

## LETTER VII.

DEAR ABRAHAM,

IN the correspondence which is passing between us you are perpetually alluding to the Foreign Secretary: and in answer to the dangers of Ireland, which I am pressing upon your notice, you have nothing to urge but the confidence which you repose in the discretion and sound sense of this gentleman.\* I can only say, that I have listened to him long and often, with the greatest attention; I have used every exertion in my power to take a fair measure of him, and it appears to me impossible to hear him upon any arduous topic without perceiving that he is eminently deficient in those solid and serious qualities upon which, and upon which alone, the confidence of a great country can properly repose. He sweats, and labours, and works for sense, and Mr. Ellis seems always to think it is coming, but it does not come; the machine can't draw up what is not to be found in the spring; Providence has made him a light, jesting, paragraph-writing man, and that he will remain to his dying day. When he is jocular he is strong, when he is serious he is like Sampson in a wig: any ordinary person is a match for him: a song, an ironical letter, a burlesque ode, an attack in the Newspaper upon Nicoll's eye, a smart speech of twenty minutes, full of gross misrepresentations and clever turns, excellent language, a spirited manner, lucky quotation, success in provoking dull men, some half information picked up in Pall Mall in the morning: these are your friend's natural weapons; all these things he can do; here I allow him to be truly great: nay, I will be just, and go still farther, if he would confine himself to these things, and consider the facet and the playful to be the basis of his character, he would, for that species of man, be universally regarded as a person of a very good understanding; call him a legislator, a reasoner, and the conductor of the affairs of a great nation, and it seems to me as absurd as if a butterfly were to teach bees to make honey. That he is an extraordinary writer of small poetry, and a diner out of the highest lustre, I do most readily admit. After George Selwyn, and perhaps Tickell, there has been no such man for this half century. The Foreign Secretary is a gentleman, a respectable as well as a highly agreeable man in private life; but you may as well feed me with decayed potatoes as console me for the miseries of Ireland by the resources of his sense and his discretion. It is only the public situation which this gentleman holds which entitles me or induces me to say so much about him. He is a fly in amber, nobody cares about the fly: the only question is, How the Devil did it get there? Nor do I attack him for the love of glory, but from the love of utility, as a burgomaster hunts a rat in a Dutch dyke, for fear it should flood a province.

The friends of the Catholic question are, I observe, extremely embarrassed in arguing when they come to the loyalty of the Irish Catholics. As for me, I shall go straight forward to my object, and state what I have no manner of doubt, from an intimate knowledge of Ireland, to be the plain truth. Of the great Roman Catholic proprietors, and of the Catholic prelates, there may be a few, and but a few, who would follow the fortunes of England at all events: there is another set of men who, thoroughly detesting this country, have too much property and too much character to lose, not to wait for some very favourable event before they show themselves; but the great mass of Catholic population, upon the slightest appearance of a French force in that country, would rise upon you to a man. It is the most mistaken policy to conceal the plain truth. There is no loyalty among the Catholics: they detest you as their worst oppressors, and they will continue to detest you till you remove the cause of their hatred. It is in your power in six months' time to produce a total revolution of opinions among this people; and in some future letter I will show you that this is clearly the case. At present, see what a dreadful state Ireland is in. The common toast among the low Irish is, the feast of the passover. Some allusion to Bonaparte, in a play lately acted at Dublin, produced thunders of applause from the pit and the galleries; and a politician should not be inattentive to the public feelings expressed in theatres. Mr. Perceval thinks he has disarmed the Irish: he has no more disarmed the Irish than he has resigned a shilling of his own public emoluments. An Irish\* peasant fills the barrel of his gun full of tow dipped in oil, butters

up the lock, buries it in a bog, and allows the Orange bloodhound to ransack his cottage at pleasure. Be just and kind to the Irish, and you will indeed disarm them; rescue them from the degraded servitude in which they are held by a handful of their own countrymen, and you will add four millions of brave and affectionate men to your strength. Nightly visits, Protestant inspectors, licences to possess a pistol, or a knife and fork, the odious vigour of the evangelical Perceval—acts of Parliament, drawn up by some English attorney, to save you from the hatred of four millions of people—the guarding yourselves from universal disaffection by a police; a confidence in the little cunning of Bow Street when you might rest your security upon the eternal basis of the best feelings: this is the meanness and madness to which nations are reduced when they lose sight of the first elements of justice, without which a country can be no more secure than it can be healthy without air. I sicken at such policy and such men. The fact is, the Ministers know nothing about the present state of Ireland; Mr. Perceval sees a few clergymen, Lord Castlereagh a few general officers, who take care, of course, to report what is pleasant rather than what is true. As for the joyous and lepid consul, he jokes upon neutral flags and frauds, jokes upon Irish rebels, jokes upon northern, and western, and southern foes, and gives himself no trouble upon any subject: nor is the mediocrity of the idolatrous deputy of the slightest use. Dissolved in grins, he reads no memorials upon the state of Ireland, listens to no reports, asks no questions, and is the

‘*Bourn* from whom no traveller returns.’+

The danger of an immediate insurrection is now, I *believe\**, blown over. You have so strong an army in Ireland, and the Irish are become so much more cunning from the last insurrection, that you may perhaps be tolerably secure just at present from that evil: but are you secure from the efforts which the French may make to throw a body of troops into Ireland? and do you consider that event to be difficult and improbable? From Brest Harbour to Cape St Vincent you have above three thousand miles of hostile sea coast and twelve or fourteen harbours quite capable of containing a sufficient force for the powerful invasion of Ireland. The nearest of these harbours is not two days' sail from the southern coast of Ireland, with a fair leading wind; and the farthest not ten. Five ships of the line, for so very short a passage, might carry five or six thousand troops with cannon and ammunition; and Ireland presents to their attack southern coast of more than 500 miles, abounding in deep bays, admirable harbours, and disaffected inhabitants. Your blockading ships may be forced to come home for provisions and repairs, or they may be blown off in a gale of wind and compelled to bear away for their own coast;—and you will observe, that the very same wind which locks you up in the British Channel when you are got there, is evidently favourable for the invasion of Ireland. And yet this is called Government, and the people huzza Mr. Perceval for continuing to expose his country day after day to such tremendous perils as these; cursing the men who would have given up a question in theology to have saved us from such a risk. The British empire at this moment is in the state of a peach-blossom—if the wind blows gently from one quarter, it survives, if furiously from the other, it perishes. A stiff breeze may set in from the north, the Rochefort squadron will be taken, and the Minister will be the most holy of men; if it comes from some of her, point, Ireland is gone, we curse ourselves as a set of monastic madmen, and call out for the unavailing satisfaction of Mr. Perceval's head. Such a state of political existence is scarcely credible; it is the action of a mad young fool standing upon one foot, and peeping down the crater of Mount Etna, not the conduct of a wise and sober people deciding upon their best and dearest interests: and in the name, the much-injured name, of Heaven, what is it all for that we expose ourselves to these dangers? Is it that we may sell more muslin? Is it that we may acquire more territory? Is it that we may strengthen what we have already acquired? No: nothing of all this; but that one set of Irishmen may torture another set of Irishmen—that Sir Phelim O'Callaghan may continue to whip Sir Toby M'Tackle, his next door neighbour, and continue to ravish his Catholic daughters; and these are the measures which the honest and consistent Secretary supports; and this is the Secretary whose genius, in the

estimation of brother Abraham, is to extinguish the genius of Bonaparte. Pompey was killed by a slave, Goliath smitten by a stripling, Pyrrhus died by the hand of a woman; tremble, thou great Gaul, from whose head an armed Minerva leaps forth in the hour of danger; tremble, thou scourge of God, a pleasant man is come out against thee, and thou shalt be laid low by a joker of jokes, and he shall talk his pleasant talk against thee, and thou shalt be no more!

