

THE GLEANER:

NORTHUMBERLAND SCHEDIASMA.

VOLUME II.]

"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.

FROM BELL'S WEEKLY MESSENGER.

COLONIAL REPRESENTATION.

Our readers will find in our paper this week two documents which have been laid before Parliament, containing estimates of the expenditure of the miscellaneous service of the year, and also of the civil expenses of our colonies. Upon the paper we have only this to remark, that the sum of this expenditure, contained in what has been called the *Petty Cash* book of the State, reaches to the enormous amount of between six and seven hundred thousand pounds! If such are the items of the waste book, what must we expect from the ponderous ledgers of the Ministers?

There is a charge for printing, paper, and stationery of between two and three hundred thousand pounds,—and this principally for the two Houses of Parliament. But we are sorry to see continued, under a Whig Administration, a head of charge of between thirty and forty thousand for *Secret Service* money! We did not know that so rank an abuse still existed.

Under the head of Civil Expenses for the Colonies, one remark will strike our readers; that these Colonies must be most wretchedly managed if they cannot afford to pay their own judges and law officers. It seems most absurd to cry them up as the great stay and refuge of England, (and we have never wished to decry them) whilst they are in this condition.

But our present purpose is to consider a much more important question,—a question which has frequently been brought before the public on many occasions, but never satisfactorily explained or discussed. It is simply this,—whether or not these Colonies ought not to have representatives in Parliament, and whether the present crisis does not afford a fit opportunity of giving them such representatives.

It has been strongly argued that, as the population of the British dependencies, including India, exceeds that of the mother country,—and as the wealth and rising importance of many of the Colonies mark them out as the cradle of future empires,—it would be the manifest policy and duty of Great Britain to attach them by a closer connection, and to give them, by representation, a share in the general political power of the country. By the extinction of the boroughs, which afforded the readiest access to Parliament for those whose property was invested in our settlements, the Colonies will be precluded from that virtual representation which they have hitherto enjoyed. It is not to be dissembled but that the new Reform Bill strikes a hard blow upon this description of members of Parliament respecting colonial interests. They will, by the natural consequences of this political exclusion, be more alienated from us than they are now inclined to be, and every day become more indisposed to bear the yoke of the parent state. An opportunity now offers of giving them a direct representation. It may be carried into effect simply by receding from that of the reform plan which was never popular,—we mean that part which proposes to reduce the number of our representatives in Parliament. It is known that Lord Grey does not obstinately persist in the reduction of the Members of Parliament. It never was a favourite measure with the people. Why not, then, keep up the number of our representatives in the House of Commons to their ancient amount,—distributing a certain portion, say fifteen or twenty, amongst our Colonies and foreign dependencies? The mode, and the term of their election, might easily be arranged. If the principle were once conceded, the policy of it would be obvious.

Our Colonists, or those British owners and merchants whose property is largely engaged abroad (for we are not speaking of the native born colonists only,) must desire, like other men, to have some share in the management of public affairs, chiefly on account of the importance which it would give them. Upon the power which the greater part of the leading men, the natural aristocracy of every country, have of preserving or defending their respective importance, depend the stability and duration of every system of free government. In the attacks which these leading men are continually making upon one another; and in the defence of their own power and station, consists the whole play of domestic faction and ambition.

It is but natural that the leading men possessed of colonial property and influence should be actuated by similar motives of ambition. They feel, or imagine, that they should be excluded from Parliament by the extinction of the boroughs, and the operation of the new Reform Bill.—These boroughs opened to them the road to political importance. They feel, or imagine, that if their Colonial Assemblies, which they are fond of calling Parliaments, should be so far degraded as to become the humble ministers of the Parliament of Great Britain, the greater part of their own importance would be broken down. Now it must be acknowledged that the control of the parent state over her Colonies was, and is, greatly softened and qualified to the taste of the colonists, by having their leading men of property members of the British Senate, and acting as many did, a splendid part in the national councils. But if they can no longer expect to see them seated in a reformed Parliament, their pride will be hurt, and their affections weakened:—and, like other ambitious and high spirited men, they will rather choose to throw off the yoke, and draw the sword in defence of their own importance, than live in a connection with the mother country, which is injurious, unequal, and disparaging.

