

THE GLEANER:

AND
NORTHUMBERLAND SCHEDIASMA.

VOLUME III.]

"Nec araneorum sane texus ideo melior, quia ex se fila gignunt nec noster vilior quia ex alienis libamus ut apes."

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THE GLEANER.

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STATE OF EUROPE.

*** From the unsettled and dubious state of British affairs, we turn to the equally unsettled state of the Continent. The great source of diplomatic trouble, at present, is Belgium. The declaration by France that she will, under no circumstance, send troops to support the decision of the 'five powers,' has completely nullified all their proceedings.

The most curious feature of the crisis is the offer of the crown to the Princes of France and England successively. The Belgians desire a republic, and there can be no doubt that a republican government might be perfectly consistent with their prosperity. A large republic cannot subsist in Europe, because a large one must have a great military force, and the first war which raised up a successful general would raise this general into a dictator. But a republic of the restricted size of Belgium, and protected less by its own force than the interests of its neighbours, might flourish in the centre of empires. Holland had so existed; Switzerland had so existed for centuries, and may so exist for centuries to come. But the monarchs are determined that no republic shall exist to tempt the wayward wills of their subjects, and Belgium is sent to wander to all courts for a king. France has refused the Duke of Nemours a sage of seventeen. England is now solicited for Prince Leopold, whose brow seems made to have the chance of all the stray diadem, and yet to die crownless after all. But the Prince is a philosopher, and he may calculate that £60,000 a-year, paid quarterly out of the British Treasury, is a much more satisfactory provision than the civil list of Belgium, with the certainty of having something to do for it. Whether the Prince has refused directly or not, the delay is a virtual negative. [This was of course written previous to Prince Leopold's acceptance of the crown.] No man, who is in earnest, hesitates when the offer is a diadem. We shall see Belgium a republic yet; not perhaps in the furious form of the French of 1793; but gradually assuming the shape of the American States, whose tranquillity, opulence, active vigour, and growing prosperity, form a tempting contrast to the anxieties of life and nations in the old world.

Prussia presents the phenomenon of the most military government, with the most democratic population of the continent. The towns are full of men intelligent above their rank in life. Education has been widely spread. Literature, though a tardy road to distinction under a government of epaulettes, is a favourite pursuit, and even the Prussian army contains many individuals of considerable scholarship. Those men cannot look upon the rapidly changing state of the continent, the increased power of public opinion, the growing freedom of the tribunals, the privileges of the press, without inquiring why Prussia is not to make her advance like the rest. The promise of a constitution made at the close of the late war is loudly demanded to be realized, and until it is realized, we must expect to hear the demand persevered in.

We have at all times disclaimed, and with the utmost sincerity, all regard for the pretensions of mere republicanism. We have uniformly described the spirit of mere innovation, as one of the most fatal of all public evils, as a monster insatiable of mischief, as fostering only the fierce passions of the furious, the ignorant, and the malignant, and trampling down all the barriers and forms by which time and wisdom have provided for the security of human peace, and the sustenance of human virtue. But if we resist the explosion, which would in-

volve the whole ancient fabric of states in one wild and fiery overthrow, are we therefore to regret that incumbrances should be cleared away; that the spots where corruption and pestilence breed should be purified; that light should be suffered to penetrate into the dungeon? To our conception, there is no finer display in moral nature than this beneficent change, so gradual as to produce no shock, and yet so complete as to leave nothing beyond the limits of its illustration; this general brightening of the moral landscape, not with that fierce and consuming burst of light which could only dazzle and inflame, but with that serene and deliberate splendour which, while it clears away the night, approaches in a magnificent regularity of advance that turns its very mists and shades into colour and beauty.