You tell me, in spite of all this parade of sea coast, Bonaparte has neither ships nor sailors: but this is a mistake. He has not ships and sailors to contest the empire of the seas with Great Britain, but there remains quite sufficient of the navies of France, Spain, Holland, and Denmark, for these short excursions and invasions. Do you think, too, that Bonaparte does not add to his navy every year? Do you suppose, with all Europe at his feet, that he can find any difficulty in obtaining timber, and that money will not procure for him any quantity of naval stores he may want? The mere machine, the empty ship, he can build as well and as quickly as you can; and though he may not find enough of practised sailors to man large fighting fleets—it is not possible to conceive that he can want sailors for such sort of purposes as I have stated. He is at present the despotic monarch of above twenty thousand miles of sea coast, and yet you suppose he cannot procure sailors for the invasion of Ireland. Believe, if you please, that such a fleet met at sea by any number of our ships at all comparable to them in point of force, would be immediately taken, let it be so; I count nothing upon their power of resistance, only upon their power of escaping unobserved. If experience has taught us anything, it is the impossibility of perpetual blockades. The instances are innumerable, during the course of this war, where whole fleets have sailed in and out of harbour in spite of every vigilance used to prevent it. I shall only mention those cases where Ireland is concerned. In December 1796 seven ships of the line, and ten transports, reached Bantry Bay from Brest, without having seen an English ship in their passage. It blew a storm when they were off shore, and therefore England still continues to be an independent kingdom. You will observe that at the very time the French fleet sailed out of Brest Harbour, Admiral Colpoys was cruising off there with a powerful squadron, and still, from the particular circumstances of the weather, found it impossible to prevent the French from coming out. During the time that Admiral Colpoys was cruising off Brest, Admiral Richery, with six ships of the line, passed him, and got safe into the harbour. At the very moment when the French squadron was lying in Bantry Bay, Lord Bridport with his fleet was locked up by a foul wind in the Channel, and for several days could not stir to the assistance of Ireland. Admiral Colpoys, totally unable to find the French fleet, came home. Lord Bridport, at the change of the wind, cruised for them in vain, and they got safe back to Brest without having seen a single one of those floating bulwarks, the possession of which we believe will enable us with impunity to set justice and common sense at defiance. Such is the miserable and prepercarious state of an anemocracy, of a people who put their trust in hurricanes and are governed by wind. In August 1798 three forty-gun frigates landed 1100 men under Humbert, making the passage from Rochelle to Killala without seeing any English ship. In October of the same year four French frigates anchored in Killala Bay with 2000 troops; and though they did not land their troops they returned to France in safety. In the same month a line-of-battle ship, eight stout frigates, and a brig, all full of troops and stores, reached the coast of Ireland and were fortunately, in sight of land, destroyed, after an obstinate engagement, by Sir John Warren.

If you despise the little troop which, in these numerous experiments, did make good its landing, take with you, if you please, this precis of its exploits: eleven hundred men, commanded by a soldier raised from the ranks, put to rout a select army of 6000 men, commanded by General Lake, seized their ordnance, ammunition, and stores, advanced 150 miles into a country containing an armed force of 150,000 men, and at last surrendered to the Viceroy, an experienced general, gravely and cautiously advancing at the head of all his chivalry and of an immense army to oppose him. You must excuse these details about Ireland, but it appears to me to be of all other subjects the most

important. If we conciliate Ireland, we can do nothing amiss; if we do not, we can do nothing well. If Ireland was friendly, we might equally set at defiance the talents of Bonaparte and the blunders of his rival Mr. Canning; we could then support the ruinous and silly bustle of our useless expeditions, and the almost incredible ignorance of our commercial orders in council. Let the present administration give up but this one point, and there is nothing which I would not consent to grant them. Mr. Perceval shall have full liberty to insult the tomb of Mr. Fox, and to torment every eminent Dissenter in Great Britain; Lord Camden shall have large boxes of plums; Mr. Rose receive permission to prefix to his name the appellative of virtuous; and to the Viscount Castlereagh\* a round sum of ready money shall be well and truly paid into his hand. Lastly, what remains to Mr. George Canning, but that he ride up and down Pall Mall glorious upon a white horse, and that they cry out before him, Thus shall it be done to the statesman who hath written *The Needy Knife-Grinder*, and the German play? Adieu only for the present; you shall soon hear from me again; it is a subject upon which I cannot long be silent.

## LETTER VIII.

NOTHING can be more erroneous than to suppose that Ireland is not bigger than the Isle of Wight or of more consequence than Guernsey or Jersey; and yet I am almost inclined to believe, from the general supineness which prevails here respecting the dangerous state of that country, that such is the rank which it holds in our statistical tables. I have been writing to you a great deal about Ireland, and perhaps it may be of some use to state to you concisely the nature and resources of the country which has been the subject of our long and strange correspondence. There were returned, as I have before observed, to the hearth tax, in 1791, 701,132\* houses, which Mr. Newenham shows from unquestionable documents to be nearly 80,000 below the real number of houses in that country. There are 27,457 square English miles in Ireland+, and more than five millions of people.

By the last survey it appears that the inhabited houses in England and Wales amount to 1,574,902, and the population to 9, 343,578. which gives an average of  $5 \frac{7}{8}$  to each house, in a country where the density of population is certainly less considerable than in Ireland. It is commonly supposed that two-fifths of the army and navy are Irishmen, at periods when political disaffection does not avert the Catholics from the service. The current value of Irish exports in 1807 was 9,314,854*l.* 17*s.* 7*d.*; a state of commerce about equal to the commerce of England in the middle of the reign of George II. The tonnage of ships entered inward and cleared outward in the trade of Ireland, in 1807, amounted to 1,567,430 tons. The quantity of home spirits exported amounted to 10,284 gallons in 1796, and to 930,800 gallons in 1804. Of the exports which I have stated, provisions amounted to four millions, and linen to about four millions and a half. There was exported from Ireland, upon an average of two years ending in January 1804, 591,274 barrels of barley, oats, and wheat; and by weight 910,848 cwts. of flour, oatmeal, barley, oats, and wheat. The amount of butter exported in 1804, from Ireland, was worth, in money, 1,704,680*l.* sterling. The importation of ale and beer, from the immense manufactures now carrying on of these articles, was diminished to 3209 barrels, in the year 1804, from 111,920 barrels, which was the average importation per annum, taking from three years ending in 1792; and at present there is an export trade of porter. On an average of the three years ending March 1783 there were imported into Ireland, of cotton wool 3326 cwts., of cotton yarn 5405 Ibs.; but on an average of three years ending January 1803 there were imported, of the first article, 13,159 cwts, and of the latter, 628,406 Ibs. It is impossible to conceive any manufacture more nourishing. The export of linen has increased in Ireland from 17,776,862 yards, the average in 1770, to 43,534,971 yards, the amount in 1805. The tillage of Ireland has more than trebled within the last twenty-one years. The importation of coals has increased from 230,000 tons in 1783, to 417,030 in 1804; of tobacco, from 3,459,861 Ibs. in 1783, to 6,611,543 in 1804; of tea, from 1,703,855 Ibs. in 1783, to 3,358,256, in 1804; of sugar, from 143,117 cwts. in 1782, to 309,076, in 1804. Ireland now supports a funded debt of above 64 millions, and it is computed that more than three millions of money are annually remitted to Irish absentees resident in this country. In Mr. Foster's report, of 100 folio pages, presented to the House of Commons in the year 1806, the total expenditure of Ireland is stated at  $\text{^}9,760,013$ . Ireland has increased about two-thirds in its population within twenty-five years, and yet, and in about the same space of time, its exports of beef, bullocks, cows, pork, swine, butter, wheat, barley, and oats, collectively taken, have doubled; and this in spite of two years' famine and the presence of an immense army that is always at hand to guard the most valuable appanage of our empire from joining our most inveterate enemies. Ireland has the greatest possible facilities for carrying on commerce with the whole of Europe. It contains, within a circuit of 750 miles, 66 secure harbours, and presents a western frontier against Great Britain reaching from the Firth of Clyde north to the Bristol Channel south and varying in distance from 20 to 100 miles; so that the subjugation of Ireland would compel us to guard with ships and soldiers a new line of coast certainly amounting, with all its sinuosities, to more than 700 miles—an addition of polemics, in our present state of hostility with all the world, which must highly gratify the vigorists and give them an ample opportunity of displaying that foolish energy upon which their claims to distinction are founded. Such is the country which the Right Reverend the

Chancellor of the Exchequer would drive into the arms of France, and for the conciliation of which we are requested to wait, as if it were one of those sinecure places which were given to Mr. Perceval snarling at the breast, and which cannot be abolished till his decease.

How sincerely and fervently have I often wished that the Emperor of the French had thought as Mr. Spencer Perceval does upon the subject of government; that he had entertained doubts and scruples upon the propriety of admitting the Protestants to an equality of rights with the Catholics, and that he had left in the middle of his empire these vigorous seeds of hatred and disaffection: but the world was never yet conquered by a blockhead. One of the very first measures we saw him recurring to was the complete establishment of religious liberty; if his subjects fought and paid as he pleased, he allowed them to believe as they pleased: the moment I saw this, my best hopes were lost. I perceived in a moment the kind of man we had to do with. I was well aware of the miserable ignorance and folly of this country upon the subject of toleration; and every year has been adding to the success of that game which it was clear he had the will and the ability to play against us.

