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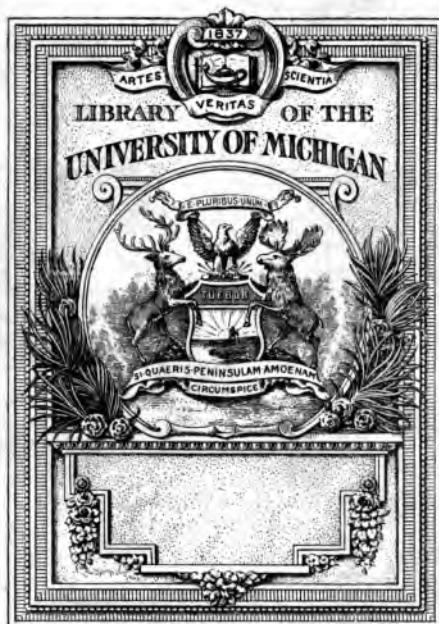
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Letter to Lord Viscount
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LETTER

TO

LORD VISCOUNT CASTLEREAGH,

K. G.

BY

JOHN C. HOBHOUSE, Esq. F. R. S.

“ Si tu es dieu, voilà des hommes, mange-les ; si tu es homme,
voilà des vivres que ces esclaves t'apprêteront.”

Essai sur les Mœurs.—Tom. vi.—DE FERNAND CORTEZ.

SECOND EDITION, WITH A PREFACE.

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PREFACE.

SINCE the first edition of this Letter was published, now about a week ago, the question respecting the legality, or illegality of the Manchester meeting, has been settled. That meeting, which, when Mr. Plunkett said it was illegal, the whole House of Commons (as if waiting for an Irish opinion) raised an applauding shout :—that meeting, which Lord Castlereagh said, was, “*on all hands, acknowledged to be illegal,*” has been asserted, by Lord Viscount Sidmouth, Secretary of State for the Home Department, to have been *legal*; and the legality of that meeting has created the necessity of the present bill, which will make such meetings illegal. The following are his Lordship’s words :—

“ *The existing law did not prescribe any manner of giving notice, or superintendence, by magistrates. It in no way regulated the manner of attending meetings : it did not prohibit the go-*

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*ing to meetings in military array, or carrying to them weapons: it did not prevent simultaneous meetings, nor the continuance of notices of meetings by adjournment: it did not prevent the assembling with flags and banners: if seditious or treasonable language were spoken, it did not, besides empowering a magistrate to order the person offending into custody, also enable him, in case of resistance, to declare the meeting illegal.” **

That is to say, that in Lord Sidmouth's view of the subject, the Manchester meeting, with all the attributes he described, was not prevented by the existing law. It did not suit the convenience of Ministers, whilst the bill was pending in the Commons, to make this confession; nor should I have thought it worth while to mention it now, did I not think it right to leave some memorial of the manner in which the nation, or rather those depending upon the word of Ministers, have allowed themselves to be basely cheated out of their liberties. It may be useful to future times, and to happier countries, to know, how a great nation, composed of the noblest men that ever lived in the tide of time—of men, whose learning and whose civilization, so far from taming down the ardour of the

* *Times*.—Saturday, Dec. 18, 1819.

spirit inherited from their rude forefathers, have encouraged and brightened the sacred flame—have been tricked out of those principles and feelings, which have distinguished them from all the people of the earth. Every ground has sunk under the assertion of Ministers—proof after proof has been found false—excuse after excuse has failed—and the positive dogma of one day has been contradicted by the concession of the next. At last, when every other pretext for tyranny has been tried, and no other way for accounting for the terrifying phenomena of the times remains, a minister of state has actually resolved the unhappy enigma, by finding “a change of fashion,” the true source of the national distress—of that “distress so nearly allied to disaffection.” It is hardly credible, but I direct the reader to the Earl of Harrowby’s speech, where he will find, that the “*Dandies*,” have had full as much to do as the “*Radicals*,” in creating the present discontents.* The same minister allows the con-

* *Times*.—Dec. 18, 1819. “*A change of fashion, or the caprice of a foreign state, might ruin, or throw out of employ, whole classes of manufacturers.*” And again:—“*These fluctuations were the cause of great distress; and distress and disaffection were often nearly allied.*”—Earl Harrowby’s Speech on the Seditious-Meetings’ Bill.

duct of the great mass of the population of England to be "most excellent, most praiseworthy;" and, indeed, can hardly find any of the evil, except in two counties. But, then, says his Lordship, as we mean nothing but "*protection*," it would be a shame to except any portion of the country from the *benefit* of the new law; and, if it were a shame to except any districts of England, equally invidious would it be to exclude Ireland from the advantage of this legislation; merely because she is on the other side of the Channel. Now, this is no pleasantry—no exaggeration of mine. I find it substantially in Lord Harrowby's speech, nor does the reporter note a single "*laugh*," or "*hear*" of astonishment, at all these instances of his Lordship's impartial benevolence. His kindness to all the Empire, which, not the invisible limits of provinces, nor the sea itself can arrest, entitles him to the love and gratitude of all his countrymen. Though the original circle in motion, is, he owns, but insignificant, yet he will diffuse his care to the limits of the whole Empire: well said Lord Grosvenor, if Ireland be included, why stop there? why not travel to the Cape? why not embrace the Trans-Atlantic colonies? Surely his Lordship would be well pleased, and other nations

too—why not legislate for them? It is but a small pebble at first; but the stir once made—

“ Wide, and more wide, th’ o’erflowings of his mind,
Take every creature in of every kind.”

Towards the end of Earl Harrowby’s speech, his Lordship seems to allude to a class of men, no small number, he says, who would prefer despotism to anarchy; and I understand his Lordship to have himself professed a preference of “ Hell ” to the “ gates of Hell.”* With his Lordship’s taste (as reported to me), either in language or politics, I will not presume to quarrel; but, it may be as well to remark, that those noble persons, such as Lords Wellesley, Grenville, and Harrowby, who so magnanimously come forward, to state their preference of the said despotism, or, if the word may be used, of Lord Harrowby’s “ Hell,” seem to forget that they only state, that they like being absolute masters, without the trouble of competition. They forget, that they never contemplate the oppression of themselves, but only of the people—that they kindly resign the privileges of others, and graciously augment their own power—that they, with

* The phrase is not in the reported speeches, but has reached me through another channel: whether my informant was in joke, or not, I cannot say.

the utmost complacency, vote themselves into the perpetual and tranquil possession of that place, trust, profit, and consideration, which they now enjoy, by too frail and uncertain a tenure. That they should have this feeling, I can easily understand; but how any one should call the avowal of it, open and manly, and fine-spirited, when there are such epithets as arrogant, and overbearing, and presumptuous, left in the language, I confess myself not at all to understand. After all, it appears, that the "CONSTITUTION," in whose name more atrocities have been committed than ever disgraced the cause of liberty, has been infringed solely by those who have drawn their swords and their pens in her behalf.

