can wisely or justly be endured, so long only as the probable danger to be apprehended from its removal, shall evidently exceed the certain mischief of its continuance.

The restraint now existing upon the Roman Catholics is, therefore, in itself a positive evil; an imperfection in the frame of the empire: the question is, whether this special and particular imperfection, which separates one great branch of the people from the common benefits of the general constitution, is a necessary evil, which must be sustained for the universal safety of the whole Empire.

No community can be warranted by justice or policy, in extending such restraints beyond the strict limits of necessity; if real danger requires this sacrifice of the impartial and parental spirit of any state towards all its subjects, that State, however reluctantly, must hold to such restraints, as the necessary means of security.

How does this reasoning apply to the Roman Catholics of Ireland? What j

for continuing the restraint of which they complain? Is no mischief felt from its continuance? What danger is dreaded from its removal? What is the probable balance of peril between its continuance and its removal?

Lord Wellesley declared, that in his judgment, the mischief of continuing this system of restraint greatly overbalanced any danger which could be apprehended from reverting to the more liberal, more mild, more benignant, and auspicious policy, which had adorned the earlier periods of his Majesty's reign. The original severity of the penal laws; was directed against the Roman Catholics rather as the known instruments and abettors of the system of arbitrary Power at that era, than as the sectaries of a peculiar religious faith. The Papist succession to the British throne was dreaded, as the certain destruction of our liberties and laws; as well as of the independence and freedom of Europe; our ecclesiastical establishment was inseparably blended with the foundations of our limited monarchy, and of our civil rights; and a bulwark was formed by the admirable connection of the whole of our constitution, which has proved impregnable to every assault of domestic or foreign foes. In the lapse of time, the gradual and progressive changes, have removed the alarm of

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 a Papist successor to the Crown, or of a Papist combination for the introduction of arbitrary power.

OK
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 The Roman Catholics of Ireland have not been viewed by the legislature, as the ready instruments of ruin to our established constitution. Why have they been admitted to the benefits which they now enjoy? Why were they relieved from the ignominy of disherison? admitted to the rights of property, to the elective franchise, to the bar, to the army, to various other advantages? Has the benevolence of the state rashly opened to them the portals of a constitution, of which they are believed to be the sworn foes? Have they been permitted to approach so closely to the throne and altar, under conviction of a traitorous conspiracy to destroy both?

OK
 Their Lordships must remember what has been already granted to the Roman Catholics, before a just estimate can be formed of the effect, either of withholding or of conceding what remains under restraint.

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already
 Do the Roman Catholics of Ireland now possess no political power? No person acquainted with that country would deny that they possess a large, almost a predominant share of political power in Ireland.

This fact afforded matter of deep reflection: it must be the policy of every wise state, to connect all descriptions of persons, possessing political power, with the

general frame of the community, to mix and blend their individual pursuits with the common interests of the state, and to attach them by the powerful ties of honourable ambition and honest gain to the established order of the government.

A body, possessing great political power, but separated from the state by special exclusions and restraints; individual ambition extinguished; individual interest abridged; uninfluenced by the government; exercising an influence, which the government can neither extend, nor diminish; dissociated from all the establishments, civil, military, and religious, but yet holding an intrinsic weight, which occasionally presses upon every establishment;—what must be the operation of such a body upon the frame of any state? It must be prejudicial to public order and tranquillity, because its action is not coincident with the ordinary movement of the state, not regulated by the same principles, nor touched and moved by the same means, nor directed to the same ends.

It would appear to be wisdom in any state to endeavour to associate such a body with the ordinary operations of the established government, by infusing the same principles of connection, which unite and harmonise all the parts of the community, and which form the peculiar strength and beauty of the British Constitution. It was

not so much a question whether additional political power should be given to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, as whether they should now be refused those appendages to their present political power, which would identify its exercise with the interests of the state, and would constitute the bonds and pledges of attachment to the government, and the ties of union with the Commonwealth. The action and force of our happy constitution depends upon a similar principle, which combines individual interests in the general preservation of order, and mixes and blends each part in the harmony of the whole. It is a wild theory to suppose, that the balance of the British Constitution is maintained merely by the mutual check and collision of the great branches of political power, of which it is composed. The result of such a scheme must be either perpetual discord and disorder, or the total stagnation of the vital powers of the government, and the inaction and final decay of the whole system. But this conflict is prevented by the intervention of individual interests; without injuring the principles of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, which constitute the foundations of the government, the mildness of our laws, and the character of our nation have tempered these apparently discordant materials into a system of the most regular and uniform action.