You say Bonaparte is not in earnest upon the subject of religion, and that this is the cause of his tolerant spirit; but is it possible you can intend to give us such dreadful and unamiable notions of religion? Are we to understand that the moment a man is sincere he is narrow-minded; that persecution is the child of belief, and that a desire to leave all men in the quiet and unpunished exercise of their own creed can only exist in the mind of an infidel? Thank God, I know many men whose principles are as firm as they are expanded, who cling tenaciously to their own modification of the Christian faith, without the slightest disposition to force that modification upon other people. If Bonaparte is liberal in subjects of religion because he has no religion, is this a reason why we should be illiberal because we are Christians? If he owes this excellent quality to a vice, is that any reason why we may not owe it to a virtue? Toleration is a great good and a good to be imitated let it come from whom it will. If a sceptic is tolerant, it only shows that he is not foolish in practice as well as erroneous in theory. If a religious man is tolerant, it evinces that he is religious from thought and inquiry because he exhibits in his conduct one of the most beautiful and important consequences of a religious mind, — an inviolable charity to all the honest varieties of human opinion.

Lord Sidmouth, and all the anti-Catholic people, little foresee that they will hereafter be the sport of the antiquarian; that their prophecies of ruin and destruction from Catholic emancipation will be clapped into the notes of some quaint history and be matter of pleasantry even to the sedulous housewife and the rural dean. There is always a copious supply of Lord Sidmouths in the world, nor is there one single source of human happiness against which they have not uttered the most lugubrious predictions. Turnpike roads, navigable canals, inoculation, hops, tobacco, the Reformation, the Revolution—there are always a set of worthy and moderately-gifted men who bawl out death and rum upon every valuable change which the varying aspect of human affairs absolutely and imperiously requires. I have often thought that it would be extremely useful to make a collection of the hatred and abuse that all those changes have experienced which are now admitted to be marked improvements in our condition. Such a history might make folly a little more modest, and suspicious of its own decisions. Ireland you say since the Union, is to be considered as a part of the whole kingdom; and therefore, however Catholics may predominate in that particular spot, yet, taking the whole empire together, they are to be considered as a much more insignificant quota of the population. Consider them in what light you please, as part of the whole, or by themselves, or in what manner may be most consentaneous to the devices of your holy mind—I say in a very few words, if you do not relieve these people from the civil incapacities to which they are exposed, you will lose them; or you must employ great strength and much treasure in watching over them. In the present state of the world, you can afford to do neither the one nor the other. Having stated this, I shall leave you to be

ruined, Puffendorf in hand (as Mr. Secretary Canning says), and to lose Ireland, just as you have found out what proportion the aggrieved people should bear to the whole population before their calamities meet with redress. As for your parallel cases, I am no more afraid of deciding upon them than I am upon their prototype. If ever any one heresy should so far spread itself over the principality of Wales that the Established Church were left in a minority of one to four, if you had subjected these heretics to very severe civil privations, if the consequence of such privations were a universal state of disaffection among that caseous and wrathful people, and if at the same time you were at war with all the world, how can you doubt for a moment that I would instantly restore them to a state of the most complete civil liberty? What matters it under what name you put the same case? Common sense is not changed by appellations. I have said how I would act to Ireland, and I would act so to all the world.

I admit that, to a certain degree, the Government will lose the affections of the Orangemen by emancipating the Catholics; much less, however, at present, than three years past. The few men who have ill-treated the whole crew live in constant terror that the oppressed people will rise upon them and carry the ship into Brest: —they begin to find that it is a very tiresome thing to sleep every night with cocked pistols under their pillows, and to breakfast, dine, and sup with drawn hangers. They suspect that the privilege of beating and kicking the rest of the sailors is hardly worth all this anxiety, and that if the ship does ever fall into the hands of the disaffected, all the cruelties which they have experienced will be thoroughly remembered and amply repaid. To a short period of disaffection among the Orangemen, I confess I should not much object: my love of poetical justice does carry me as far as that; one summer's whipping, only one: the thumb-screw for a short season: a little light easy torturing between Lady-day and Michaelmas; a short specimen of Mr. Perceval's rigour. I have malice enough to ask this slight atonement for the groans and shrieks of the poor Catholics, unheard by any human tribunal, but registered by the Angel of God against their Protestant and enlightened oppressors.

Besides, if you who count ten so often can count five, you must perceive that it is better to have four friends and one enemy than four enemies and one friend; and the more violent the hatred of the Orangemen, the more certain the reconciliation of the Catholics. The disaffection of the Orangemen will be the Irish rainbow; when I see it, I shall be sure that the storm is over.

If those incapacities from which the Catholics ask to be relieved were to the mass of them only a mere feeling of pride, and if the question were respecting the attainment of privileges which could be of importance only to the highest of the sect, I should still say, that the pride of the mass was very naturally wounded by the degradation of their superiors. Indignity to George Rose would be felt by the smallest nummery gentleman in the king's employ; and Mr. John Bannister could not be indifferent to anything which happened to Mr. Canning. But the truth is, it is a most egregious mistake to suppose that the Catholics are contending merely for the fringes and feathers of their chiefs. I will give you a list, in my next Letter, of those privations which are represented to be of no consequence to anybody but Lord Fingal, and some twenty or thirty of the principal persons of their sect. In the meantime, adieu, and be wise.

## LETTER IX.

DEAR ABRAHAM,

No Catholic can be chief Governor or Governor of this Kingdom, Chancellor or Keeper of the Great Seal, Lord High Treasurer, Chief of any of the Courts of Justice, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Puisne Judge, Judge in the Admiralty, Master of the Rolls, Secretary of State, Keeper of the Privy Seal, Vice-Treasurer or his Deputy, Teller or Cashier of Exchequer, Auditor or General Governor or Custos Rotulorum of Counties, Chief Governor's Secretary, Privy Councillor, King's Counsel, Serjeant, Attorney, Solicitor General, Master in Chancery, Provost or Fellow of Trinity College Dublin, Postmaster-General, Master and Lieutenant-General of Ordnance, Commander-in-Chief, General on the Staff, Sheriff, Sub-Sheriff, Mayor, Bailiff, Recorder, Burgess, or any other officer in a City or a Corporation. No Catholic can be guardian to a Protestant, and no priest guardian at all: no Catholic can be a gamekeeper, or have for sale, or otherwise, any arms or warlike stores: no Catholic can present to a living, unless he choose to turn Jew in order to obtain that privilege; the pecuniary qualification of Catholic jurors is made higher than that of Protestants, and no relaxation of the ancient rigorous code is permitted, unless to those who shall take an oath prescribed by 13 & 14 Geo. III. Now if this is not picking the plums out of the pudding and leaving the mere batter to the Catholics, I know not what is. If it were merely the Privy Council, it would be (I allow) nothing but a point of honour for which the mass of Catholics were contending, the honour of being chief-mourners or pall-bearers to the country; but surely no man will contend that every barrister may not speculate upon the possibility of being a puisne Judge; and that every shopkeeper must not feel himself injured by his exclusion from borough offices.

One of the greatest practical evils which the Catholics suffer in Ireland is their exclusion from the offices of Sheriff and Deputy Sheriff. Nobody who is unacquainted with Ireland can conceive the obstacles which this opposes to the fair administration of justice. The formation of juries is now entirely in the hands of the Protestants; the lives, liberties, and properties of the Catholics in the hands of the juries; and this is the arrangement for the administration of justice in a country where religious prejudices are inflamed to the greatest degree of animosity! In this country, if a man is a foreigner, if he sells slippers, and sealing wax, and artificial flowers, we are so tender of human life that we take care half the number of persons who are to decide upon his fate should be men of similar prejudices and feelings with himself: but a poor Catholic in Ireland may be tried by twelve Percevals, and destroyed according to the manner of that gentleman in the name of the Lord, and with all the insulting forms of justice. I do not go the length of saying that deliberate and wilful injustice is done. I have no doubt that the Orange Deputy Sheriff thinks it would be a most unpardonable breach of his duty if he did not summon a Protestant panel. I can easily believe that the Protestant panel may conduct themselves very conscientiously in hanging the gentlemen of the crucifix; but I blame the law which does not guard the Catholic against the probable tenor of those feelings which must unconsciously influence the judgments of mankind. I detest that state of society which extends unequal degrees of protection to different creeds and persuasions; and I cannot describe to you the contempt I feel for a man who, calling himself a statesman, defends a system which fills the heart of every Irishman with treason and makes his allegiance prudence not choice.

I request to know if the vestry taxes in Ireland are a mere matter of romantic feeling, which can affect only the Earl of Fingal? In a parish where there are four thousand Catholics and fifty Protestants, the Protestants may meet together in a vestry meeting, at which no Catholic has the right to vote, and tax all the lands in the parish is 6d per acre, or in the pound



I forget which, for the repairs of the church—and how has the necessity of these repairs been ascertained? A Protestant plumber has discovered that it wants new leading; a Protestant carpenter is convinced the timbers are not sound, and the glazier who hates holy water (as an accoucheur hates celibacy because he gets nothing by it) is employed to put in new sashes.

