

THE GLEANER

AND

NORTHUMBERLAND SCHEDIASMA.

VOLUME II.]

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

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THE GLEANER.

EUROPE.

FROM THE SCOTTISH LITERARY GAZETTE.

PROSPECTS OF THE NEW MINISTRY.

Whether it is the voice of the country, or merely of a bold and unruly faction, it would be difficult to say; but, certainly, there has of late been a wide manifestation of certain unsettled half-revolutionary principles, enough to startle even the most staunch and sanguine lover of the constitution. From one end of the kingdom to the other, the expression of all but directly seditious opinions has been re-echoed by bodies of the people. All the stimulants of unfettered oratory and unceasing agitation have been applied to the inflamed minds of the mob. The middling classes, who, of course, see farthest, and think most, are seldom or ever appealed to by the political barrangers of the day. Those who have nothing to fear or lose, have been taught to consider their native country as merely the source of oppression. They have been driven from their former faith—the confidence which they placed in the law and the legislature—and they are now tossing about amidst a sea of troubles, where they can find no fitting place of anchorage to quiet the agitation in which they have been plunged.

We are sufficiently convinced that this crisis, in the conduct and affairs of the labouring classes, has been hastened, if not produced, by the untoward circumstances in which they are placed. For the last three years they have borne up against a mass of misery, which has inflamed and unsettled their minds, and exaggerated their ideas to such a degree that they are open to any conviction of necessity which presents itself before them. Bodies of men, as well as individuals, have been influenced under similar circumstances. They have been rendered selfish and unprincipled. They look no longer to the general good; their only care extends to themselves. In short, they are not to be depended upon; no government, except for their own exclusive making could hope for their assistance in a time of danger and emergency. That such should be the case, need not excite wonder, for it is but the operation of the strongest principle of human nature—self-preservation. The ruling sentiment of the labouring classes is, that the superior ranks are combined to destroy and enslave them, body and mind. This idea has been pressed upon them by orators of all grades, who have, in any way, been punished, whether by law or public scorn;—the ambitious and the knavish are well aware that this is their grand cue, and accordingly they have heaped upon the same string, until it has responded, in some degree, to their wildest desires.

Unquestionably, there has been something removed from common causes, to excite the lower orders to that rebellious spirit which they now evince. In the circumstances of the times, these are plainly seen. Licentiousness of thought, followed by licentiousness of conduct, has followed close upon the unmitigated necessities of the industrious portion of the community, (as they are sometimes too exclusively called.) We do not believe, however, that any body of persons whatever their grievances for their stations could act as the peasantry of England and Ireland are said to have acted—without a leader. It is in the readiness of public men to second the movements of the rabble, that much of the evil which afflicts the country is to be seen. The best of principles, if not firmly rooted in the mind, will yield to the force of an ingenious sophistry, which courts and humours the passions. All this has been tried, and has succeeded with the unthinking mob; and, we dread that the results have yet to be evolved, with all the fearful and unavoidable attendants of revolution, and, perhaps, of blood. The demon of anarchy has been called up, and it must now be exercised.

The continuance of the Wellington Government,

which all along contained the seeds of a speedy and sudden dissolution, nourished and spread the moral virus which evinced itself so undisguisedly in the course of the last three years. The advantages to be derived from the operations of a weak and worthless Administration, so eloquently explained by its Whig adherents, may now sorely be fair matter of question—at least to all who do not participate in such views as tend directly to ruin the country. No party or interest has gained by the ascendancy of the Duke of Wellington, except the radicals and incendiaries. This is the much vaunted effect of a weak Government. Despotism in intention, feeble and fluctuating in execution, the inevitable result of its various attempts to govern and direct the national mind, was speedy ruin to every one who was rash enough to involve himself in the event. Nothing less disastrous could have been anticipated; and often—often did we foretell what has already occurred. We knew that the sense of the country was with us; but the clamour and noise of 'not-born' faction, contrived to make itself better heard, because it was more easily followed.

