

# 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.

FROM THE NEW MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

### DIALOGUE BETWEEN A REFORMING COMMONER AND A TORY PEER.

**Commoner.** Well, my Lord, the time draws near when the battle will again be fought—it is to be hoped with better success than heretofore for the Reformers. We, or rather the signs of the times, have made, I believe, some converts amongst your august body since our journals went into mourning for the loss of the Bill.

**Peer.** If converts be made, it is more than I know of; but I do not object to that mode of gaining your (pardon me,) revolutionary objects. These, I am quite ready to grant are times, when we cannot lay down abstract and unchanging rules. What is violence in opinion one month, may be moderation the next.

**Commoner.** Exactly so, my Lord. Had the Duke of Wellington, when in power, for instance, proposed a bill enfranchising ten towns, and disenfranchising twelve boroughs, there can be little doubt but that the Tories in general would have cried out on the violence of the Reform. Now, it must be confessed, you would be happy to compound with so moderate a measure. Beware in time! Public opinion, once turned to popular subjects, marches by giant strides. The day may be at hand when you will think the present Reform as moderate as you would now think that which the Duke of Wellington might once have substituted for it.

**Peer, (smiling.)** What! you recur to intimidation—threats again, eh?

**Commoner.** Nay, is warning, threat? We do not speak to arouse your fears, but to express our own. Our safety is bound up in yours. All respectable classes have a common interest. I tremble at the future: am I to stifle my apprehension lest your pride take alarm? But what folly is this talk of intimidation. Suppose you had a fit of the cholera—you may have it yet—(though Heaven forbid, and keep the disease for the poor!) and the doctor cried out—"Go into this vapour-bath; drink this laudanum; throw away those salts; put your arm under the bedclothes, or you are a dead man!" would your Lordship take pet, bristle up your languid energies, and cry with a querulous voice, "Do you think, Sir, that I am to be frightened?" My Lord, My Lord, there is a mortal malady in England, more deadly than the physical one, which I trust we shall escape—that malady is DISCONTENT. Why quarrel then, with advice? Why swallow the salts and refuse the oil? Why declare, that to caution is to terrify, and to warn is to insult?

**Peer.** All this is very fine. But I think the case must be put thus: either there is one strong and bitter feeling against the aristocracy, or there is not. If there exist that feeling, we are doomed already. We can but defer our fate—let us rather meet it bravely, and die in the first ditch, not the last. If there does not exist that feeling, it would be madness in us to encourage a democratic change in the country, while we are able, if not to prevent, at least to modify it.

**Commoner.** I thank you, my Lord, for your frankness; and this, I believe, is the common view which your party take of the question. As right and just notions on this point are, then, of great consequence, let us here pause for a moment. You have read the work called "The Tour of a German Prince." You may remember (or if not, you may deem to turn to a review on that work in this Magazine,) how much the Tourist comments upon the aristocratic tendencies that in this country pervaded all classes two years ago.

It is what every observant foreigner then and before remarked of us. There was, at that day, in this great country, no feeling against the aristocracy. Our vice ran the other way. You were by far the *safest*, the *most powerful*, the *most solidly based* portion of the state. You are now in danger—you allow it. You have become the most obnoxious, and in a revolution, would be the most exposed body in the community; so much so that even the Whig noblemen suffer for the dislike to the Tory, and Lord Althorp and Lord Grey are sometimes suspected to be insincere, merely because they are known to be Lords. This change, my Lord, from power to weakness, from safety to danger, from a servile homage to a calumniating hatred, ought, I respectfully to say, to teach your assembly one truth, which it seems resolved not to learn, and that resolution is the cause of all the obscure and confused notions which men less intelligent than your Lordship have formed on your side of the question—that change ought, I say, to teach you in what your strength consists. It does not consist in your estates; it does not consist in your Norman pedigree, or your Saxon gold; it consists solely in Public Opinion. When you talk of despising the press and the public clamour, your boast may be very sounding, but it is very irrational. You are despising the foundation of the House you inhabit, and crying, as you sit on the roof, that you care not a straw what may become of the kitchen. Public Opinion was in your favour, and you were strong; Public Opinion is now against you, and you are weak. Do you wish to be safe? Do you wish to be powerful? You must first be popular. Your Lordship's logical dilemma gives way in either horn. Public feeling is against you—brave it—and you may perhaps be swept away by its flood! But it has so recently been turned against you—the feeling is so contrary to old habits, that you have only to conciliate in order to be once more stronger even than I would wish you. I repeat—the secret of power, in all ages, is to be popular. In Morocco, the Muleys were popular. It was a fine thing, according to an old Eastern saying, to be subject to a King who could cut off as many heads as he pleased. Whatever be the shape of power, whether it wear a despotic garb, or a liberal, it must be cheerfully acknowledged, in order to be permanent. You, on the other hand, would guard your hereditary power by offending the opinions on which it is based: and you think you have done great things for the aristocracy by an act that has rendered them as odious as possible.

