

# The Gleaner:

AND  
NORTHUMBERLAND SCHEDIASMA.

VOLUME III.]

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

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## THE GLEANER.

FROM BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE FOR OCTOBER.

### WHAT SHOULD THE PEERS DO?

"POPULAR opinion," says the ablest of the writers in favour of Reform, "once allowed to take the lead, soon runs riot; it appoints its own rulers—it dictates to them—it deposes them; and nothing but great temperance, and mutual forbearance, and final union on the part of the early and more moderate parties, can check its destructive career. We will not follow this St. Lawrence to its Niagara; the course is fatally sure." Never were truer sentiments uttered by man; never any of which passing events more completely demonstrate the justice. How did they find their way into a publication intended to hasten the victory of the populace over the last bulwarks of order and intelligence? Because, in a powerful mind, historic truth prevails over temporary delusion; and the experience of ages furnishes the antidote to the poison of faction.

The author we have quoted, asks, "What will the Lords do?" and he concludes that "though a vast majority of the House of Lords have a general, though partially concealed hatred of the Reform Bill, they will pass it in opposition to their better judgment, from timidity, the love of ease, or the dread of an excessive addition to their numbers. We will not follow his example, or hazard a prophecy of what the Lords will do; but we will say firmly and fearlessly what they ought to do.

Popular opinion, as this author truly says, when once allowed to take the lead, soon runs riot. It was allowed to take the lead when Earl Grey ascended to office; and has it, or has it not, since run riot? What do the manufacturing cities propose as the ends of reform? Mr Cobbett, the Member elect for Manchester, declares he is to propose the immediate confiscation of Church Property—the cessation of any payment of dividends after two years—the abolition of the standing army, and the raising of a militia, with officers appointed by Parliament, in its stead, in all the counties. The electors of Bolton have declared that they are to require pledges from their representative, that he will support an immediate repeal of the corn laws, an equitable adjustment of the national debt; in other words, confiscation of one half of every man's funded property—the abolition of all taxes pressing on the middling, or lower orders—the appropriation of the church property to the public necessities—the abolition of the right of primogeniture. What must follow from the adoption, or serious and incessant discussion of such projects as this?—National bankruptcy, individual ruin, the failure of every bank in the kingdom—the stoppage of industry—the starvation of the poor—the abolition of the peerage—the overthrow of the throne. "We will not follow this St. Lawrence to its Niagara; the course is fatally sure."

"Need the anti-reformers," says the same author, "be reminded of the result of those court intrigues, and that conservative hatred which at length succeeded in driving Necker, the French Lord Grey, from the Ministry? Will they profit by the example? I trust they may." So, it is admitted by themselves, that Necker was the French Earl Grey! And what was said of Necker by the greatest man of modern times, the one on earth who profited most by his reforms? "The projects of Necker," said Napoleon Buonaparte "were more ruinous to France than those of any other man. It was he who brought about the Revolution. Danton, Marat, Robespierre himself, did less injury to the country than the Swiss reformer. All the blood that was shed, rests on his head. Nothing is so fatal

as such popular projects; the learned are carried away by them, the populace transported, the cautious intimidated, the public happiness in every mouth; and meanwhile trade is suspended, industry withers, the people are without bread, they revolt, the reign of blood succeeds, and that is all that is gained by such theories."

Necker retired from the Ministry, and there the author of this pamphlet leaves him. Was it that which occasioned the Revolution? Quite the reverse. He resigned in 1780, and the Revolution did not break out for nine years after. What then brought it on? We will follow this St. Lawrence to its Niagara. He returned to office in 1789, instantly set on foot his projects of reform, and strained the royal prerogative to overcome the opposition of the Noblesse. He doubled by royal ordinance, the number of the members of the Commons, set the populace on fire by the prodigal gift of political power, convoked the States-General put the King at the head of the movement, made him for a little brief space the most popular man in France. And what was the consequence? The monarch beheaded, the nobles abolished; their estates divided, themselves guillotined, the public debt abolished, the reign of terror and the rules of Robespierre. "Will the Peers profit by the example?" We hope they may.

