

# THE GLEANER.

AND

## NORTHUMBERLAND SCHEDIASMA.

VOLUME II.]

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

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### THE GLEANER.

FROM THE NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

#### JOURNALISM.

THE most difficult of all knowledge is probably self-knowledge doubtless, because none is beset with so many misleading partialities. It would seem to be almost as difficult for a man to understand the springs of his own vocation as to analyze his own motives. A Sunday journalist thus explains (so call it) journalism:

"Journalism is nothing but the expression of public opinion. A newspaper that should attempt to dictate must soon perish. Every now and then, indeed, a journal is started for the enforcement of some opinion not accepted out of the narrow circle which establishes the paper; but the speculation invariably fails, both in a political and in a pecuniary sense. Dictation is hateful to all the world; and a newspaper cannot dictate, because, if it dictates, it dies. True, many a newspaper appears to dictate,—as, for instance, the *Times*, in its late 'thundering' articles against the poor boroughmongers; but to call this dictation would be like saying, that it is the hatchet, and not the woodsman, who fells the tree. Newspapers are but an instrument to express the opinions of their readers on either side of whatever may be the question; and, taken altogether, where the press is free, they constitute the public voice."

It has been observed to us, that, in the very same paper, (which is of no great age,) a directly opposite argument has been held; but of that we know nothing, and with the self-contradiction, if there be one, we have nothing to do. The editor would answer us at once by lying the blame of inconsistency to public opinion, which, having chopped about as to its own operation on journalism, has made him hold opposite doctrines within no very long space of time. The ingenious *Tattler* remarks upon the quoted doctrine, that there is much truth in it, but not the whole truth; for, "if journals had never been in advance of public opinion, public opinion would not have been so advanced as it is." This gives the key to the question; but there is another way of resolving it. If public opinion ran like the Thames through London, and a journalist had only to take a bucket down to the bank, draw a supply, and soak his paper with it, the cited explanation of the business might hold together; but, as the prudent *Mistress Glasse* says, in treating of cooking dolphins, "first, catch a dolphin," so, we contend, the journalist has first to catch public opinion, and, when we consider the habits and circumstances of most editors, we see no opportunities for the seizure. The conductors of some of the ablest prints in London are men of retired habits, who mix very little with society, and observe upon what is passing in the world, relying only on their individual capacities for judgment. There are other publications of great circulation and high character, which lay themselves out for drifting with the stream; but the editors of these papers, however disposed to go with opinion, cannot run into the streets to seek it, whenever a question arises likely to engage it. They have to pronounce an opinion before they can consult opinions. Public opinion is written and talked of as if it were something always palpable and integral. A score of able papers are published in London, all holding different opinions, and all argued to be emanations of public opinion. Examine the editors, however, as to their converse with society, and it will soon be found that three-fourths of the number derive their idea of the opinions of the world from print, and the question then arises, whether the authors of the print furnishing sub-

jects or materials of judgement are better instructed in the sentiments of men than their editorial readers and commentators. Conductors of newspapers are, for the most part, only qualified to express public opinion as men of sense likely to sympathize and have thoughts in common with the sensible portion of society, which leads the rest. But there are some superior men among the editorial corps, and they lead the intelligence of classes of readers predisposed to entertain their views, but not equal, or perhaps not at leisure, to take such views unaided. To argue, with the writer above quoted, that journalism is nothing but an expression of public opinion, implying that it cannot guide it, is to argue, that no superior talent can be employed in the service, or that superior reason, if set before the public, will not obtain the assent of the more intelligent and influential minds. The doctrine, if received, would be most pernicious, for it would forbid the journalist to attempt the correction of a popular error, or to put forth a thought beyond the acceptance of the mass of the people, lest his profits should suffer by exceeding the functions of a mere mouth-piece of established and prevailing opinions. The principle is slavish and false. Papers may be named, as high in reputation as the one we are controverting, which have enforced not only new but dry doctrines, and with advantage both to their circulations and their characters. On the other hand may be instanced examples of the opposition of the great majority of the press to the popular prejudices. Catholic emancipation was warmly advocated by the press when seven persons out of ten were against it, and the powerful host of the clergy almost to a man. And with such aid the measure succeeded against what is commonly termed public opinion, for by public opinion, as it is talked and written of, cannot be meant public intelligence, as, in that case, what would the journals of nonsense, scandal, and tittle-tattle be organs of? and organs of public opinion the writer quoted contends them to be. Again, the prints generally popular opposed themselves to the horror of dissection, which possesses nineteen minds out of twenty; and this feeling, accounted sacred by those who entertain it, was roughly combated without detriment to the profits or popularity of the reprovers. We should much regret to see the time when an erroneous notion of the province and functions of the journalism should prevent these attempts at the correction of popular error, real or supposed. It were, however, vastly convenient for a newspaper, having no other object than the greatest number of pence, and made, like the dull razors in the epigram, only for sale, to argue that the echo of the public voice is the hollow calling of all journalists. But such is the character of the print in question.