The Ministers, *according to their own confession*, have, in three out of five bills, assailed that "fair fabric" which, with every other word, they swear they come forward to protect. Lord Sidmouth owned the bill for restricting the liberty of the press, was, to a certain extent, an infringement of the spirit of the Constitution." The Lord Chancellor owned that the right of traversing was part of the old common law, and that his bill would change that practice. The Earl of Harrowby, to recommend the Seditious

Meetings' bill, said, " This measure did not come before the House, like another that had lately received the sanction of parliament (the Seizure of Arms' bill), as an invasion of the Constitution, and, therefore, &c."* Future times will be at a loss to believe, that men, pretending to be statesmen, should have talked thus. What! force down one bad measure, and then praise another measure, as not so nefarious as the one they before obliged parliament to adopt. And yet, after this, the great men talk of the lower orders, and of the trash and nonsense with which they delude their ignorant audience!!!

Some more candid of the ministerialists have been kind enough to own that the Seditious Meetings' bill is a partial sacrifice of English rights. I am, for my own part, at a loss to understand how, during the vigorous defence of our liberties which Mr. Tierney has made against these measures, that gentleman should have been induced to allow that he supposed there was a law to prevent training, and that if there was not a law there ought to be one. Can that country be said to be free where every man may not if he please train himself to the use of arms? So

* *Times*.—Saturday, Dec. 18, 1819.

far from training being against the law, every Englishman is supposed to know the use of arms, and how can he know the use but by the habit ?

Some modification has been obtained of the proposed arbitrary measures; and Lord Castlereagh, whom the collected wit, wisdom, and courage of the nation, assembled in parliament, could not force to abate an iota of his pretensions, has bowed down before Mr. Butterworth and the booksellers—and those who displease the powers that be twice, are not to be transported, but only banished for life!!*

The limiting ex-officio informations to eighteen months is hailed as a boon extorted by patriotism from power. To my humble

* Lord Castlereagh says, “ The most appropriate punishment that could be devised for offenders of this class was to separate and sever them from that society to whose religious and political institutions they found it impossible to reconcile their sentiments.” [*Cheers from the ministerial benches*].—*Times*, Dec. 23. That is, if a man cannot reconcile himself to Lord Castlereagh, he must be banished for life. The booksellers, pleased with their success, tried again—but no, [as Mr. Canning said in his reported speech] that will not do twice. Some other corporation should have tried, and though Sir James Mackintosh’s speech could scarcely gain a moment’s delay, the paper weavers might have been listened to.

judgment, this is the worst of symptoms. Better is it always to protest against the whole practice, than by modifications to establish the claim. It was one of the promises of the Revolution that ex-officio informations should be abolished; and Blackstone says that the application of them was only to such cases as made a "*moment's delay*" inexpedient. But we now throw up our caps, because his Majesty's attorney-general can keep a prosecution hanging over us only eighteen months, with the chance of a prosecution after all.

Thus it was that Mr. Fox's libel law was the subject of congratulation—but that law recognized a right to punish where the common law of the land recognized no right—and instead of passing such a law, the true duty of the legislature would have been to impeach Lord Mansfield, who attempted to pervert the free institutions of his country, by making the jury judge of fact only, and not of law. The proposition was made, I believe, by Mr. Tooke to Mr. Burke—but the Rockinghams had some private reasons, and Mr. Burke opposed the measure. No doubt can be entertained of the liberal intention of Mr. Fox any more than of Lord Holland in obtaining the above limitation of time; but I

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hope I may be pardoned for stating my opinion, that a protest against the whole practice is far better than any compromise.

Thus then it appears, that the Radical Reformers, whatever their intentions may have been, have *not* overturned the Constitution—that they have not loosened a single stone of the building. His Majesty's Ministers confess, that they have themselves “infringed” and “invaded,” (I use their own words, applied by themselves to their own deeds,) the spirit of the Constitution. And this they have done with the fairest professions, and the most unblushing contradiction of their own manifest intentions. Lord Castlereagh, in his opening speech on this session, repeatedly said, that he came forward as the protector of the rights and liberties of his countrymen; and that English freedom should not be assaulted by him. Even on the 4th of December, and in the Lords, where less deception has prevailed, the Earl of Liverpool said, “*He should be the last man to propose, or recommend, any additional restrictions on the Liberty of the Press; for he regarded it as one of the best securities of public freedom !*”*

Now this was said by Lord Liverpool, who knew, that *the imposition of a Censorship had*

* *Times*, Dec. 4.

*been seriously agitated in the Cabinet,** and who knew, that the most horrible alterations in the Libel law, and other restrictions on Publication, would be proposed, and carried through parliament, by himself.

The mischief is now done—but the warning may be useful to others—and even this glimmering beacon may serve to shew the rock on which we have sunk. Those who peruse the debates will at once be struck with the eagerness with which the “infringers” and “invaders” of the Constitution have quoted every precedent for their attack upon public liberty. This may teach the future guardians of a free land never to suffer any foreign threat or domestic disturbance to seduce them into the slightest infringement of public freedom for the specious pretext of what is called “strengthening the hands of government.” Many such sacrifices were unfortunately made, because thought necessary to keep the House of Hanover on the throne; and those very acts are now quoted and imitated by the men who, had they lived in those days, would, it is probable, have joined the rebel armies. The rebellions of 1715 and 1745

* Mr. Solicitor-General denied this; Lord Folkestone charged the Minister with it; Lord Castlereagh said not a word.

seem to them just in point, and fruitful in models already made to the hands of despotism. Yet even here Lord Castlereagh takes care to make a contrast between the vulgar advocates of popular rights and the loyal gentlemen who made “*a generous resistance to the House of Brunswick.*” On December 14, his Lordship said “*He certainly thought that it was a much more generous spirit of resistance to the laws which actuated the persons engaged in those rebellions than any thing which had influenced any proceedings out of which the present measures might have arisen.*” *

Be it recollected, that it is the minister to the great grandson of George II. who uses this language—an English minister in an English House of Commons, uses language which a vile serf, who had sucked in the love of slavery with his mother’s milk, would hardly venture to utter in the presence of men, the sons of freemen, themselves desiring to be free. One might think oneself listening to some breechless adventurer, the descendant of one of the ragged ruffians triumphant from the sack of the gin-shops of Derby, rather than to a British minister, the prop and bulwark of that throne, which the “generous resistance” above eulogized was raised to overthrow.—The noble

* *Times*, Dec. 15.

Lord seems resolved to imitate those whom he praises; but his "generous resistance" to our laws has been more successful than that of the traitors of forty-five.

I find in a proclamation of George II. about the time of the rebellion, that his Majesty talked of the doctrine of "*legitimacy*" as absurd, new, slavish—and subversive of all the principles of free government. It was against this opinion of the King of England that the *gentlemen* from the Highlands made their "generous resistance;" but, injured spirits of Culloden! manes of those unburied heroes who haunt Kennington Common! mourn no more—an avenger has arisen from your gibbeted bones—and the same walls which once rung with curses on your traitorous heads, now re-echo the praises of your pious enterprize.—A new æra opens on these isles—Your own Stuarts have, it is true, expired—the royal race has nothing more to fear from banishment or death; but rebellious patriotism has triumphed only over their mortal part—their lessons still live—their policy still sits upon the throne—and the children of the Revolution expiate the sins of their forefathers in ashes and in blood.