Past events, says the author, "may be regretted, but cannot be changed; and those who mourn over their effects, will not strongly evince the purity of their hatred of all excitement, by pursuing measures tending directly to increase it." Historic truth is already beginning to assert its eternal ascendancy over temporary error. "Past events"—the prodigal offer of political power to the people, the excitements of the dissolution are even now spoken of by its authors as a subject of regret. And now are its effects proposed to be remedied? By a continuance of the fatal system which has brought us to this last and perilous pass. Finding that yielding has quadrupled the power of the enemy of order—that past error has become the subject of regret even to its own authors, they propose an extension of the same concession, a continuance of these errors, as the only means of averting its disastrous effects.

The Peers in England yielded to all the demands of the Long Parliament and the populace; they sent Stafford to the block—passed all the revolutionary bills sent up to them, and remained passive spectators of the Civil War. What did they get by it? The abolition of their order, the death of their Sovereign, the tyranny of Cromwell.

The Peers in France not only concurred in, but voluntarily set themselves at the head of all the Reform projects with which Necker, the 'French Lord Grey' inflamed the country. They surrendered their right of sitting in a separate chamber; gave up their titles, dignities, and privileges, abandoned the church property to the people; concurred in a highly democratic constitution; and what did they obtain in return for so many concessions? Exile, contempt, confiscation, and death.

The Peers in England in 1793, boldly fronted the danger. They refused to yield to popular violence, despised the threat of Revolution, put themselves at the head of the conservative party, and nailed the colours of the constitution to the mast. What was the consequence? Returning confidence, renewed prosperity, unheard-of public welfare, unprecedented glory, the conquest of Trafalgar, the field of Waterloo.

The country they may be assured, will be true to them if they are true to themselves. The rabble, the radicals, the populace, will rave and thunder, and despair; but all who have a thought to bestow, a shilling

to lose, will rally round the constitution, the moment that they see leaders on whom they can rely. This is what is wanted; it is not bold and determined soldiers for the army of order, it is firm and uncompromising chiefs.

If the Peers desert their duty now: if they refuse to take that lead in the defence of the country which their high descent, their noble birth, their historic names, their vast possessions, their acknowledged and unrivalled abilities, entitle them to assume, they will never recover their fall, and they never ought. The conservative party will break up in despair. They will emigrate, bury themselves in retirement, leave the field in which their generals signed a capitulation, when victory was within their grasp, and await in silent despair till suffering and wretchedness has calmed the fever of passion among their countrymen. Never need they hope to rouse the people, if they now abandon them. Vain will be their exclamations, hopeless their appeals, contemptible their cries, when the tide of conquest approaches their own doors; when their honours are abolished, their estates divided, their children exiled. The people will exclaim;—You abandoned us when we were in danger: Can you expect us to support you who have delivered us over to the enemy.

FROM THE FOREIGN QUARTERLY REVIEW.

"All history, like all scripture, 'is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction;' and, from this picture of the patriotic self-devotion of the Athenians, we may derive grounds of consolation and confidence in the present aspect of public affairs in our own country. For if, in a state of heathenism and under a democratic form of government, the lowest and poorest citizens of Athens were capable, at the voice of their great orator of sacrificing all, of daring the utmost vengeance of the conqueror, in the cause of virtue and justice, why should we for an instant despair of the people of England? Why apprehend, in a country where the pure precepts of Christianity are continually inculcated; where the wise and the good have such abundant means of diffusing their knowledge, and delivering their warnings and exhortations; where all orders have been from their infancy habituated to an obedience of the laws and a regard for the rights of property; where industry and peacefulness have ever been the characteristics of the lower orders; where intelligence is spreading more and more every day;—why, we say, in such a country, apprehend dangers to property or religion from placing the source of legislative power with that portion of the society which contains the far largest portion of the wealth, the virtue, and the intelligence of the nation, that is, with the middle ranks? for, let sophistry and declamation say what they will, this is what must be the result of the measure now in contemplation. People if they please, may call it *revolution*, but it is, in reality, only what Nieubr would call the natural development of the constitution, and 'it cannot and it will not come to bad.' We have confidence in Providence, we have confidence in the good sense of the people of England, and we hearken to the voice of history, which assures us, that evil and destructive measures have never emanated from the people, and that, whenever they have acted wrong, they have been deceived by their superiors. Let those who are high in rank and wealth, endeavour to maintain corresponding elevation in virtue and intelligence, and they will find that they have nothing to fear."

PURITY.—A worthy burgees was asked at one of the late elections, if he given his vote from pure motives. "Oh, zartainly" cried bumpkin, "vor I got as pure a vive pound for it as I ever had in my life!"