Great Britain is, perhaps, since the world began, the only state which, as it extended its empire, has only increased its expenses without augmenting its resources. Towards the declension of the Roman Republic, the allies of Rome, who had borne the principal burthen of defending the state, and extending the boundaries of the empire, demanded to be admitted to all the privileges of Roman citizens. Upon being refused, the Social war broke out: and, during the course of that war, Rome granted those privileges to the greater part of them, one by one, and in proportion as they detached themselves from the general confederacy. Why should not England do by choice what Rome was compelled to do by force? It is a fundamental maxim of our policy, since the American war, that there can be no taxation without representation. Our Colonies therefore must always, be an incumbrance to us whilst they remain unrepresented. We shall always be taxed with the enormous expenses of their civil and military establishments, until we put them in an equal condition, and give them equal political privileges with the rest of our empire. Let them be admitted to the same privileges, and they could no more object to a tax for paying their judges and governors, than the inhabitants of a county could object to a county rate for the building of their bridges and the maintaining of their prisons. Why should not Great Britain allow to each Colony such a number of representatives as suited the proportion of what it contributed to the public revenue of the empire,—in consideration of its being subjected to a fair rate of taxes, and, in compensation, admitted to the same freedom of trade with its fellow-subjects at home?—Why, for instance, should not the Two CANADAS return four members to Parliament—Jamaica return two. The number of

representatives might be augmented as the proportion of contribution might afterwards increase. A new method of acquiring importance,—a new and more dazzling object of ambition—would thus be presented to the leading men of each Colony, and to the capital merchants engaged in its trade, whose domicile is in our own country; instead of contending for the little prizes which are to be found in the paltry traffic of colonial factions, they might then hope, from the presumption which men naturally have in their own ability and good fortune, to draw some of the prizes which invariably issue from the wheel of the great state lottery of British politics.

Unless this or some other method be fallen upon, the Reform Bill cannot be rendered very palatable to these leading colonists, and that great mass of British Capitalists whose fortunes are invested in our foreign settlements. There seems to be no method more obvious than the one we propose,—of conciliating those mercantile and colonial proprietors who are so loud in clamour against the abolition of boroughs; and it strikes us that it will not only tend to preserve the importance, and to gratify the ambition of some of the most leading capitalists among us, but that it will tend materially to consolidate the interests of the parent state of her Colonies, and to unite them by closer ties than have hitherto subsisted between them.

Though the Roman constitution was necessarily ruined by the union of Rome with the allied states of Italy, there is not the least probability that the British constitution would be hurt by the union of Great Britain with her Colonies. That constitution, on the contrary, would be completed by it, and seems to be imperfect without it. The Assembly which deliberates and decides concerning the affairs of every part of the empire, in order to be perfectly informed, ought certainly to have representatives from every part of it.

That this union, however, could be easily effected, or that difficulties, and great difficulties, might not occur in the execution, is undoubted. We have heard of none, however, which appear insurmountable. The principal, perhaps, arise not from the nature of things, but from the prejudices and opinions of the people both on this and on the other side of the Atlantic.

But if Lord Grey and the Ministers shall yield to the reasonable desires of Parliament, and to the natural wishes of the people, in keeping up the present number of the members of the House of Commons, an opportunity would be immediately afforded (and the boon will, we are sure, be most acceptable) of admitting colonial property to its just share of representation, and to its due and salutary weight in a reformed Parliament.

Supposing that the sixty-two members, intended to be struck off should be retained upon a revision of the Reform Bill, would it not be an admirable measure of policy to allot a certain portion of them to our Colonies? It would greatly tend to conciliate the mercantile and shipping interests of the country, and would strengthen the popularity of the Bill amongst all those persons whose fortunes are bound up with the trade and commerce of the Empire.

To play the fool and marry for love, is to marry Melita, a pretty, young, virtuous and prudent woman, of a frugal temper, and who has a kindness for you, but less money than Ægina, who is offered you with an extraordinary good portion, and extraordinary good qualifications to squander it all away, and your own along with it—*La Bruyere*.

The Shah of Persia has published a work under this title: 'The Poems of him before whom the world humbleth itself to adore him!'