Newgate,
Dec. 24th, 1819.



The following Letter has been written and published with the same "breathless haste" as the bills are now passing through Parliament. The public will therefore condescend to pardon the composition, and regard only the motive of the writer.

A

L E T T E R,

&c.

MY LORD,

WE are at your feet—you have a compliant Parliament—you have, you take care to tell us, an orderly and obedient soldiery—you have an executive, composed of the basest professors of a profession more venal here than it ever was in Rome*—you have accomplices in all kinds and for every purpose—you see no one immediately about you, who is not ready to rush into servitude, and who does not use every effort to persuade you that he shares that inclination with all the honest, the peaceable, the pious of his fellow-countrymen; together with all those whose opinions are worth consulting, or whose interest any government should stoop to promote. The vast ecclesiastical establishment is all your own—you have more than a million of active

* “ *Nec quicquid publicæ mercis tam venale fuit quam perfidia advocatorum.*” They were bad times when Tacitus said this of the Roman bar.

men—officially interested in your authority: you have, besides, an undaunted courage, great experience of the past—no little reliance in the future—and other resources in your own bosom, which, if even you were left without such powerful coadjutors, would go no little way towards the accomplishment of a mighty project.

We are at your feet. The People of England—the AWFUL COMMONS,* who trampled upon the pride of an armed nobility—the English people—the destroyers of monarchs—the dethroners of tyranny—the conquerors who have planted the triumphant banners of liberty and civilization in every quarter of the globe—the People-King—unarmed—naked—stripped of all their power—surrendering all their privileges—are about to pass under the yoke—and those who still dare to lift an imploring voice in their behalf, hail with gratitude and wonder the unlooked for mercy that dooms them only to perpetual servitude, but spares them from an ignominious death.†

* A phrase from Lord Erskine, of whose word given in a late pamphlet, Lord Castlereagh has made an unhappy use, which Lord Erskine's present conduct shows he neither contemplated nor wished.

† Lord Castlereagh, speaking of a *stranger* addressing a meeting—"he did not propose to make it felony or death." Times, November 30, Commons' Debate.

That constitution, the pride and “riddle” of the modern world, which our fond vanity had taught us it would require at least as many ages to ruin as to raise, is about to fall at a single blow; and we see from your present power, that it is only your past forbearance, and not our importance, which has enabled us to enjoy so long the semblance of freedom.

Before, however, the irrevocable decree is gone forth, whilst my country still enjoys that blessing which has given her a name amongst the nations, let one who has loved liberty, not wisely perhaps, but, certainly, well; let him indulge, perhaps for the last time, in the peculiar privilege of Britons; and let the expiring voice of the free press of England be raised in behalf of that liberty, which never can be totally extinguished, but by her silence and her shame.

What additional honor—what more wealth—what higher importance—what influence unpossessed—what can your Lordship hope to attain by the total destruction of the liberties of your country? We bend the knee before your very valet*—to you we address what the defenceless savage of Mexico said to the in-

* On se mettoit à genoux dans les rues quand un valet espagnol passait.”—*Essai sur les Mœurs*, tom. vi. See the motto.

vulnerable invader :—“ *If thou art a god, here are men for thee, eat them ; if thou art a man, here is common food, and these slaves shall dress it for thee.*” Were your Lordship’s coadjutors as sanguinary as the companions of Cortez, the blood spilt at Manchester might, for the present, slake their thirst—and, as for our sustenance, it is theirs to the uttermost doight. What then do you want? You are all powerful—we own it. Be contented with the degradation that forces us to admit a truth so humiliating. We ask you only to forbear—you know you have the power ; for though you frighten others, you are not frightened yourself ; you are as perfectly aware as we are, that there is no probable event that can shake your present authority. One of your friends tells the Parliament, that is, tells your Lordship, “that you must take care
 “lest you should be wanting to the people ;
 “that your common country, assailed by the
 “firebrands and darts of an impious conspiracy, lifts to you her suppliant hands ;
 “that to you she commends herself—to you
 “the life of all her citizens—to you the bulwarks and capitol of the State—to you her
 “household altars—to you the churches and
 “chapels of her gods—to you the walls and
 “houses of her great city—” and, he adds,

“ moreover you are called upon to decide
 “ upon your own life—on the life of your
 “ wife—on the life of your children—on
 “ the fortunes of all—on your own estates
 “ —on your own fire-sides.”* The alarm is
 sounded from the pulpit and the bench,
 and is re-echoed from all the hollow hearts
 in every corner of the empire, until all our
 superfluous humours, all our English pas-
 sions are well purged off by this dramatic
 pity and terror. But you, my Lord, are not
 alarmed—you are not the dupe of your own
 fiction—you can have no fears whatever for
 your place—you know that you are secure of
 that for life, and may transmit it to the
 adopted child of your principles, to be en-
 joyed in all likelihood from generation to ge-
 neration.

I am as convinced as I am of my own exist-
 ence that your Lordship is not frightened at all.
*“ Rebellion! No. A rebellion cannot be made now
 as in former days: we have few great men now.”*†
 If Lord Russel felt the degeneracy of the age,
 surrounded as he was by the noble persons

* Such is the literal translation and plain English of the
 noble quotation with which Mr. Canning concluded his
 speech on the Address.—See *TIMES*, Nov. 24.

† Lord Russel at his trial. There is some doubt as to
 the precise words.

who, only five years afterwards, proved to the world that their martyred fellow patriot had undervalued their courage, what must be your Lordship's contempt for your own contemporaries? . No one has so low an opinion of you, as to think that the papers which have been laid before Parliament, and which have produced no other effect than amaze and indignation from every man of sense in the country: no one, I say my Lord, believes that the exaggerated detail of dangers which, if they ever existed, have passed away, can have had any influence with you. I thought, indeed, higher of your Lordship, than to suppose it possible you could quote such documents as your excuse; but there is not an Englishman who believes these documents to be any thing but an excuse. Lord Grenville* may tell parliament

* His Lordship has, for the second time of his life, erected an altar to an old Pagan God—to FEAR!!

" Had they, (the Manchester magistrates) said his Lordship, " refused to listen to the FEARS of the inhabitants on that day, his Lordship was not bold enough to " assert that any subsequent opportunity would have been " afforded for remedying the fatal mistake:" and just before, " it might be, and he, perhaps, thought it was, " in some degree questionable, whether the forbearance " of magistrates had not been too long! too patient! too " indulgent!!!" [hear] Again: " he had heard of many " instances of public ingratitude—history was full of ser-

that he thinks the evidence satisfactory, and applaud the Manchester Magistrates for slaughtering their fellow countrymen upon the persuasion which produced that evidence. God only knows the hearts of men; but it is not possible to believe Lord Grenville sincere—there are easier ways of solving his Lordship's declaration, and as for his applause of the massacre, he has received the answer of his defenceless fellow countrymen, through the mouth of Lord Grey. It was heard with horror and astonishment.*

Your Lordship has lived too long, and in
 “vices unrequited, but its extended page could not exhibit
 “an instance parallel to that which would have stained it,
 “had Parliament listened to the suggestions of those, who,
 “while the wicked disturbers escaped with implicit appro-
 “bation, would have compelled upright and honorable
 “men to defend that conduct which their duty command-
 “ed, and their honor exacted” [cheers from all sides].*
 Cheers from all sides!!! Good Heavens! of what men is
 this house composed!! Then if Ethelstone and Norris had
 cut their own throats, for not being thanked by Parlia-
 ment, their case would have been harder than Scipio's,
 and Lord Grenville would have inscribed *ingrata patria*
 upon the cross-roads. If great talents are thus abused, I
 thank God that has doomed me to mediocrity.