The House of Lords is connected with the House of Commons, with the People, and with the Crown, by many ties of common interest, mitigating the theoretical notion of aristocracy, which has been described as the sole constituent principle of this Assembly. In the constitution of the House of Commons, the same tempera-
 ture may be observed; and even the Imperial Crown of these realms is intimately blended with the interests of the nobility, of the gentry, and of the people. The great principles of the constitution are, in fact, to be traced in the frame of each branch of the Legislature, as well as in the combination of the whole; and the happy intermixture of individual interests, the common right of the whole people to a participation in all the honours and advantages of the state, are the vital energies, the soul and spirit of the British Constitution. The present condition of the Roman Catholics of Ireland is anomalous in this Constitution, and repugnant to the policy of any wise State. The restraint, which still exists, cements and embodies discontent, without impairing the force or activity of political power. Perhaps the restraint itself tends to increase the power of the body on which it acts, by concentrating its entire energy in a narrow space, and by precluding the interposition of any collateral interest, of

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influence. The Roman Catholics of Ireland are now bound together by these impolitic restraints, in a distinct community, naturally adverse to the Establishment which excludes them. Remove this restraint, and you dissolve the ties of discontent; you disperse the sentiments of disaffection; and you introduce the powerful motives of individual interest, to counteract any combination against an Establishment, which offers so many immediate advantages of emolument and honour. The danger to the Protestant Establishment in Ireland is now considerable, and must increase with the natural augmentation of the power and wealth of the Roman Catholics, and with the necessary augmentation of their discontent, under the protracted continuance of this invidious system of exclusion.

Their increasing property in land and commercial wealth, their increasing numbers in the army and at the bar, their increasing influence of every description, while they shall remain an alienated and distinct community, must be formidable to the Establishment, which perseveres in rejecting their solicitations for admission into its bosom.

Their compacted strength must be directed against the Protestant Establishment, until a better policy shall incorporate the Roman Catholic interests with the Pro-

come Judges and Chancellors ;—and these extravagant desires were deemed certain proofs of hostility against the state. Because they wished to serve the Crown, they must intend to destroy it: they could not desire to reach the Seals, for any other purpose than to overthrow the Throne. They were permitted to hold commissions in the army; they had served with valour, and glory; shed their blood in the cause of their King and Country; beheld the inspiring example of their own native countrymen, leading British armies against the common enemy, and arresting the progress of France in the full career of her fury; and they were infected with the criminal ambition of desiring to emulate the illustrious sons of Ireland, under whom they had fought, and bled, and conquered; of hoping, ultimately, to direct the armies in which they had so gloriously served; and to devote to their country, in the command of her troops, those attainments, which they had laboriously acquired in the subaltern branches of her service.

Were these unreasonable or inordinate desires? Was this criminal ambition?

These wishes were the most substantial proofs that the Roman Catholics entertained a true estimate of the value of the concessions which had already been made to them, and a just sense of the Constitutional use of these advan-

tages. Was it to be argued, that because the Roman Catholics were sensible to the same emotions of honourable ambition, and public glory, which similar causes, and similar situations, had raised in all other breasts, they must have conspired the usurpation of the government of their country. The Legislature itself had excited these sentiments; they were the natural fruits of former concessions.—Because the Legislature had halted in its course, and had not pursued with steadiness the progressive policy of generosity to the Catholics, in which it had advanced so far, was it just to reprove them for the necessary effect of a powerful cause, which they had not originated, and which they could not controul?

Lord Wellesley, therefore, could not censure the solicitude of the Roman Catholics to obtain those additional advantages, which naturally grew out of past concessions, and which were almost the necessary result of former gifts. From this disposition, he inferred no defect of gratitude, or excess of expectation. The sentiment thus displayed by the Roman Catholics was implanted in the human heart, and congenial to the spirit of every free Constitution.

The Noble Earl would thus perceive, that Lord Wellesley's opinions on the condition and claims of the Catholics were substantially the same as his Lordship's.

He trusted that he should not be accused of a spirit of procrastination or delusion, if he now objected to enter into the Committee for the purpose of instantaneously abolishing the restraints under which the Roman Catholics of Ireland laboured.

The claim of that body now appears under circumstances of peculiar disfavour; clad in the terrific armour of right, accompanied by a defiance of the legal authority of the State, by a premeditated outrage upon the law of the land, and by the most insulting and contumelious spirit of intemperate menace.

To a claim, of such an aspect, Parliament cannot yield, even with justice to the claimants: it would prove a perilous gift to them, to concede any portion of the dignity and honour of Parliament, which must be sacrificed, if, in the present moment, their Lordships should submit to the temper and tone, in which these demands had been urged in Ireland, and to the violence, with which they had been supported in open resistance to legitimate government.

The trials of the offenders against the law were still in progress in Ireland; and the course of justice seemed to have suspended for a season, in that country, the active solicitations of those, who had hitherto conducted the affairs of the Roman Catholics. Even they seemed

to have determined, that the present moment was not suited to the discussion of this great question; and that time must be given for the return of tranquillity, before the voice of petition could again be heard in a tone, duly adapted to the solemnity of the occasion.