The grand juries in Ireland are the great scene of jobbing. They have a power of making a county rate to a considerable extent for roads, bridges, and other objects of general accommodation. You suffer the road to be brought through my park and I will have the bridge constructed in a situation where it will make a beautiful object to your house. You do my job and I will do yours.' These are the sweet and interesting subjects which occasionally occupy Milesian gentlemen while they are attendant upon this grand inquest of justice. But there is a religion, it seems, even in jobs; and it will be highly gratifying to Mr. Perceval to learn that no man in Ireland who believes in seven sacraments can carry a public road, or bridge, one yard out of the direction most beneficial to the public, and that nobody can cheat that public who does not expound the Scriptures in the purest and most orthodox manner. This will give pleasure to Mr. Perceval: but, from his unfairness upon these topics, I appeal to the justice and the proper feelings of Mr. Huskisson. I ask him if the human mind can experience a more dreadful sensation than to see its own jobs refused, and the jobs of another religion perpetually succeeding? I ask him his opinion of a jobless faith, of a creed which dooms a man through life to a lean and plunderless integrity. He knows that human nature cannot and will not bear it; and if we were to paint a political Tartarus, it would be an endless series of snug expectations and cruel disappointments. These are a few of many dreadful inconveniences which the Catholics of all ranks suffer from the laws by which they are at present oppressed. Besides, look at human nature:—what is the history of all professions? Joel is to be brought up to the bar: has Mrs Plymley the slightest doubt of his being Chancellor? Do not his two shrivelled aunts live in the certainty of seeing him in that situation, and of cutting out with their own hands his equity habiliments? And I could name a certain minister of the Gospel who does not, in the bottom of his heart, much differ from these opinions. Do you think that the fathers and mothers of the holy Catholic Church are not as absurd as Protestant papas and mammas? The probability I admit to be, in each particular case, that the sweet little block-head will in fact never get a brief;—but I will venture to say there is not a parent from the Giant's Causeway to Bantry Bay who does not conceive that his child is the unfortunate victim of the exclusion, and that nothing short of positive law could prevent his own dear pre-eminent Paddy from rising to the highest honours of the State. So with the army, and parliament; in fact, few are excluded; but, in imagination, all: you keep twenty or thirty Catholics out, and you lose the affections of four millions; and let me tell you that recent circumstances have by no means tended to diminish in the minds of men that hope of elevation beyond their own rank which is so congenial to our nature: from pleading for John Roe to taxing John Bull, from jesting Mr. Pitt and writing in the *Anti-Jacobin*, to managing the affairs of Europe—these are leaps which seem to justify the fondest dreams of mothers and of aunts.

I do not say that the disabilities to which the Catholics are exposed amount to such intolerable grievances that the strength and industry of a nation are overwhelmed by them: the increasing prosperity of Ireland fully demonstrates to the contrary. But I repeat again, what I have often stated in the course of our correspondence, that your laws against the Catholics are exactly in that state in which you have neither the benefits of rigour nor of liberality: every law which prevented the Catholic from gaining strength and wealth is repealed; every law which can irritate remains: if you were determined to insult the Catholics you should have kept them weak; if you resolved to give them strength you should have ceased to insult them:—at present your conduct is pure unadulterated folly.

Lord Hawkesbury says, We heard nothing about the Catholics till we began to mitigate the laws against them; when we relieved them in part from this oppression they began to be disaffected. This is very true; but it proves just what I have said, that you have either done too much or too little; and as there lives not I hope, upon earth, so depraved a courtier that he would load the Catholics with their ancient chains, what absurdity it is then not to render their dispositions friendly, when you leave their arms and legs free!

You know, and many Englishmen know, what passes in China; but nobody knows or cares what passes in Ireland. At the beginning of the present reign, no Catholic could realize property or carry on any business; they were absolutely annihilated, and had no more agency in the country than so many trees. They were like Lord Mulgrave's eloquence and Lord Camden's wit - the legislative bodies did not know of their existence. For these twenty-five years last past, the Catholics have been engaged in commerce; within that period the commerce of Ireland has doubled -there are four Catholics at work for one Protestant and eight Catholics at work for one Episcopalian; of course the proportion which Catholic wealth bears to Protestant wealth is every year altering rapidly in favour of the Catholics. I have already told you what their purchases of land were the last year: since that period, I have been at some pains to find out the actual state of the Catholic wealth: it is impossible, upon such a subject, to arrive at complete accuracy; but I have good reason to believe that there are at present 2000 Catholics in Ireland, possessing an income from 500*l* upwards, many of these with incomes of one, two, three, and four thousand, and some amounting to fifteen and twenty thousand per annum :-and this is the kingdom, and these the people, for whose conciliation we are to wait Heaven knows when, and Lord Hawkesbury why! As for me, I never think of the situation of Ireland without feeling the same necessity for immediate interference as I should do if I saw blood flowing from a great artery. I rush towards it with the instinctive rapidity of a man desirous of preventing death, and have no other feeling but that in a few seconds the patient may be no more.

I could not help smiling, in the times of No Popery, to witness the loyal indignation of many persons at the attempt made by the last ministry to do something for the relief of Ireland. The general cry in the country was, that they would not see their beloved Monarch used ill in his old age, and that they would stand by him to the last drop of their blood. I respect good feelings, however erroneous be the occasions on which they display themselves; and therefore I saw in all this as much to admire as to blame. It was a species of affection, however, which reminded me very forcibly of the attachment displayed by the servants of the Russian ambassador at the beginning of the last century. His Excellency happened to fall down in a kind of apoplectic fit when he was paying a morning visit in the house of an acquaintance. The confusion was of course very great, and messengers were despatched in every direction to find a surgeon; who, upon his arrival, declared that his Excellency must be immediately bled, and prepared himself forthwith to perform the operation: the barbarous servants of the embassy, who were there in great numbers, no sooner saw the surgeon prepared to wound the arm of their master with a sharp shining instrument, than they drew their swords, put themselves in an attitude of defence, and swore in pure Slavonic, 'that they would murder any man who attempted to do him the slightest injury: he had been a very good master to them, and they would not desert him in his misfortunes, or suffer his blood to be shed while he was off his guard, and incapable of defending himself'. By good fortune, the secretary arrived about this period of the dispute, and his Excellency, relieved from superfluous blood and perilous affection, was, after much difficulty, restored to life.

There is an argument brought forward with some appearance of plausibility in the House of Commons, which certainly merits an answer: You know that the Catholics now vote for members of parliament, in Ireland, and that they outnumber the Protestants in a very great proportion; if you allow Catholics to sit in Parliament, religion will be found

to influence votes more than property, and the greater part of the 100 Irish members who are returned to parliament will be Catholics. Add to these the Catholic members who are returned in England, and you will have a phalanx of heretical strength which every minister will be compelled to respect, and occasionally to conciliate by concessions incompatible with the interests of the Protestant Church. The fact is, however, that you are at this moment subjected to every danger of this kind which you can possibly apprehend hereafter. If the spiritual interest of the voters are more powerful than their temporal interests, they can bind down their representatives to support any measures favourable to the Catholic religion, and they can change the objects of their choice till they have found Protestant members (as they easily may do) perfectly obedient to their wishes. If the superior possessions of the Protestants prevent the Catholics from uniting for a common political object, then the danger you fear cannot exist: if zeal, on the contrary, gets the better of acres, then the danger at present exists, from the right of voting already given to the Catholics, and it will not be increased by allowing them to sit in parliament. There are, as nearly as I can recollect, thirty seats in Ireland for cities and counties, where the Protestants are the most numerous, and where the members returned must of course be Protestants. In the other seventy representations, the wealth of the Protestants is opposed to the number of the Catholics; and if all the seventy members returned were of the Catholic persuasion, they must still plot the destruction of our religion in the midst of 588 Protestants. Such terrors would disgrace a cook-maid, or a toothless aunt—when they fall from the lips of bearded and senatorial men, they are nauseous, anti-peristaltic, and emetical.