* “He now came to another part of the speech of his
 “noble friend, which he confessed he heard with astonish-
 “ment, and with a degree of pain, amounting almost to
 “horror. [hear, hear, hear!]. His noble friend was not

* Times, December 1, Lords' Debates.

scenes too turbulent, to be alarmed by the A, B, C depositions, every one of them contradicted by notorious facts. Could an anonymous letter terrify you, your Lordship had not slept these twenty years. Every one admits that the manner in which you handled the subject, shewed you were in perfect possession of your senses, and had not been at all stricken with that panic, which it has been your policy to spread throughout the kingdom. We cannot imagine, for a moment, that the politic wisdom of a Constable, a comment on the English law from a mercenary Magistrate, a letter from a Lord, detailing his terrors of flags unseen, and of what "rumour says," and of inscriptions "as seditious as usual:"* we cannot imagine that these have been real sources of terror to the man whose fame and

"only against inquiry, not only approved of the noble Secretary of State's letter, but had gone so far as to express his opinion that the magistrates of Manchester had deserved, what he called, authoritative approbation. He (Lord Grey) sincerely believed his noble friend was the only man in the house, was the only man in the country, that approached to such an opinion."†

* The Lord says, talking of some meeting near Wigan, "One of the *seditious meetings* the nature of which I need not describe, was held at the requisition of some low persons;" [the Lord has taken a leaf from Mrs. Slip-slop about *high* persons and *low* persons;] "but they

† Times, December 1.

whose fortunes grew out of one of the most sanguinary domestic conflicts recorded in history.

Indeed, so little could your Lordship be alarmed; so little yourself persuaded of the reality of that which was to furnish the present pretext for your interposition, that you did not think it worth while to inform yourself of the sort of argument which it was resolved by some of your coadjutors to adopt; and so determined were you to shew us that naked power which you know, and we see that you possess, that you were not aware, or forgot, or did not think it worth while to tell, that the Manchester Magistrates had ordered the Manchester Massacre.—You felt like Cæsar, that it was easier to do some things than to defend them.

were joined on the common by the dangerous rabble of “Bolton, who were all armed with bludgeons, and RUMOUR “SAYS with arms!!” Rumour is the only talker who now *says* any thing that is listened to.

My Lord proceeds: “The mob carried eighteen flags “with the usual symbols of sedition!!” The Lord does not know what sedition is; and yet his letter is actually given amongst the papers—although it ends thus: “In this position the magistrates rested, having determined that as the meeting of Parliament was so near, “they would pay no attention to the flags or their leaders, “and the day passed away with the greatest order and tranquillity.”*

* See Parliamentary Paper signed ———.

The lawyers about you have indeed shewn signs of alarm and confusion; but they are novices—they are but half-fledged apostates. Nothing but great terror, operating upon the novelty of his situation, could have induced an English Solicitor-General to ascribe at first *all* the disorders of the country, and, when he was laughed at, a *great part* of the disorders, to the verdict of an English jury.* I am sure your Lordship had not given the lawyer orders to tell so much of your plan at once; and the perturbation which must have caused such a disclosure cannot be imputed to you.

You are not afraid that a people, seventy thousand of whom were driven like sheep before forty flurried yeomen, should push you from your stool, surrounded as you are by a more tremendous power than ever hedged in the majesty of an English king. You have not mistaken the explosion of a retort for the firing of radical platoons. †

Your Lordship knows that we have no

* See in Debate, Dec. 3, Times—what His Majesty's Solicitor-General attributes to Mr. Hone. This sage opinion was re-echoed by a gentleman who asked, who would expect any thing *good* (that is, a court conviction) from a Middlesex Jury? And yet they leave the Manchester inquiry to a Jury when it suits their turn!!!

† See TIMES, Dec. 10. Sir M. W. Ridley's speech.

arms,—and that all our speeches, all our resolutions, are so much idle wind, so much waste paper, which must

“ Descend

“ To pastrycooks and moths, and there’s an end.”

The writing upon the wall, which, by some strange omission, has not been included in the causes of alarm, is not believed to be traced by a divine hand; nor has your Lordship yet quoted the chalk inscriptions, which tell us that the kingdom is passed away from your royal master. We have no arms; and the fear of honey-combed cannons must be confined to the prudent Secretary, who saw them in his fancy “laying about” in various holes and corners of the United Kingdom. Incautious age, that heard of the fortifications of Commodore Trunnion, and the leather ordnance of Corporal Trim, without a suspicion of meditated insurrection.

Your Lordship is not the dupe of the sophistry which pretends to see more danger in the quiet of the People than in their tumults;*

* The “Country Club” in St. James’s Street say, that the fact of the intended meeting at Manchester of the 13th December not taking place, is the most terrific of all circumstances—it shews the people obey leaders. Then they have stories of the Radicals carrying about bits of cracked china. If a traitor meets a man, whom he suspects from his look to be engaged in subverting the constitution, he

and which deduces the worst motives from the best conduct. This line of argument is a little too insulting, and should not have been hazarded until you had given the word, and that rope which the Solicitor-General holds at one end, and the Chancellor at the other, had been finally straightened. If when the people are peaceable, their silence is pronounced terrifying; if, when they are not peaceable, they are to be massacred without any regard to number, or age, or sex, in the execution of the law:* let me ask your Lordship's lawyers at what period it is, and under what particular aspect that the People

pulls out his bit of china;—the other, if one of the initiated, extracts his symbol. If the fragments tally, the Radicals fall to work immediately upon Church and State; if the bits do not fit, the traitor turns upon his heel.—The "Country Club" do not think it worth while to explain how it happens that most men walk about with a cargo of crockery. One might have thought, that the circumstance of having a bit of this ware about one, would be quite enough to bespeak a conspirator. But no! the Radicals are such sly fellows, they will not say a word, unless the bits fit.—Query, how many exact *fits* can be produced from a broken tea-cup? Those low people, who do not frequent St. James's Street, will hardly have faith enough for this fact—but true it is.