When, however, we consider the personal character of the late Administration, we do not rightly see how it could have acted otherwise than it has done. Having no strength in itself, no confidence in its own councils, no knowledge or experience to mould its policy, composed of clerks and imbeciles, it necessarily gave way to the force of circumstances, and was contravened by objects from without, over which it exerted no influence. Wellington, the head, had been trained in the narrow field of military exertion; he had been accustomed to deal only with vicars; which he knew how to command. He had yet to discover that politicians should study tempers, and passions, and interests, which had been called into existence without their interference; that men who argue and debate, before they are induced to act, can not be overborne by a habit of despotic command, or of silent disappointment. In short he ventured to guide the vessel of the state, without providing himself with a crew possessed of either experience or reputation to fit or recommend them for the task. We do not inquire how far the genius and disposition of the leader guided him in the selection of his coadjutors; but, if we are to judge from the manner in which he continued their services, we may readily conclude, that he believed no other set of persons would suit his purpose. And we are certain, that in this, at least, he was perfectly correct.

The country, however, has flung these Ministers off at last; and we are thus induced to think that one great cause of the predominant evils is removed. We are no longer tormented with the fear, that the government of the country, in the event of popular commotion, will yield to the considerations of personal safety and selfish motives, leaving the constitutional portion of the community to struggle against the stream. And in this state of mind we willingly join in the general feeling of joy, and hope, which at present enlivens all classes of the people. We forget our "time-hallowed" enmities in the expectations of better times, and more prosperous circumstances.

The great question now to be solved is, whether a popular government, moulded, as it is said, by the spirit of the age—a phrase invented by canters and hypocrites—is sufficient to provide for the evils brought on by scanty employment and bad government. It is not a question of Whig or Tory. Party distinctions are of small importance compared with the demands of the nation. But surely if principles are any thing but gross fallacies or shallow pretences, they cannot be altogether sacrificed as they were by the Wellington party. We are not amongst those who cry out 'Measures, not men.' We do not expect the thistle to grow grapes; nor do we look for sunshine at midnight. But this we do demand, that man shall hold fast by their avowed principles, and not act like the late government, who pretended one thing and performed

another. We trust that Tories will still be Tories; and it is their own matter if the Wigs forsake their old and beaten tracks, a thing which they are doing every day, and which we hail with the highest delight. In making these observations we do not mean to revive distinctions, which, as has been said, lead only to differences; but we make them for the purpose of ascertaining the degree of confidence to which either party is entitled. Confidence and good will are indeed the best safeguards which can be extended to the government by the governed; for the advantages in that case never fail to be mutual.

The new Ministry, it would appear, are loud in their expectation of assistance from the people, inasmuch as they profess themselves to be formed upon popular principles. So far they have a right to indulge in such expectations. But it ought first to be asked, who and what are they? We say that their names are sufficient to answer the question; and in this we have a proof that men more than measures are in the first place to be considered. At the same time we readily grant that it would be unfair to prejudge them; for we may be sure that the altered circumstances in which the new Ministry are placed, will be strong enough to modify any extreme opinions which out of office they might have entertained.

According to the official accounts, the new government is composed, for the greater part, of Whigs. Of late, the more sensible portion of that body have co-operated with the old Tories against the Duke of Wellington, and it was by their united exertions, that the downfall of the 'imbecile government' was effected. For our own part, we perfectly concurred in that system of co-operation, and in fact, were among the first to recommend it; for we well knew that by shuffling and shifting, the late administration might have succeeded in duping the country, until it found itself on the very brink of destruction. If then, we were willing to advocate the co-operation of the better mind of both parties out of office, it need not to be wondered at, that we see no great cause of fear in their continuing to act together, to a certain extent, and with perfect independence, now that they are in office. In fact, we shall be much mistaken in our calculations, if the country does not experience immediate relief from the salutary measures which, we doubt not, the new government is prepared to adopt.

We certainly admit, that there are men induced into the inferior departments of government whom we should have been glad to see excluded; but still, as public men none of them are personally objectionable, and, on the score of talent, no existing opposition will be able to confront them. It will be only in the event of their adopting false views and unpopular measures, that they can run any hazard of being displaced. They have also, we believe, the good opinion of his Majesty; and, what is not to be despised, the favourable feeling of the aristocracy. With Lord Grey at their head, and the Duke of Richmond in the ranks, we do not see what party can remain unconciliated. As for the opposition of the Peel and Dawson party, no fear need be entertained. That set have already committed *felo-de-se*; and they are now totally without influence or importance of any kind.

It is quite plain, however, that the country has been startled by the sudden and unexpected elevation of Mr. Brougham. Whatever may be that gentleman's merits, we do not perceive how his character entitled him to the Chancellorship. But, probably, nothing less would content him; though, we doubt not, he himself will be the first to regret that he has been taken out of his natural sphere—the House of Commons. We regret much, however, from his indefatigable and unceasing