How can you for a moment doubt of the rapid effects which would be produced by the emancipation?—In the first place, to my certain knowledge, the Catholics have long since expressed to his Majesty's Ministers their perfect readiness to vest in his Majesty, either with the consent of the Pope, or without it if it cannot be obtained, the nomination of the Catholic prelacy.\* The Catholic prelacy in Ireland consists of twenty-six bishops and the warden of Galway, a dignitary enjoying Catholic jurisdiction. The number of Roman Catholic priests in Ireland exceeds one thousand. The expenses of his peculiar worship are, to a substantial farmer or mechanic, five shillings per annum; to a labourer (where he is not entirely excused) one shilling per annum: this includes the contribution of the whole family, and for this the priest is bound to attend them when sick, and to confess them when they apply to him: he is also to keep his chapel in order, to celebrate divine service, and to preach on Sundays and holy days. In the northern district a priest gains from  $\text{£}30$  to  $\text{£}50$ ; in the other parts of Ireland from  $\text{£}60$  to  $\text{£}90$  per annum. The best paid Catholic bishops receive about  $\text{£}400$  per ann.; the others from  $\text{£}300$  to  $\text{£}350$ . My plan is very simple; I would have 300 Catholic parishes at  $\text{£}100$  per annum, 300 at  $\text{£}200$  and 400 at  $\text{£}300$  per annum; this, for the whole thousand parishes, would amount to  $\text{£}190,000$ . To the prelacy I would allot  $\text{£}20,000$  in unequal proportions, from  $\text{£}1000$  to  $\text{£}500$ ; and I would appropriate  $\text{£}40,000$  more for the support of Catholic schools and the repairs of Catholic churches; the whole amount of which sums is  $\text{£}250,000$ , about the expense of three days of one of our genuine, good, English, *just and necessary wars*. The clergy should all receive their salaries at the Bank of Ireland, and I would place the whole patronage in the hands of the Crown. Now, I appeal to any human being, except Spencer Perceval, Esq., of the parish of Hampstead, what the disaffection of a clergy would amount to, gaping after this graduated bounty of the Crown, and whether Ignatius Loyala himself, if he were a living blockhead instead of a dead saint, could withstand the temptation of bouncing from  $\text{£}100$  a year at Sligo, to  $\text{£}300$  in Tipperary? This is the miserable sum of money for which the merchants and land-owners and nobility of England are exposing themselves to the tremendous peril of losing Ireland. The sinecure places of the Roses and the Percevals, and the “dear and near relations”, put up to auction at thirty years' purchase, would almost amount to the money.

I admit that nothing can be more reasonable than to expect that a Catholic priest should starve to death, genteelly and pleasantly, for the good of the Protestant religion;

but is it equally reasonable to expect that he should do so for the Protestant pews and Protestant brick and mortar? On an Irish Sabbath the bell of a neat parish church often summons to church only the parson and an occasionally conforming clerk; while, two hundred yards off, a thousand Catholics are huddled together in a miserable hovel and pelted by all the storms of heaven. Can anything be more distressing than to see a venerable man pouring forth sublime truths in tattered breeches, and depending for his food upon the little offal he gets from his parishioners? I venerate a human being who starves for his principles, let them be what they may; but starving for anything is not at all to the taste of the honourable flagellants: strict principles and good pay is the motto of Mr. Perceval: the one he keeps in great measure for the faults of his enemies, the other for himself.

There are parishes in Connaught in which a Protestant was never settled nor even seen: in that province, in Munster, and in parts of Leinster, the entire peasantry for sixty miles are Catholics; in these tracts the churches are frequently shut for want of a congregation, or opened to an assemblage of from six to twenty persons. Of what Protestants there are in Ireland the greatest part are gathered together in Ulster, or they live in towns. In the country of the other three provinces the Catholics see no other religion but their own, and are at the least as fifteen to one Protestant. In the diocese of Tuam they are sixty to one — in the parish of St Mullins, diocese of Leghlin, there are four thousand Catholics and one Protestant; in the town of Grasgenamana, in the county of Kilkenny, there are between four and five hundred Catholic houses, and three Protestant houses. In the parish of Alien, county Kildare, there is no Protestant though it is very populous. In the parish of Arlesin, Queen's County, the proportion is one hundred to one. In the whole county of Kilkenny, by actual enumeration, it is seventeen to one: in the diocese of Kilmacduagh, province of Connaught, fifty-two to one, by ditto. These I give you as a few specimens of the present state of Ireland;—and yet there are men impudent and ignorant enough to contend that such evils require no remedy and that mild family man who dwelleth in Hampstead can find none but the cautery and the knife,

*omne per ignem  
Excoquitur vitium.*

I cannot describe the horror and disgust which I felt at hearing Mr. Perceval call upon the then ministry for measures of vigour in Ireland. If I lived at Hampstead upon stewed meats and claret; if I walked to church every Sunday before eleven young gentlemen of my own begetting, with their faces washed, and their hair pleasingly combed; if the Almighty had blessed me with every earthly comfort,—how awfully would I pause before I sent forth the flame and the sword over the cabins of the poor, brave, generous, open-hearted peasants of Ireland! How easy it is to shed human blood—how easy it is to persuade ourselves that it is our duty to do so—and that the decision has cost us a severe struggle—how much in all ages have wounds and shrieks and tears been the cheap and vulgar resources of the rulers of mankind—how difficult and how noble it is to govern in kindness, and to found an empire upon the everlasting basis of justice and affection!—But what do men call vigour? To let loose hussars and to bring up artillery, to govern with lighted matches, and to cut, and push, and prime—I call this, not vigour, but the sloth of cruelty and ignorance. The vigour I love consists in finding out wherein subjects are aggrieved, in relieving them, in studying the temper and genius of a people, in consulting their prejudices, in selecting proper persons to lead and manage them, in the laborious, watchful, and difficult task of increasing public happiness by allaying each particular discontent. In this way Hoche pacified La Vendee—and in this way only will Ireland ever be subdued. But this, in the eyes of Mr. Perceval, is imbecility and meanness: houses are not broken open—women are not insulted—the people seem all to be happy; they are not rode over by horses and cut by whips. Do you call this vigour?—Is this government?

## LETTER X. AND LAST.

YOU must observe that all I have said of the effects which will be produced by giving salaries to the Catholic Clergy only proceeds upon the supposition that the emancipation of the laity is effected:—without that, I am sure, there is not a clergyman in Ireland who would receive a shilling from Government; he could not do so, without an entire loss of credit among the members of his own persuasion.

What you say of the moderation of the Irish Protestant Clergy in collecting tithes, is, I believe, strictly true. Instead of collecting what the law enables them to collect, I believe they seldom or ever collect more than two-thirds; and I entirely agree with you, that the abolition of agistment tithes in Ireland by a vote of the Irish House of Commons, and without any remuneration to the Church, was a most scandalous and Jacobinical measure. I do not blame the Irish Clergy; but I submit to your common sense, if it is possible to explain to an Irish peasant upon what principle of justice or common sense he is to pay every tenth potato in his little garden to a clergyman in whose religion nobody believes for twenty miles around him and who has nothing to preach to but bare walls. It is true, if the tithes are bought up the cottager must pay more rent to his landlord; but the same thing, done in the shape of rent, is less odious than when it is done in the shape of tithes: I do not want to take a shilling out of the pockets of the clergy, but to leave the substance of things, and to change their names. I cannot see the slightest reason why the Irish labourer is to be relieved from the real onus, or from anything else but the name of tithes. At present he rents only nine-tenths of the produce of the land, which is all that belongs to the owner; this he has at the market price; if the landowner purchase the other tenth of the Church, of course he has a right to make a correspondent advance upon his tenant.

I very much doubt, if you were to lay open all civil offices to the Catholics and to grant salaries to their clergy in the manner I have stated, if the Catholic laity would give themselves much trouble about the advance of their Church; for they would pay the same tithes under one system that they do under another. If you were to bring the Catholics into the daylight of the world, to the high situations of the army, the navy, and the bar, numbers of them would come over to the Established Church and do as other people do; instead of that, you set a mark of infamy upon them, rouse every passion of our nature in favour of their creed, and then wonder that men are blind to the follies of the Catholic religion. There are hardly any instances of old and rich families among the Protestant Dissenters: when a man keeps a coach, and lives in good company, he comes to church, and gets ashamed of the meeting-house; if this is not the case with the father it is almost always the case with the son. These things would never be so if the dissenters were in practice as much excluded from all the concerns of civil life as the Catholics are. If a rich young Catholic were in parliament, he would belong to White's and to Brookes's, would keep race-horses, would walk up and down Pall Mall, be exonerated of his ready money and his constitution become as totally devoid of morality, honesty, knowledge, and civility, as Protestant loungers in Pall Mall, and return home with a supreme contempt for Father O'Leary and Father O'Callaghan. I am astonished at the madness of the Catholic clergy in not perceiving that Catholic emancipation is Catholic infidelity; that to entangle their people in the intrigues of a Protestant parliament and a Protestant court is to insure the loss not every man of fashion and consequence in their community. The true receipt for preserving their religion is Mr. Perceval's receipt for destroying it: it is to deprive every rich Catholic of all the objects of secular ambition, to separate him from the Protestant, and to shut him up in his castle, with priests and relics.