* His Lordship said, that the number of people assembled could not be taken into consideration in the execution of a warrant.—*Debate on Address.*

cease to be the cause of terror and the object of punishment. I have not, perhaps, read as much history as your Lordship's lawyers; but I will venture to say, that the annals of no country furnish maxims so atrocious, so bloody, so insulting to the governed, so totally opposed to every principle of common humanity and common sense. But I know that your Lordship is terrified neither by the silence nor by the clamour of the People. A peaceable meeting frightens you as little as a tumultuous meeting. You leave it to some one or two of your colleagues to be scared by the sight of a flag as much as by the sound of a fiddlestick; and you have not the least apprehension of their tranquil demeanor any more than of their suspected intentions: although there are daily proofs of the former which must be therefore more alarming than that of which there is no evidence whatever.*

* In order to increase the terror, new horrors are brought nightly to one or both Houses of Parliament. The Earl of Strathmore, when the Peers are rising to retire, will not let them separate without telling them that he has had fresh accounts of *disturbances in the North*; and he calls upon His Grace of Northumberland to say if he has heard nothing. The Duke assures the House, that although he should not have obtruded himself unless called upon, yet he must say "the statement of the Noble Earl was not only strictly correct, but rather short of the real fact. (A new definition of strict correctness! !) By

But if your Lordship, who is in the secret of the plot, must be still less alarmed than we who are not in the secret, I may also presume to say, (and appeal to the conviction of any

"a return which had been made to him, upon the accuracy of which he could rely, the number associated in the several collieries amounted to 16,600. He understood that all these had arms."†—Yes, my Lord Duke, and legs too, unless they were lopped off in the Manchester Massacre.

Baron Redesdale confirms this: though he should not have said any thing about it, if the Earl had not stopped the House; and the Earl of Strathmore then stated "that two magistrates had been driven from their homes, and that he was therefore himself at once going home: he would be found at his post in the hour of alarm." In this way are we treated: when the Reformers can make no stir above ground, they descend into the mines, and a worse than Dalecarlian conspiracy is hatching in the bowels of the earth. The Duke has heard a Reformer whisper—

Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.

The very specific list,—the odd number,—the 16,000 and six hundred, *accurately reported* to be associated, and *understood* to be armed, does not look at all a fiction. Oh, no:—and as for the whole story being contradicted by Mr. Lambton and Sir M. W. Ridley, who live on the spot, what does that signify? they are only opposition men. Then the Duke has got a list of 100,000 men in arms in those counties where there are only 400 and odd thousand men, women, and children in all. Then comes an arrest for high-treason!!! Then comes a contradiction of both!

† Times, Dec. 4, Lords' Debates.

man of common sense,) that the alarm respecting your religion can hardly be so seducing a pretext even as the fear for the loss of your power.

Who can believe the tender solicitude for the interests of religion, and the abhorrence of what is called blasphemy, now almost universally expressed, to be any thing else than an hypocritical, and, I will venture to call it, an impious farce?

The affectation is too glaring, the hypocrisy too gross, the artifice too immoral, too unjust in its effect, to be tolerated by any honest man. The judges on the Bench, the lawyers at the bar; nay, the Lords with the lawn sleeves, and their clergy, well enough know, that such is the tone and tenour of the times, that, except perhaps, since hypocrisy has become the fashion, their presence, so far from checking, not unfrequently encourages that sort of transgression which is now decried as the grossest and most abominable of all outrages on society, and the prevalence of which is now quoted as the pretext for the destruction of liberty.

At this moment, I find a learned serjeant, in the Court of Common Pleas, only on Wednesday last, designating the ministry of the gospel by the following phrase: the de-

fendant, he said, "*was at present carrying on business for himself as minister or preacher to a congregation of Baptists.*" *—But, I do not find, that the Lord Chief Justice told Mr. Serjeant Pell, that the teaching of any denomination of Christians, is not the carrying on a business; and, that no place set apart for religious worship, can, without irreverence, be called a shop. Had Mr. Carlile said this, it would have been called a vulgar, offensive, impious pleasantry; and, I quote it to convey, by an example, what I mean by charging the higher orders with that irreverence for sacred subjects, which they charge on others.

I will not say, that the Reformers have more religion than your Lordship; for, I should be loth to hint at even a comparative deficiency in any man, especially in any public man, respecting a subject where it is as easy to make the charge, as it is difficult to refute the accusation. But thus much, at least, I may presume to advance, that, if the most odious hypocrisy, if uncharitableness, if evil speaking, if persecution be discouraged by the Christian religion, it is amongst the opponents of the Reformers that we are to seek for the enemies of the faith. Your

* See Law Report, *Curling v. Buck*.—*Statesman Newspaper*.

Lordship, indeed, according to all the honest rules by which Statesmen are as notoriously governed, as they notoriously decry them, was perhaps allowed to make what is vulgarly called a *hit* of the trial, and conviction of Mr. Carlile. Up to the period of that trial, the *hits* had been all on the other side. The blunder at Manchester, the blunder of dismissing Lord Fitzwilliam, had done something for the rhetorical topics of your opponents. Not that your power was a whit the less; but our common places had been swelled; we had more reason to urge our complaint, although without more ability to procure our redress.

Of the conduct of Mr. Carlile, your Lordship and I entertain, I think I may safely assert, exactly the same opinion; but, as you have made every use of that conduct, by connecting it with principles with which it has no connexion whatever, and by diverting the public attention from the unpunished crime of many, to the conviction of one; it is but fair, that I should, in my turn, attempt to recall you to the original question; and, in place of the punished offence of an individual, who may, for ought we know, think himself a martyr, set before your eyes and those of the public, the base, the ungenerous, the

stupid, the insolent hypocrisy of that immense mass of your Lordship's coadjutors or dupes, who affect to tremble for their own faith, and for the general interests of religion. Were the zealots of Atheism triumphant, were the pulpits and the professors of Christianity consuming in the flames formerly lighted for incredulity, were the ferocity of superstition transferred to scepticism, and that enormous power which your Lordship wields, handed over to the miserable captive, who alone, of all the nation, dared to preach what nobody would hear—even in that altered case, it would be impossible to raise a more lamentable cry of anticipated extinction, than that which is now lifted up by all the triumphant sons of the church militant: that church, whose fears were but lately aroused by those who believe more, but are now excited against those who believe less than themselves.

It would be very well if your Lordship's Colleague, who has no other idea of liberty, than that which he can enjoy under a pious king,* were to pretend that he was alarmed, lest a two-penny pamphlet should sap the foundation of his faith: but neither you, my Lord, nor the generality of those who have raised the cry

* *Libertas sub rege pio*, Lord Sidmouth's motto. Claudian had an excuse.

against impiety, are in any alarm lest the time should come, when you and your countrymen should, at the dagger's point, be forced to believe less than you like. All of you are in the habit of chuckling over the sly comments of Bayle, the dangerous researches of Middleton, the well poised positions of Hume, and the historical analysis of Gibbon. The maxim, that permits a man to keep a poison in his closet, but not to vend it, may serve to hang the vender of any thing determined by our law to be poison; but it does not serve to justify the affected and intolerant outcry against the thing itself, of which daily draughts are, for ought we know, taken in many a private house. As you have the naked power to make us submit to what you please, it is unaccountable why you should, for the sake of a pretext, which deceives nobody, and insults us all, encourage the most barefaced and impudent, as well as superfluous and ridiculous hypocrisy that ever prevailed in the educated classes of a modern nation. Your hypocrites may ask, in what society the man can have lived, who shall dare to make such an assertion. They will add to their hypocrisy, and refute me by the positive denial of that which they know to be true. The pretended alarm for religion is the alarm of men for

the most part without any of the faith, without any of the morality of religion—an alarm which the daily language and practice of their lives show they never have really felt, they never can really feel.