#### BANK OF ENGLAND.

This great Establishment, which has long been the principal bank of deposit and circulation, not in this country only, but in Europe, was founded in 1694. Its principal projector was Mr Wm. Patterson, an enterprising and intelligent Scotch Gentleman, who was afterwards engaged in the ill fated colony of Darien. Government being at the time distressed for want of money, partly from the defects and abuses in the system of taxation, and partly from the difficulty of borrowing, because of the supposed instability of the revolutionary establishment, the Bank grew out of a loan of £1,200,000 for the public service. The subscribers, besides receiving eight per cent. on the sum advanced, as interest, and £4000 a-year, were incorporated into a society, denominated the 'Governor and Company of the Bank of England.' The charter is dated the 27th July, 1694. In 1696, during the great recoinage, the Bank involved in considerable difficulties, and was

even compelled to suspend payment of her notes, which were at a heavy discount. Owing, however, to the judicious conduct of the directors, and the assistance of Government, the Bank got over the crisis. But it was at the same time judged expedient, in order to place her in a situation the better to withstand any adverse circumstances that might afterwards occur, to increase her capital from £1,200,000 to £2,201,000. In 1708, the Directors undertook to pay off and cancel £1,500,000 of Exchequer Bills they had circulated two years before, at 4 1-2 per cent. with the interest on them, amounting in all to £1,775,028, which increased the permanent debt due by the public to the Bank, including £400,000 then advanced in consideration of the renewal of the Charter to £3,375,028 for which they were allowed 6 per cent. The Bank capital was then also doubled or increased to £4,402,343. But the year 1708 is chiefly memorable in the history of the bank for the act that was then passed, which declared that during the continuance of the Corporation of the Bank of England, 'it should not be lawful for any body politic, erected or to be erected, other than the said Governor and Company of the Bank of England, or for other persons whatsoever, united or to be united in covenants or partnership, exceeding the number of six persons, in that part of Great Britain called England, to borrow, owe, or take up any sum or sums of money on their bills or notes payable on demand, or in any less time than six months from the borrowing thereof. This proviso which has had so powerful an operation on banking in England, is said to have been elicited by the Mine Adventure Company having commenced banking business, and began to issue notes. The charter of the Bank of England, when first granted, was to continue for eleven years certain, or till a years notice after the 1st of August 1705. The charter was further prolonged in 1697. In 1708, the Bank having advanced £400,000 for public service without interest, the exclusive privileges of the corporation were prolonged to 1733. And in consequence of various advances made at different times, the exclusive privileges of the Bank have been continued by successive renewals, to a year's notice, after the 1st of August 1833. The last renewal was made in 1800, by the act 40th Geo. III. cap. 23. in consideration of an advance by the Bank to the public of three millions for six years without interest.

We have seen a gentleman who arrived in London yesterday morning from Riga, who states, from actual observation, that the cholera morbus, which is now devastating some of the fairest provinces of Europe, is nothing more nor less than the yellow fever of the West Indies. The symptoms—a violent diarrhoea, in its most excruciating form, which continues till the victim's strength becomes completely exhausted and he sinks—are the same in both countries. In a cold climate it has invariably been denominated cholera—it warm climates it has frequently been known as the yellow fever. When our informant left Riga, the West India system had been pursued, and, in many instances, with very considerable success. This regimen, which is only efficacious when applied in the early stage of the disease, consists in severely blistering the patient over the whole of the body, with the exception of the extremities. Inward medicine has ever been found to be unavailing. Out of the family of an English merchant, residing at Riga, of the name of Collings or Collins, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. C., eight children and five servants, the whole have fallen victims to this devastating disorder, with the exception of one child, aged five years, and two females.

The latest accounts from Riga and Danzig were considered very favourable, and had excited expectations that the cholera was abating.