We are told, in answer to all our arguments, that this is not a fit period, — that a period of universal war is not the proper time for dangerous innovations in the constitution: this is as much as to say, that the worst time for making friends is the

period when you have made many enemies; that it is the greatest of all errors to stop when you are breathless, and to lie down when you are fatigued. Of one thing I am quite certain: if the safety of Europe is once completely restored, the Catholics may for ever bid adieu to the slightest probability of effecting their object, such men as hang about a court not only are deaf to the suggestions of mere justice, but they despise justice; they detest the word right; the only word which rouses them is peril; where they can oppress with impunity they oppress for ever, and call it loyalty and wisdom.

I am so far from conceiving the legitimate strength of the Crown would be diminished by those abolitions of civil incapacities in consequence of religious opinions, that my only objection to the increase of religious freedom is, that it would operate as a diminution of political freedom: the power of the Crown is so overbearing at this period, that almost the only steady opposers of its fatal influence are men disgusted by religious intolerance. Our establishments are so enormous, and so utterly disproportioned to our population, that every second or third man you meet in society gains something from the public: my brother the commissioner, —my nephew the police justice, —purveyor of small beer to the army in Ireland, —clerk of the mouth, —yeoman to the left hand, —these are the obstacles which common sense and justice have now to overcome. Add to this that the King, old and infirm, excites a principle of very amiable generosity in his favour; that he has led a good, moral, and religious life, equally removed from profligacy and methodistical hypocrisy; that he has been a good husband, a good father, and a good master; that he dresses plain, loves hunting and farming, hates the French, and is, in all his opinions and habits, quite English: — these feelings are heightened by the present situation of the world and the yet unexploded clamour of Jacobinism. In short, from the various sources of interest, personal regard, and national taste, such a tempest of loyalty has set in upon the people that the 47th proposition in Euclid might now be voted down with as much ease as any proposition in politics; and therefore if Lord Hawkesbury hates the abstract truths of science as much as he hates concrete truth in human affairs, now is his time for getting rid of the multiplication table, and passing a vote of censure upon the pretensions of the *hypotheneuse*. Such is the history of English parties at this moment: you cannot seriously suppose that the people care for such men as Lord Hawkesbury, Mr. Canning, and Mr. Perceval, on their own account; you cannot really believe them to be so degraded as to look to their safety from a man who proposes to subdue Europe by keeping it without Jesuit's Bark. The people, at present, have one passion, and but one—

A Jove principium. Jovis omnia plena.

They care no more for the ministers I have mentioned, than they do for those sturdy royalists who for 60*l* per annum stand behind his Majesty's carriage, arrayed in scarlet and in gold. If the present ministers opposed the Court instead of flattering it, they would not command twenty votes.

Do not imagine by these observations that I am not loyal: without joining in the common cant of the best of kings, I respect the King most sincerely as a good man. His religion is better than the religion of Mr. Perceval, his old morality very superior to the old morality of Mr. Canning, and I am quite certain he has a safer understanding than both of them put together. Loyalty within the bounds of reason and moderation is one of the great instruments of English happiness; but the love of the King may easily become more strong than the love of the kingdom, and we may lose sight of the public welfare in our exaggerated admiration of him who is appointed to reign only for its promotion and support. I detest Jacobinism; and if I am doomed to be a slave at all, I would rather be the slave of a king than a cobbler. God save the King, you say, warms your heart like the sound of a trumpet. I cannot make use of so violent a metaphor; but I am delighted to hear it when it is the cry of genuine affection; I am delighted to hear it when they hail not only the individual man but the outward and living sign of all

English blessings. These are noble feelings, and the heart of every good man must go with them; but God save the King, in these times, too often means God save my pension and my place, God give my sisters an allowance out of the privy purse,—make me clerk of the irons, let me survey the meltings, let me live upon the fruits of other men's industry, and fatten upon the plunder of the public.

What is it possible to say to such a man as the Gentleman of Hampstead, who really believes it feasible to convert the four million Irish Catholics to the Protestant religion, and considers this as the best remedy for the disturbed state of Ireland? It is not possible to answer such a man with arguments; we must come out against him with beads, and a cowl, and push him into an hermitage. It is really such trash, that it is an abuse of the privilege of reasoning to reply to it. Such a project is well worthy the statesman who would bring the French to reason by keeping them without rhubarb, and exhibit to mankind the awful spectacle of a nation deprived of neutral salts. This is not the dream of a wild apothecary indulging in his own opium; this is not the distempered fancy of a pounder of drugs, delirious from smallness of profits: but it is the sober, deliberate, and systematic scheme of a man to whom the public safety is entrusted and whose appointment is considered by many as a masterpiece of political sagacity. What a sublime thought, that no purge can now be taken between the Weser and the Garonne; that the bustling pestle is still, the canorous mortar mute, and the bowels of mankind locked up for fourteen degrees of latitude! When, I should be curious to know, were all the powers of crudity and flatulence fully explained to his Majesty's Ministers? At what period was this great plan of conquest and constipation fully developed? In whose mind was the idea of destroying the pride and the plasters of France first engendered? Without castor oil they might for some months, to be sure, have carried on a lingering war; but can they do without bark? Will the people live under a government where antimonial powders cannot be procured? Will they bear the loss of mercury? 'There's the rub.' Depend upon it, the absence of the materia medica will soon bring them to their senses, and the cry of Bourbon and bolus burst forth from the Baltic to the Mediterranean.

You ask me for any precedent in our history where the oath of supremacy has been dispensed with. It was dispensed with to the Catholics of Canada in 1774. They are only required to take a simple oath of allegiance. The same, I believe, was the case in Corsica. The reason of such exemption was obvious; you could not possibly have retained either of these countries without it. And what did it signify whether you retained them or not? In cases where you might have been foolish without peril you were wise; when nonsense and bigotry threaten you with destruction it is impossible to bring you back to the alphabet of justice and common sense. If men are to be fools I would rather they were fools in little matters than in great; dulness turned up with temerity is a livery all the worse for the facings; and the most tremendous of all things is the magnanimity of a dunce.

It is not by any means necessary, as you contend, to repeal the Test Act if you give relief to the Catholic: what the Catholics ask for is to be put on a footing with the Protestant Dissenters which would be done by repealing that part of the law which compels them to take the oath of supremacy and to make the declaration against transubstantiation: they would then come into parliament as all other Dissenters are allowed to do, and the penal laws to which they were exposed for taking office would be suspended every year, as they have been for this half century past towards Protestant Dissenters. Perhaps, after all, this is the best method,—to continue the persecuting law, and to suspend it every year,—a method which, while it effectually destroys the persecution itself, leaves to the great mass of mankind the exquisite gratification of supposing that they are enjoying some advantage from which a particular class of their fellow creatures are excluded. We manage the Corporation and Test Acts at present much in the same manner as if we were to persuade parish boys

who had been in the habit of beating an ass to spare the animal, and beat the skin of an ass stuffed with straw; this would preserve the semblance of tormenting without the reality, and keep boy and beast in good humour.

How can you imagine that a provision for the Catholic clergy affects the 5th article of the Union? Surely I am preserving the Protestant Church in Ireland if I put it in a better condition than that in which it now is. A tithe proctor in Ireland collects his tithes with a blunderbuss, and carries his tenth hay-cock by storm, sword in hand: to give him equal value in a more pacific shape cannot, I should imagine, be considered as injurious to the Church of Ireland; and what right has that Church to complain, if parliament chooses to fix upon the empire the burthen of supporting a double ecclesiastical establishment? Are the revenues of the Irish Protestant clergy in the slightest degree injured by such provision? On the contrary, is it possible to confer a more serious benefit upon that Church, than by quieting and contenting those who are at work for its destruction?

It is impossible to think of the affairs of Ireland without being forcibly struck with the parallel of Hungary. Of her seven millions of inhabitants, one half were Protestants, Calvinists, and Lutherans, many of the Greek Church, and many Jews: such was the state of their religious dissensions that Mahomet had often been called in to the aid of Calvin, and the crescent often glittered on the walls of Buda and of Presburg. At last, in 1791, during the most violent crisis of disturbance, a diet was called, and by a great majority of voices a decree was passed which secured to all the contending sects the fullest and freest exercise of religious worship and education; ordained (let it be heard in Hampstead) that churches and chapels should be erected for all on the most perfectly equal terms; that the Protestants of both confessions should depend upon their spiritual superiors alone; liberated them from swearing by the usual oath, "the holy Virgin Mary, the saints, and chosen of God"; and then, the decree adds, "*that public offices and honours, high or low, great or small, shall be given to natural born Hungarians who deserve well of their country, and possess the other qualifications, let their religion be what it may.*" Such was the line of policy pursued in a diet consisting of four hundred members, in a state whose form of government approaches nearer to our own than any other, having a Roman Catholic establishment of great wealth and power, and under the influence of one of the most bigoted Catholic Courts in Europe. This measure has now the experience of eighteen years in its favour; it has undergone a trial of fourteen years of revolution such as the world never witnessed, and more than equal to a century less convulsed: What have been its effects? When the French advanced like a torrent within a few days' march of Vienna, the Hungarians rose in a mass; they formed what they called the sacred insurrection, to defend their sovereign, their rights and liberties, now common to all; and the apprehension of their approach dictated to the reluctant Bonaparte the immediate signature of the treaty of *Leoben*. The Romish hierarchy of Hungary exists in all its former splendour and opulence; never has the slightest attempt been made to diminish it; and those revolutionary principles to which so large a portion of civilized Europe has been sacrificed have here failed in making the smallest successful inroad.