Religion cannot teach—it cannot tolerate such hypocrisy: no principle of justice, or of morality, not the much-loved expediency of politicians: no promptings of that discretion, which one who had some repute in his day * called a fiend, but which is the fairest of all goddesses to the eyes of modern statesmen—no prudence can on any occasion justify such base and ignoble dissimulation—far less when this odious seeming is to be the basis of persecution. If your Lordship's intention be solely to degrade your countrymen, and by accustoming them to the practice of the meanest of all vices to qualify them more completely for slaves, I repeat that we are as weak, as totally unnerved, as impotent for all practical resistance, as despotism can desire. We are emasculated to the marrow—you have nothing whatever to dread from us—you need employ no pretext—why then wear a mask which must embarrass your utterance and check your free respiration at the same time

* “*The fiend discretion.*”—Sir W. JONES, in his well-known Ode.

that it mocks and insults those who would prefer, for they must bear, the naked features of tyranny.

Let me intreat you then to lay by "*the torrent of blasphemy*," * and other approved phrases of that sort, in your rhetorical drawer; for I must do your Lordship the justice to say that they spoil the effect of your political portrait as much as an awkward label projecting from the mouth of a hero in caricature.

You cannot fear for your power—you cannot fear for your religion—what then can be the motive for your resolution to deprive us of that semblance of freedom which we admit you can at any time suspend—but which we would not abandon at once without asking for some plausible pretext?

I find your Lordship says that you intend to take away our public meetings as the only alternative which can prevent you from establishing a military despotism. †

The dislike of a military despotism by the abettors of the Manchester massacre is another topic in which I again assure your Lordship it was superfluous to indulge. This might

* His Lordship's phrase is "*torrent of crime and seductive reasoning*." See TIMES, November 30, Debate. What makes this reasoning so seductive? 'Tis all assumption from beginning to end: where is this reasoning, where is this seduction?

† See the Speech as given in the Chronicle.

have been spared us at least—but it is a part of the deception—the extraordinary, the insulting deception—by which the power of the sword and of violence is to be established in the name of peace and law—the constitution pulled down solely to protect the constitution, and the first principles of religion and humanity violated for the glory of God and the happiness of mankind.

Your Lordship must know that it is only by the military despotism not *to be* established, but *already* established, that you could or can put down our public meetings; a right which we won by the sword, and which the sword only could take away. Your Acts of Parliament—if not backed by the countersign of the Commander-in-Chief, would not, you well know, have any currency beyond the bar of your house; and if you thought your bayonets insufficient to keep us down, you were perfectly right to provide another ten thousand at as cheap a rate as you could procure such indispensable engines—but you need not have taunted our nerveless impotence by talking of your dislike of a military despotism.

I see that your colleagues have started still more singular paradoxes. Amongst other samples of their sportive cruelty they say—God forbid they should infringe a tittle of the Bill of Rights—God forbid they should

violate the sacred privilege of Britons, which enables them to meet and discuss their grievances—no—it is to allow them to meet *—it is to encourage and give free scope to their discussions, that they now gently regulate the manner, moderately abridge the opportunities, and cautiously diminish the numbers of public meetings. If they disarm the nation, it is that the clause in the Bill of Rights, which grants arms for defence, should be carried into full effect: † My Lord Chancellor ‡ has told us that “*so far as he is concerned no subject should ever be deprived of his rights.*” He trusted that their Lordships would excuse the warmth with which he spoke: it was the warmth not of the man but of the subject. We may say with poor Lydia Languish, “Pshaw! what signifies kneeling, when you know I *must* have you?” But if his Lordship thinks he may be warm when he is only in jest—I hope

* See TIMES, November 30. Lord Liverpool said this, in effect, as also that the system proposed was not coercion but protection. Lord Sidmouth said, that the seditious meetings’ bill gave “that right by law which the nation enjoyed before only by practice.” See TIMES, Saturday, Dec. 18.—Good my Lord, leave us our practice, and keep your law to yourself.

† See TIMES, Lords’ Debates. Lord Holland’s Speech exposed this.

‡ TIMES of December 3, 1819. Speech in the Lords.

he will excuse us for being a little warm, who are quite in wretched earnest. The same day that your Lord Chancellor was so warm for fear some one of his fellow subjects might, whilst he held the seals, be deprived of his rights—your Solicitor-General declared himself “*a warm friend to the liberty of the press—he considered the liberty of the press and the trial by jury to be the two main pillars of the constitution, and would be therefore the last person in the world to support any measure tending to weaken either.*” * I believe your Solicitor-General to be just as warm a friend to the liberty of the press as is your Chancellor to the rights of the subject—and your Lordship knows them to the full as sincere in their professions as your Lordship is in your detestation of military despotism. Indeed Mr. Solicitor seems to have laid much such a hold on his two pillars as Sampson did on those of the temple of Dagon—he grasped them the firmer only to pull them down the easier. Before he finished his speech he had given a stout tug at trial by jury †—and as to his warm friendship for the liberty of the

* *Times*, December 5. Commons’ Debate.

† “If he was asked what was the cause of this so great and so unexampled an evil, he would say that he could not develop the whole cause. He would say, however, that the acquittal of Howe had partly occasioned it.” *Times*, December 3, Commons’ Debates.

press, Mr. Solicitor and your Lordship know very well what you are about—nor have you deceived any body—one of our most cautious public journalists, and who rather follows than leads opinion, has pronounced the conviction of the country on the proposed measure, which is neither more nor less in its effect than a previous censorship on the political press.*

My Lord Sidmouth has not thought it necessary to act his part in the masquerade—he has candidly admitted, that with regard to the bill on the subject of the press, there was to a certain extent a violation of principle.† The Earl of Liverpool has used no concealment—he has told us that we are not fit for that liberty which we enjoyed two hundred years ago—and that the legal machine which was powerful enough for the population of that period requires more screws and stronger braces, now that our numbers are so much increased.‡ Candid confession!—so

* *Times*, Dec. 2.—Leading article.—The cruelties and injustice of the proposed libel law would disgrace the code of Algiers.

† *Times*, Dec. 3.—Lord Holland's speech.