**Peer.** You are honest, Sir.

**Commoner.** But mark; I say, "if the temper of the times continue to be democratic, and you continue to oppose." Very well, I fear that you would, in the case of these hypotheses, be equally badly off, whether the "creation" furnished a precedent or not. If neither of these suppositions be made fact, you will be secure; in spite of all precedent if they are made fact, the excuse of a precedent will not be wanting, even to the length of sweeping you away altogether! We stand in perilous times, my Lord, when desperate diseases require bold remedies; and we must not palter and prate about possible precedents for one order of the state, when we know not whether our next step may not be over the ruin of all. This is to emulate the quack, who stood in the market-place when the earth was shaking and palaces rocked to and fro, crying, "Famous pills, these—famous pills against an earthquake." But to return to our new "creation." If you are now in danger—it is from what?—a collision with Public Opinion? What would then remove the danger?—a reconciliation with Public Opinion! How would you bring this about?—by a new infusion of such

men as advocate popular principles? Thus, if a numerous creation of Reformers were made, your House would suddenly be converted from an obnoxious to a popular assembly. Instead of resisting reforms, it would propose them; and you would, almost as by magic, cease to be in peril from the people, because you would cease to resist their desires.

**Peer.** In other words, we should be an assembly of Radicals.

**Commoner.** Not so. Men of large property, inheriting the prejudices of birth, and possessed of that practical intercourse with the real world which sobers, and it may be, degrades, political theories, will be always slower to devise than the philosophical, and more wary to act than the vehement, Reformer. Every legislative assembly is a little behind the spirit of the day. The House of Commons is now far more democratic than it ever has been; but you may see, by comparing its tone with the tone of the press, that it is not nearly so democratic as the humour of the times. If this be the case with a representative body, it must be far more the case with a body not brought into electioneering contact with the people; and you need never, therefore, fear that a House of Lords can be too radical, or not sufficiently a procrastinator of popular principles. I will suppose, then, this creation made; I will suppose the Reform Bill passed; I will suppose the Lords rendered liberal by the new infusion—seconding, not rejecting the popular measures of the Commons; I will suppose them acceding to a wise and early Reform of the Church, (that must come next!) I will suppose them passing the repeal of the Six Acts; I will suppose them supporting my Lord Brougham in his amendment of the Poor Laws; I will suppose them freeing Ireland from her ecclesiastical abuses;—and I will ask you—I will ask any man—if the Lords would not then be powerful—if the calumnies of "Black Books" would then be purchased and believed—if the people would then debate in private, nay, demand in public, the uses of your Chamber, and the justice of your control? It is only when deeply exasperated against their rulers, that the people speculate on their rights. When William the Fourth ascended the throne, there was no friendly feeling to monarchy in this country. If at the time Charles the Tenth brought crowns into contempt, William the Fourth had advanced the standard of Anti-reform, can we say—can you, my Lord, as an Anti-reformer, lay your hand on your heart, and say, that that standard would not have waved over a fallen throne? We know, at least, that William the Fourth would not have been the beloved and safe, and mighty King that he is now—that he could not as now, have felt secure—that come what may, in riot or in civil war, not a hair of his head would be assailed—he would not have felt his subjects his friends, and that his citadel, in convulsion, would be the hearts of a devoted nation? Why is William the Fourth powerful?—because he is beloved! Why is his throne firmer than that of any monarch in Europe?—because it is based in opinion! My Lord, your august body can yet attain the same security by the same means. Identify yourselves with the interests of the people, and we shall hear no more said against the aristocracy than we now hear said against the monarchy. Whatever procures that identification is your best chance of permanent authority. It will benefit your order more than a thousand precedents will injure: and that prerogative which the creation of new Peers will seem to weaken the infusion of new principles will (if human policy can effect any thing to that end) in reality preserve!

Marriage is like money—seem to want it, and you never get it.—Miss Landon.