The whole history of this proceeding of the Hungarian Diet is so extraordinary, and such an admirable comment upon the Protestantism of Mr. Spencer Perceval, that I must compel you to read a few short extracts from the law itself:—"The Protestants of both confessions shall in religious matters depend upon their own spiritual superiors alone. The Protestants may likewise retain their trivial and grammar schools. The Church dues which the Protestants have hitherto paid to the Catholic parish priests, schoolmasters, or other such officers, either in money, productions, or labour, shall in future entirely cease, and after three months from the publishing of this law be no more anywhere demanded. In the building or repairing of churches, parsonage-houses, and schools, the Protestants are not obliged to assist the Catholics with labour, nor the



Catholics the Protestants. The pious foundations and donations of the Protestants which already exist, or which in future may be made for their churches, ministers, schools and students, hospitals, orphan-houses and poor, cannot be taken from them under any pretext, nor yet the care of them; but rather the unimpeded administration shall be entrusted to those from among them to whom it legally belongs, and those foundations which may have been taken from them under the last government shall be returned to them without delay. All affairs of marriage of the Protestants are left to their own consistories; all landlords and masters of families, under the penalty of public prosecution, are ordered not to prevent their subjects and servants, whether they be Catholic or Protestant, from the observance of the festivals and ceremonies of their religion," &c. &c. &c.—By what strange chances are mankind influenced! A little Catholic barrister of Vienna might have raised the cry of *No Protestantism*, and Hungary would have panted for the arrival of a French army as much as Ireland does at this moment; arms would have been searched for; Lutheran and Calvinist houses entered in the dead of the night; and the strength of Austria exhausted in guarding a country from which, under the present liberal system, she may expect, in a moment of danger, the most powerful aid: and let it be remembered that this memorable example of political wisdom took place at a period when many great monarchies were yet unconquered in Europe; in a country where the two religious parties were equal in number, and where it is impossible to suppose indifference in the party which relinquished its exclusive privileges. Under all these circumstances, the measure was carried in the Hungarian Diet by a majority of 280 to 120. In a few weeks we shall see every concession denied to the Catholics by a much larger majority of Protestants, at a moment when every other power is subjugated but ourselves, and in a country where the oppressed are four times as numerous as their oppressors. So much for the wisdom of our ancestors—so much for the nineteenth century—so much for the superiority of the English over all the nations of the Continent!

Are you not sensible, let me ask you, of the absurdity of trusting the lowest Catholics with offices correspondent to their situation in life, and of denying such privilege to the higher? A Catholic may serve in the militia, but a Catholic cannot come into Parliament; in the latter case you suspect combination, and in the former case you suspect no combination; you deliberately arm ten or twenty thousand of the lowest of the Catholic people; —and the moment you come to a class of men whose education, honour, and talents, seem to render all mischief less probable, then you see the danger of employing a Catholic, and cling to your investigating tests and disabling laws. If you tell me you have enough of members of parliament, and not enough of militia, without the Catholics, I beg leave to remind you that by employing the physical force of any sect at the same time when you leave them in a state of utter disaffection you are not adding strength to your armies, but weakness and ruin. If you want the vigour of their common people, you must not disgrace their nobility and insult their priesthood.

I thought that the terror of the Pope had been confined to the limits of the nursery, and merely employed as a means to induce young master to enter into his small-clothes with greater speed and to eat his breakfast with greater attention to decorum. For these purposes, the name of the Pope is admirable; but why push it beyond? Why not leave to Lord Hawkesbury all farther enumeration of the Pope's powers? For a whole century you have been exposed to the enmity of France, and your succession was disputed in two rebellions; what could the Pope do at the period when there was a serious struggle whether England should be Protestant or Catholic, and when the issue was completely doubtful? Could the Pope induce the Irish to rise in 1715? Could he induce them to rise in 1745? You had no Catholic enemy when half this island was in arms; and what did the Pope attempt in the last rebellion in Ireland? But if he had as much power over the minds of the Irish as Mr. Wilberforce has over the mind of a young Methodist converted the preceding quarter, is this a reason why we are to disgust men who may be acted upon in such a manner by a foreign power? or is it not an additional reason why

we should raise up every barrier of affection and kindness against the mischief of foreign influence? But the true answer is, the mischief does not exist. Gog and Magog have produced as much influence upon human affairs as the Pope has done for this half century past; and by spoiling him of his possessions, and degrading him in the eyes of all Europe, Bonaparte has not taken quite the proper method of increasing his influence.

But why not a Catholic king, as well as a Catholic member of parliament, or of the cabinet?—Because it is probable that the one would be mischievous, and the other not. A Catholic king might struggle against the Protestantism of the country, and if the struggle was not successful, it would at least be dangerous; but the efforts of any other Catholic would be quite insignificant, and his hope of success so small, that it is quite improbable the effort would ever be made: my argument is that in so Protestant a country as Great Britain the character of her parliaments and her cabinet could not be changed by the few Catholics who would ever find their way to the one or the other. But the power of the Crown is immeasurably greater than the power which the Catholics could obtain from any other species of authority in the state; and it does not follow, because the lesser degree of power is innocent, that the greater should be so too. As for the stress you lay upon the danger of a Catholic chancellor, I have not the least hesitation in saying that his appointment would not do a ten thousandth part of the mischief to the English Church that might be done by a Methodistical chancellor of the true Clapham breed; and I request to know, if it is really so very necessary that a chancellor should be of the religion of the Church of England, how many chancellors you have had within the last century who have been bred up in the Presbyterian religion?—And again, how many you have had who notoriously have been without any religion at all?

Why are you to suppose that eligibility and election are the same thing, and that all the cabinet will be Catholics whenever all the cabinet may be Catholics? You have a right, you say, to suppose an extreme case and to argue upon it—so have I: and I will suppose that the hundred Irish members will one day come down in a body and pass a law compelling the King to reside in Dublin. I will suppose that the Scotch members, by a similar stratagem, will lay England under a large contribution of meal and sulphur: no measure is without objection, if you sweep the whole horizon for danger; it is not sufficient to tell me of what may happen, but you must show me a rational probability that it will happen: after all, I might, contrary to my real opinion, admit all your dangers to exist; it is enough for me to contend that all other dangers taken together are not equal to the danger of losing Ireland from disaffection and invasion.

I am astonished to see you, and many good and well-meaning clergymen beside you, painting the Catholics in such detestable colours; two-thirds, at least, of Europe are Catholics,—they are Christians, though mistaken Christians; how can I possibly admit that any sect of Christians, and above all that the oldest and the most numerous sect of Christians, are incapable of fulfilling the common duties and relations of life: though I do differ from them in many particulars, God forbid I should give such a handle to infidelity and subscribe to such blasphemy against our common religion!

Do you think mankind never change their opinions without formally expressing and confessing that change? When you quote the decisions of ancient Catholic councils, are you prepared to defend all the decrees of English convocations and universities since the reign of Queen Elizabeth? I could soon make you sick of your uncandid industry against the Catholics, and bring you to allow that it is better to forget times past and to judge and be judged by present opinions and present practice.

I must beg to be excused from explaining and refuting all the mistakes about the Catholics made by my Lord Redesdale; and I must do that nobleman the justice to say, that he has been treated with great disrespect. Could anything be more indecent than to make it a morning lounge in Dublin to call upon his Lordship and to cram him with

Arabian-night stories about the Catholics? Is this proper behaviour to the representative of Majesty, the child of Themis, and the keeper of the conscience in West Britain? Whoever reads the Letters of the Catholic Bishops, in the Appendix to Sir John Hipposly's very sensible book, will see to what an excess this practice must have been carried with the pleasing and Protestant nobleman whose name I have mentioned, and from thence I wish you to receive your answer about excommunication, and all the trash which is talked against the Catholics.