‡ "Those who considered the increase of the population must feel with him that the legal machinery which two hundred years ago might have answered every purpose; could not, *prima facie*, be calculated for the present state of things." *Times*, Dec. 1.—Then Sir William

then Sir Francis Burdett has not been quite so mistaken in describing the days of Elizabeth—the times of two hundred years ago, as the flourishing era of British freedom—the period when statesmen could afford to employ “*a legal machine*” comparatively weak and insignificant—at least he has the sanction of the Earl of Liverpool. Lord Grenville also tells us, what to be sure it is strange assurance to deny, that we are resigning some portion of our freedom—but then—comfortable suggestion!—happy bargain! we resign what we lose only that we may secure what we retain. The fact seems tolerably known and avowed in the House of Lords—why then does your Lordship reserve all the farce for the Commons?—Why did you think it worth while to say that you had no design whatever upon British privileges—The searching for arms—the breaking into a man’s house by night—the cutting the people to pieces if ten thousand and one persons allow a stranger to talk to them for more than a quarter of an hour—the total alteration of the libel law—

Jones, who said that a club was but a small nation, and a nation a large club, and that the good laws and principles which governed the smaller must regulate the larger society, was a blockhead, and Lord Liverpool is, *prima facie*! a very great man.

the immediate transfer of a political culprit to a tribunal at forty miles distance, filled perhaps by his local enemies, and heated with temporary passions, (a direct infraction, as Mr. Solicitor-General did condescend to own, of the common law of the land) *—all these meditated changes, and particularly the Sedi-

* The Minister, Lord Liverpool, agreed the measure was an innovation, in one part of his speech—in another he said he was grievously mistaken, if the ancient law was not favorable to the principle of the measure.†

‡ The Lord Chancellor, instead of saying that the law of imparlance is a part of the common law, professes that he breaks through that practice in order to restore the common law. *In introducing this bill he believed he was correcting an erroneous practice which had grown up contrary to the ancient practice.*‡ His Lordship went to the reign of James the Second for a time when our practice was not so erroneous. The seven Bishops were forced to plead immediately—he might have added, that Lord Russell, in a charge of more than misdemeanor, was forced to *plead immediately*, and that that was probably one of the reasons which made the first parliament in King William's reign call his death a murder. Lord Erskine has stated the fact—there is no doubt on the subject. The Lord Chancellor objects to delay in the course of common law; but in chancery, the delays of which are the cause of more human suffering than any other single grievance that can be named, his Lordship reconciles himself to any delay.

† *Times*, Dec. 4... Lord Holland exposed all their inconsistencies.

‡ *Times*, Dec. 4... Lord's Debates.

tious Meetings Bill, are a mere trifle—no change at all—to say it is a change, and that it has such *fearful qualities*, is only a *misrepresentation made by Mr. Brougham!* to which your Lordship is eager to reply.*

My Lord, we have lost our ancient liberty, but have not lost our understanding—most of our courage is gone, but not all our senses. We are not totally brutified by our degradation. It is superfluous to talk to us thus. The Romans continued to think as patriots more than a century after they had ceased to be free—and it will be many years before the English shall have lost all distinct conception of those principles, the practice of which secured to them for ages so much envied happiness and such unrivalled renown.

I know that when a People have recently lost their liberties, their change of condition begets also a change in the application of their language—durable servitude is called established order—whatever tends to tighten the chain is recommended as a wholesome regulation—a sacrifice of a little good for the sake of a greater benefit—as a necessary curb upon the licentiousness natural to man—whilst the appellations of anarchy, confusion,

* *Times*, Dec. 1.—Commons' Debate — Lord Castlereagh's speech.

disorder, tumult, rebellion, designate every attempt to recover the liberties of the subject. This may appear revolutionary language—but it is not mine, it is Montesquieu's.*

Not that your Lordship is deceived as to the true nature of the measures which you propose. It cannot be: you know very well, that if they pass, we shall lose the shadow of that freedom, the substance of which we have some time ceased to enjoy: you know very well, that if the Bills pass, "*there will then be a suspension of all the liberties of all the People of England.*"† This fact, which your Lordship knows as well as the writer from whom I quote the words, is clearly seen by every one who has not, by his fears or for his interests, made himself the accomplice of your intentions. I will add a word to the above definition, and place "*permanent*" before the "suspension." You do not play with us here: no, no; your friends tell us, the suspension is to be permanent. Temporary measures have been tried before: the Ministers were too remiss and too lenient; they will correct their mistake;—what was local, they must make general, or the Solicitor-General would not be discharging his

* *Grandeur et Decadence des Romains*,

† *Times*. Dec. 3. Leading article.

duty; "what was *severe* and *temporary*, must now be *moderate* and *permanent*;"* so that the definition must now run thus, "*a permanent suspension of all the liberties of all the People of England.*" †

This does not come from a Radical Reformer; it comes from those who are very far from approving of any thing done by any Radical Reformer, and who would turn that sort of character adrift on the same plank with your Lordship, to sink or swim. And I quote it to show your Lordship, that it is no use to pretend any longer, that you are not quite aware of the effects of your measures.

It would be presumptuous in me, after the complete exposure of these effects, by the friends of freedom in parliament and out of parliament, to attempt to add to a conviction already so general. It would, moreover, be equally idle, certain as I am that your Lordship needs no instructor—no prompter to

* His Speech.—*Times*, December 3.

† Since writing the above, Lord Castlereagh has, against his better judgment, he says, given up the permanence of one bill, and made it last only five years—*grande mortalis ævi spatium*!!—The new law will then be made the old law, and to oppose the new law will be innovation. If tranquillity ensues it will be attributed to the bills—if disorder results it will be advised to try harder measures.

remind you of your own intentions. What I would press upon your Lordship is, that you gain nothing by stripping us of every remnant of our freedom: you are our master already; can you have a better proof of it than that your propositions, which in other times would have stirred the very stones to rise in mutiny, have not excited a single popular movement? * That people, which a few years ago sent forth a million of signatures to save a sixpenny license, † have not, that I have heard, moved a finger for their own protection, although their danger has been proclaimed by all their friends.

Again I ask your Lordship, what can you expect to gain by our total and confessed humiliation? The soldiers have cut the people to pieces—you have shewn the ancient nobility of the land, that you care as little for them, as you do for the meanest of the rabble. All this has been done with impunity, nay more, instead of our complaining of you in any way in which a people can make their complaint worth listening to, it is you that have arraigned, and are now proposing to punish us. You cannot make out the shadow

* A public meeting has since been summoned for Westminster, and also for the Borough of Southwark.

† When the Dissenters petitioned Parliament against Lord Sidmouth's Bill.

of a cause for this punishment, you do not take the trouble from the sixteenth of August to the meeting of Parliament, even to inquire what has been the conduct of those whose conduct you have approved: you one day say one thing, and the next correct your statement. You use language quite new in your Lordship's mouth; you are angry, and you are pathetic, and you are pious—not a soul laughs in all the House; the nation looks on as if the game concerned them not. Your coadjutors contradict each other—contradict themselves—contradict you. They can make out no case whatever against us. One says our crime was committed before the 16th of August; Mr. Solicitor-General dates the mischief back twenty-five years.* My Lord Grenville goes back before the French Revolution.† Your Lordship says, that up to the

* “Temporary bills had been passed every three or four years, to check the mischief which had arisen from these tumultuous meetings; and yet, during the whole of the last twenty-five years, it had continued to exist with little interruption;” ‡ and, he might have added, without any mischief.