Why, then, did the Noble Earl now press their Lordships to a decision? After all the rage and tumult of the contest in Ireland, the storm has paused; and an interval of repose and quiet has succeeded by common consent, as the necessary preparation of temper for the important deliberation, which now approaches. Let not the Noble Earl prematurely interrupt this calm; on the other hand, let not their Lordships suffer this vital question to remain DORMANT, until reviving impatience shall again awaken the tempest of passion. The claims of the Roman Catholics of Ireland demand EARLY CONSIDERATION; in every view, for every interest, for every opinion, for every party, the EARLY consideration of the question is indispensably necessary.

That consideration Lord Wellesley would meet, with every favorable inclination to the Roman Catholic cause, but with a determination to tread the ground of concession with circumspection and caution; to examine the most favorable mode and time of removing the existing

restraints; to provide the securities which might be requisite for the protection of our sacred establishments in Church and State; and to consider every other beneficial arrangement, which could tend to give additional happiness to Ireland, or additional strength to the Empire in a settlement of such interest and importance.

He would not advise his King, or his Prince, to bow the Protestant sceptre of the realm, to any fictitious pretension of right, however arrayed with violence, or enforced by clamour: nor would he lend his hand to close the gates of the Constitution against any class of his Majesty's faithful subjects; nor would he presume to proclaim a sentence of irrevocable and eternal exclusion against a large portion of the population of the Empire, under colour of pure zeal for the Protestant establishment. In real affection and veneration for that establishment he yielded to none of those, whose zeal has been so conspicuous. The Protestant establishment in Church and State, was, indeed, the great security of all our public happiness and welfare. Whatever protection of person or property, was enjoyed by any class of subjects, by any sect of religion, whatever civil or religious liberty existed among us, originated from the Protestant establishment, was guarded and preserved by it, would flou-

rish with its prosperity, and decline with its decay. All sects, all parties, civil and religious, are concerned in the preservation of this great bulwark of the community. It is the safeguard of the subject, as well as of the Crown; connecting the purity and moderation of our reformed church with the regulated freedom of the people, and with the temperate spirit of our limited monarchy. To this refuge all have resorted, in the dreadful visitations of confusion, by which the order and liberty of this country have been so often disturbed; and under this hallowed altar all sects have found shelter from despotism or licentiousness:

*“Huc tandem concede—Hæc ARA tuebitur Omnes,
“Aut moriere simul.”—*

If it could be credited, that the Roman Catholics of Ireland had conceived the frantic imagination of subverting the fair fabric of the Protestant Constitution of the realm, and of erecting a Papist State, (of whatever form) on the ruins of our laws, liberties, and religion, this argument would assume a very different aspect; the point at issue would then be, not what their Lordships

should concede, but to what extremity the indignant power of the government should be urged against a conspiracy of such unexampled atrocity. But even the imprudent management of the Roman Catholic cause in Ireland, (however reprehensible) discloses a spirit, utterly incompatible with such a suspicion. It is evident, that the ambition, the desire of gain, the restless solicitations of the Roman Catholics, are all directed to advancement under the Protestant Constitution. They are jealous, not of our establishment, but of their exclusion from its benefits; they desire not to destroy it, but to enjoy its advantages; they are aware, that its destruction would expose them to evils, of far greater magnitude than those which they now endure. But they behold many benefits abundantly showered upon others, and forbidden to them; and they complain not of the existence, but of the partiality, of our happy Constitution. If this view of the temper of the Roman Catholics was erroneous, Lord Wellesley admitted that much of his reasoning was incorrect.

But if he had truly described the sentiments of the great body of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, fairly stated their interests, and justly urged their claims, let Them come forth, and vindicate Themselves against their

own leaders, who had tainted the purity of this great cause with faction, turbulence, and disorder.

An interval might now be expected of comparative tranquillity; let the Roman Catholics of Ireland employ that interval, not in devising new means of violating or evading the laws, or of insulting and vexing the legal government; not in fortifying their claims with new armaments of right, or menaces of force; but in composing and allaying the ferment so unpropitious to the favourable settlement of this question.

Instead of accumulating causes of irritation, let them endeavour to mitigate prejudices and jealousies, which have been exasperated by the recent indiscretion of their own management. Let them manifest a sincere desire to furnish to their Protestant brethren every reasonable pledge of attachment to the established Constitution, and every practicable security for its stability and prosperity. In soliciting the favour of the law, let them display a spirit of obedience to the law, and a disposition to submit with reverence to legal authority.

May these admonitions be received in the conciliatory spirit, in which they are uttered! and May the returning Sense of Duty and Affection avert the perils of Civil

**Discord ; restore the disturbed temper of the Nation ;
and enable Parliament to consider without passion, and
to decide with dignity, a question, VITAL to the Safety
and Peace, to the Power and Glory of the Empire !**

**G. SIDNEY, Printer,
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