A sort of notion has by some means or another crept into the world, that difference of religion would render men unfit to perform together the offices of common and civil life: that Brother Wood and Brother Grose could not travel together the same circuit if they differed in creed, nor Cockell and Mingay be engaged in the same cause if Cockell was a Catholic and Mingay a Muggletonian. It is supposed that Huskisson and Sir Harry Englefield would squabble behind the Speaker's chair about the Council of Lateran, and many a turnpike bill miscarry by the sarcastical controversies of Mr. Hawkins Brown and Sir John Throckmorton upon the real presence. I wish I could see some of these symptoms of earnestness upon the subject of religion; but it really seems to me that, in the present state of society, men no more think about inquiring concerning each other's faith than they do concerning the colour of each other's skins. There may have been times in England when the quarter sessions would have been disturbed by theological polemics: but now, after a Catholic justice had once been seen on the bench, and it had been clearly ascertained that he spoke English, had no tail, only a single row of teeth, and that he loved port wine, —after all the scandalous and infamous reports of his physical conformation had been clearly proved to be false,—he would be reckoned a jolly fellow, and very superior in flavour to a sly Presbyterian. Nothing, in fact, can be more uncandid and unphilosophical\* than to say that a man has a tail because you cannot agree with him upon religious subjects: it appears to be ludicrous, but I am convinced it has done infinite mischief to the Catholics, and made a very serious impression upon the minds of many gentlemen of large landed property.

In talking of the impossibility of Catholic and Protestant living together with equal privilege under the same government, do you forget the Cantons of Switzerland? You might have seen there a Protestant congregation going into a church which had just been quitted by a Catholic congregation: and I will venture to say that the Swiss Catholics were more bigoted to their religion than any people in the whole world. Did the kings of Prussia ever refuse to employ a Catholic? Would Frederick the Great have rejected an able man on this account? We have seen Prince Czartorinski, a Catholic secretary of state in Russia: in former times, a Greek patriarch and an apostolic vicar acted together in the most perfect harmony in Venice; and we have seen the Emperor of Germany in modern times entrusting the care of his person and the command of his guard to a Protestant Prince, Ferdinand of Wirtemberg. But what are all these things to Mr. Perceval? He has looked at human nature from the top of Hampstead Hill, and has not a thought beyond the little sphere of his own vision. 'The snail,' say the Hindoos, 'sees nothing but his own shell, and thinks it the grandest palace in the universe.'

I now take a final leave of this subject of Ireland; the only difficulty in discussing it is a want of resistance, a want of something difficult to unravel, and something dark to illumine. To agitate such a question is to beat the air with a club and cut down gnats with a scimitar; it is a prostitution of industry and a waste of strength. If a man says, I have a good place and I do not choose to lose it, this mode of arguing upon the Catholic question I can well understand; but that any human being with an understanding two degrees elevated above that of an Anabaptist preacher should conscientiously contend for the expediency and propriety of leaving the Irish Catholics in their present state, and of subjecting us to such tremendous peril in the present condition of the world, it is utterly out of my power to conceive. Such a measure as the Catholic question is entirely beyond the common game of politics; it is a measure in which all parties ought to

acquiesce, in order to preserve the place where and the stake for which they play. If Ireland is gone, where are jobs? where are reversions? where is my brother Lord Arden? Where are my dear and near relations? The game is up, and the Speaker of the House of Commons will be sent as a present to the menagerie at Paris. We talk of waiting from particular considerations, as if centuries of joy and prosperity were before us: in the next ten years our fate must be decided; we shall know, long before that period, whether we can bear up against the miseries by which we are threatened, or not: and yet, in the very midst of our crisis, we are enjoined to abstain from the most certain means of increasing our strength, and advised to wait for the remedy till the disease is removed by death or health.

And now, instead of the plain and manly policy of increasing unanimity at home by equalizing rights and privileges, what is the ignorant, arrogant, and wicked system which has been pursued? Such a career of madness and of folly was, I believe, never run in so short a period. The vigour of the ministry is like the vigour of a grave-digger,—the tomb becomes more ready and more wide for every effort which they make. There is nothing which it is worth while either to take or to retain, and a constant train of ruinous expeditions have been kept up. Every Englishman felt proud of the integrity of his country; the character of the country is lost for ever. It is of the utmost consequence to a commercial people at war with the greatest part of Europe that there should be a free entry of neutrals into the enemy's ports; the neutrals who carried our manufactures we have not only excluded, but we have compelled them to declare war against us. It was our interest to make a good peace, or convince our own people that it could not be obtained; we have not made a peace, and we have convinced the people of nothing but of the arrogance of the Foreign Secretary: and all this has taken place in the short space of a year, because a King's Bench barrister and a writer of epigrams, turned into Ministers of State, were determined to show country gentlemen that the late administration had no vigour. In the mean time commerce stands still, manufacturers perish, Ireland is more and more irritated, India is threatened, fresh taxes are accumulated upon the wretched people, the war is carried on without it being possible to conceive any one single object which a rational being can propose to himself by its continuation; and in the midst of this unparalleled insanity we are told that the Continent is to be reconquered by the want of rhubarb and plums.\* A better spirit than exists in the English people never existed in any people in the world; it has been misdirected, and squandered upon party purposes, in the most degrading and scandalous manner; they have been led to believe that they were benefiting the commerce of England by destroying the commerce of America, that they were defending their Sovereign by perpetuating the bigoted oppression of their fellow-subject; their rulers and their guides have told them that they would equal the vigour of France by equalling her atrocity; and they had gone on wasting that opulence, patience, and courage, which, if husbanded by prudent and moderate counsels, might have proved the salvation of mankind. The same policy of turning the good qualities of Englishmen to their own destruction, which made Mr. Pitt omnipotent, continues his power to those who resemble him only in his vices; advantage is taken of the loyalty of Englishmen to make them meanly submissive; their piety is turned into persecution, their courage into useless and obstinate contention; they are plundered because they are ready to pay, and soothed into asinine stupidity because they are full of virtuous patience. If England must perish at last, so let it be; that event is in the hands of God; we must dry up our tears and submit. But that England should perish swindling and stealing; that it should perish waging war against lazar houses and hospitals; that it should perish persecuting with monastic bigotry; that it should calmly give itself up to be ruined by the flashy arrogance of one man and the narrow fanaticism of another; these events a within the power of human beings, and I did not think that the magnanimity of Englishmen would ever stoop to such degradations.

*Longum vale!*

PETER PLYMLEY

## Sydney's footnotes

\*Letter I. p.4.

These feelings of humanity and justice were at some periods a little quickened by the representations of 40,000 armed volunteers.

\* Letter II. p.10.

The Reverend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has, since this was written, found time in the heat of the session to write a book on the Stipends of Curates.

\*Letter III. p.11.

This is Mr. Canning's term for the detection of public abuses; a term invented by him, and adopted by that simious parasite who is always grinning at his heels. Nature descends down to infinite smallness. Mr Canning has his parasites; and if you take a large buzzing blue-bottle fly, and look at it in a microscope, you may see 20 or 30 little ugly insects crawling about it, which doubtless think their fly the bluest, grandest, merriest, most important animal in the universe, and are convinced the world would end if it ceased to buzz.

\*Letter III. p. 14.

This remark begins to be sensibly felt. The Protestants in Ireland are fast coming over to the Catholic cause.

\*Letter VI. p.21.

There is nothing more objectionable in Plymley's Letters than the abuse of Mr Sturges Bourne, who is an honourable, able, and excellent person; but such are the malevolent effects of party spirit.

\*Letter VII. p. 29.

The attack upon virtue and morals in the debate upon Copenhagen is brought forward with great ostentation by this gentleman's friends. But is Harlequin less Harlequin because he acts well? I was present: he leaped about, touched facts with his wand, turned yes into no, and no into yes: it was a pantomime well played, but a pantomime; Harlequin deserves higher wages than he did two years ago: is he therefore fit for serious parts?

\*Letter VII. p. 29.

No man who is not intimately acquainted with the Irish can tell to what a curious extent this concealment of arms is carried. I have stated the exact mode in which it is done.

\*Letter VII. p.30.

I know too much, however, of the state of Ireland, not to speak tremblingly about this. I hope to God I am right.

\*Letter VII. p.32.

This is a very unjust imputation on Lord Castlereagh.

\*Letter VIII. p.33.

The checks to population were very trifling from the rebellion. It lasted two months: of his Majesty's Irish forces there perished 1600; of the rebels, 11,000 were killed in the field, and 2000 hanged or exported; 400 loyal persons were assassinated.

+Letter VIII. p. 33.  
In England 49,450.

\* Letter X. p.47.  
*Vide* Lord Bacon, and Descartes.

\* Letter X. p.48.  
Even Allen Park (accustomed as he has always been to be delighted by all administrations) says it is too bad; and Hall and Morris are said to have actually blushed in one of the divisions.