Austria has long exhibited the singular contrast of the most sluggish government, with a cabinet keenly alive to every movement of Europe. At home, all heavy, formal, and clinging to obsolete things; abroad, all eager subtly, and angry suspicion. The genius of the throne is a monk in Austria, a monarch in Hungary, a dragon in Italy, and a Jesuit every where. Metternich, whose influence began in the famous armistice of 1813, that armistice which broke down the barrier between Napoleon and the world in arms, is the soul of the cabinet; a man of singular acuteness, energy, and knowledge of courts. In all the proverbial uncertainty of favour under an arbitrary throne, he has retained his position. He has undoubtedly justified his fortune by his ability. No finesse of diplomacy has been too refined for his sagacity, no change of affairs too unexpected for his vigilance. At a period when the whole political world was charged with storm, he conducted Austria, shattered as she was by the French war, through the danger unhurt, and even raised her from decrepitude to exercise a most powerful influence upon the state of the European world. Metternich is now the acknowledged master of European politicians. He is the head of a school in which the first statesmen of his day are not ashamed to rank themselves as his pupils. His system is the acknowledged code of royal policy; his will is the first consulted in all the meditated changes of nations he has made Vienna the point to which all the envoys of the continent flock for consultation. Without his confidence nothing is done; with it every thing is attempted. There are now but two powers, the Revolutionary power, still loose, and without a leader—divided but armed with an irresistible and fiery determination; and the Monarchical power—vigorous, compact, but insecure of its ground, and ominously conscious of the strength of its enemy. Metternich is the leader of the 'Conservative System,' and he at once lords it over Italy and Germany; keeps the half-republican cabinet of France in awe, and influences the councils of England.—This is ambition. But we must own it to be a magnificent and lofty ambition; it dazzles and fills the mind. Whatever may be our dislike of the principles of this pre-eminent statesman, we must allow that his career has exhibited a singular display of the commanding qualities which transmit a name proudly to posterity. Without holding up either his personal virtues, or his political conduct, as a model to those who would attain the noblest honors of national esteem, we yet cannot contemplate the elevation to which such men have risen, and on which they have sustained themselves in years pregnant with vicissitude, without feeling a stronger consciousness of the vivid and vigorous faculties that may be lodged in human nature.

Italy is still disturbed. She has often been compared to her own Mediterranean, alternately the most placid and the most turbulent of seas. But the Italian insurrections have all died away. They were not founded in the feelings of the people; none of the great per-

manent popular interests had been bruised; the priesthood, the traders, the tillers of the ground, had been untouched by Austria. Even the chief part of the nobles, the most aggrieved class, had been either purchased by military and civil office, or suffered to indulge in that indolent possession of their opulence, which makes patriotism disappear from the mind. The true depositories of manly thought, the scholars and writers of a nation, are few in Italy, and the few are disunited by provincial prejudice, depressed by want of public influence, or chained by pensions. In all countries a pensioner is a slave. The last hope of Italian freedom lay in the worst hands in which freedom ever took shelter; the broken partisans of French jacobinism, the remnant of the corrupt officials of the Napoleon dynasty, the beggared courtiers of Murat, and the infidel disciples of Condorcet and Voltaire. Out of such elements no solid, peaceful constitution could ever grow. The original evil of its birth, must have enwound and enfeebled every state of its existence. A Jacobin Italian Republic must have been attended by all the train of its terrible ancestor in France; it must have been followed by those horrid shapes of confiscation, imprisonment, torture, and indiscriminate death; that insolence to the throne, and that spoliation of the temple, which to this hour throw their shade over France, and make mankind distrust every movement of her people, as if it was a coming subversion of her throne.

But the divisions of Italy, the inveterate mutual scorn of men, separated from each other but by a ridge of hills, or by a river—by the difference of dialects, of name, of historical recollections,—by the trivial injuries of ages past, which, instead of fading away, have been only darkened by time; all the weak bitterness of idle nations—exasperate Italian against Italian, until the general enemy is received as a comparative friend, fixes the letter on the foolish combatants alike, and, while he indulges in the full power of the tyrant, actually becomes the benefactor.

HOUSE OF LORDS.

TITHES.—The Archbishop of Canterbury moved the second reading of the tithes' composition bill. It applies only to tithes in the hands of the Church, so that about one third of the great tithes will not be affected by the measure. The period for which compositions may be made is twenty years, and the agreement is to bind a whole parish in two-thirds in value of the owner's concerns in it. The parties may either agree, or the amount may be settled by commissioners. If the payments were to be made on the plan of corn rents, the payments might be adjusted every seven years; and if fixed money payments, they might be adjusted every fourteen years.

The Lord Chancellor entered at great length into the question, chiefly with a view to show the expediency of composition, in preference to permanent commutation. His Lordship highly approved of the measure, and passed a high compliment on the clergy. The Bishop of London expressed his admiration of the Lord Chancellor's sentiments. The bill was then read, and was ordered to be committed on Thursday.

PRINCE LEOPOLD'S ANNUITY.—Earl Grey read a letter from Prince Leopold, in which his Royal Highness signified his intention not to draw from this country any portion of his annuity. Trustees are to be immediately appointed, to apportion as much of it as will be necessary to liquidate the pensions left by the Princess Charlotte, to reward his servants, and to keep Claremont in complete repair, the remainder will be left in the treasury. This communication was received with great cheers.