† See his Lordship's Speech in the *Times*, December 1. After talking of the French system of disorganization, he says: “How long this system had been closely pursued

‡ *TIMES*, Commons' Debates, December 3.—At last the Ministers do not condescend to debate the bills at all. See *TIMES*. Col. Davies's Speech, on Tuesday, Dec. 21.

moment Mr. Hunt came upon the field, we had committed no crime.* The Manchester magistrates, who had looked into the law, also said that such meetings were no crime,† for

“ here, its long standing, and the height it had attained, “ he would not attempt to describe.” He then charmed the House with a lament over the detestable manner in which the foundations of government had been sapped in France, a topic also indulged in by Mr. Solicitor-General. What! at this day—to sigh for that ancient regime of wooden shoes and bastiles, which all English statesmen, from the days of Louis XIV., have been accustomed to deride, by every insulting taunt!! And have the French gained nothing by their revolution? The most improving government in Europe is worth something. But the ridiculous arrogance of declaiming in the face of facts, is peculiar to great, solemn, English politicians. His Lordship expressed “ his deep regret, that our established “ system, &c. could not be continued in its first freedom “ without the most imminent danger.”—[Cheers from the ministerial benches.] If this is not plain enough, what are words worth?

* Lord Castlereagh’s Speech on “The Address.”

† “ As the law now stands, we cannot interfere with “ these meetings, notwithstanding our decided conviction “ of their mischief and danger. We are anxious to do “ every thing in our power to preserve the peace of the “ country; but, upon the most important point, we are “ unarmed.”—Paper, dated July 1, signed by the magistrates, Silvester, Ethelston, Norris, &c. The important point in which they knew they were unarmed was the law. The first inquiry in parliament would have been, who armed you? who told you to run the risk?

that the law did not enable them to prevent these meetings. How Mr. Hunt's arrival altered the question, or who had taught them other law between the first of July and the 16th of August it is useless to inquire.* One of your lawyers pronounces an expressed wish for annual parliaments and universal suffrage to be high-treason: another says it ought to be so—another would willingly make it so—one brother statesman founds his complaint upon the tumult of these assemblies—another upon their tranquillity—one is afraid of the government falling into the hands of an ignorant disorderly populace—a third thinks that the most dangerous portent of the times is, the intelligence of the people: the skill with which they draw up their re-

* To such a wonderful height has assertion gone, that Lord Castlereagh, in his speech on the address said, the meeting was *universally admitted to be illegal*. There is not a shadow of illegality in it; nor does this universality go beyond the Treasury bench. His story about the two cart-loads of stones collected the morning after the massacre, was furnished him by one who told his Lordship a gross and abominable falsehood. But how can Lord Castlereagh learn facts if he thinks there "*is no more certain means of committing man against man, party against party, and inflaming whatever of animosity is already excited—than such an investigation?*" *

* TIMES, Dec. 10.—COMMONS' DEBATES.

solutions: the organization which characterises their meetings: the nice discrimination with which they know how to keep within the letter of the law. This Member of Parliament declares upon his honor as a gentleman, and his credibility as a lawyer, that he *knows for certain* that the Reformers want nothing but Revolution—as God shall judge me, I am no less certain that the man says the thing which is not; but no matter for that: another gentleman of your honorable house would not be terrified by mere reform of parliament, but he cannot abide the subversion of all religion, which he *knows* to be the intention of the Reformers. In short, no two people agree in the accusation against us. There is no specific crime—no positive charge—we know we are slandered—we know we are accused of offences of which the accusers and not ourselves are guilty—we hear ourselves condemned in mass as infidels by men who have never been to church since they left school—as revolutionists and breakers of the law by apostate lawyers who have but just renounced our principles, and who long encouraged our practice: we are told that we have drawn the sword,* whilst the wounds

* See Times, Solicitor-General's speech, December 3rd.

" But how were ministers to conciliate these Reformers

of four hundred of our naked fellow-creatures, of all ages and sexes are yet green; * we offer to speak a word in our behalf, and

"who were drawing the sword against them,—it would be weakness to attempt it." [Cheers from the ministerial benches.]

* The Manchester Committee have already relieved three hundred persons, and have a list amounting to four hundred and ten wounded and grievously injured. Those who suffered from sabre wounds amounting to *eighty-four* individuals, (Lord Sidmouth in the debate said *not one* had been cut by a yeomanry man) are by no means such lamentable objects, as those who were pressed under heaps of fugitives, and received internal injuries. All the avenues to St. Peter's field, except one, *were* blockaded, notwithstanding the assertions made in parliament.—The 88th regiment bayoneted several persons endeavouring to escape through those passages said to be left open:—one woman was sabred nearly a mile from the place of meeting.—I learn through a most respectable Manchester gentleman, himself attached to the magistracy, and acting as one of the special constables on the 16th of August, that he is sure he saw *two thousand!!!* down on the ground at once when the charge was made.—^{*}Ashworth, the special constable, was killed close to this gentleman—but not as Lord Sidmouth said, by the mob—no—he was ridden over by the Yeomanry. More than a hundred most respectable witnesses might be brought—but what is the good to offer any proof? the tyranny is resolved upon.—As for the evidence on the other side, it contradicts itself. The Rev. Mr. Hay, in his letter giving an account of the dispersion of the meeting, says, that "*Nadin preceded the cavalry to serve the warrant on Hunt and others,*" &c. The "*Reverend Gentleman*" knows that it ought to have

to deny, in detail, every precise imputation, and the tribunal receives us with a laugh.*

And yet we bear all this; we must bear it; and the man who should, under such circumstances, endeavour to inflame us into resistance, must be a treacherous, sanguinary villain, or a rash and desperate fool.

One of your Lordship's eulogists in the *Courier* has done this more than once, and has taunted us with cowardice, because the sheep did not rush in a flock to the slaughter-house, and be butchered in mass.

But that we do bear it, because we must bear it, ought to satisfy your Lordship that you have nothing to apprehend from us, and

been so: but Nadin himself *swears* on the inquest of Lees that he *followed* the cavalry, and got there *almost as soon as they did*. He adds, that he could not get his constables back from out of the crowd, *although he tried*, before the cavalry charged.—To say nothing of the Reverend's assertion—the remaining clause proves the premeditated slaughter.

* See Times of November 30. Mr. Hunt's petition.—
“Mr. Alderman Wood said, he meant to present a petition, “which was couched in very respectful terms, complaining “of the conduct of the Manchester magistrates, of the “grand juries, and more particularly and strongly of his “Majesty's ministers.” [laughter].

He offered to prove the papers before the house all false, by various witnesses of fortune and character, “not reformers.” Some cried out, no! no! when the question for printing the petition was put.

that it would be more generous, more profitable, more glorious; to leave us as we are. It will be more generous to use your authority with moderation, and, knowing yourself to be omnipotent, permit us occasionally to fancy that we are free, and to have recourse to the usages, and indulge in the habits of our better days. It will be more profitable to exercise dominion over a nation not formally as well as substantially enslaved; and it will be more glorious to govern a people, adorned with some vestiges of their ancient dignity, than stripped of every ornament that distinguishes a free man from a slave.

Your Lordship says, “ *I feel no wrath against the People, I am only doing my duty,*” words which I have read before; * and [without meaning to make a scurvy comparison] found in the mouth of that gentle law-officer, the common hangman. “ *I hope your Lordship forgives me,*” said the executioner, kneeling before a condemned nobleman in the civil wars—“ *I am only doing my duty.*” I do not believe that your Lordship does feel any wrath against the People, any more than Brasidas did against the mouse that bit him. But he did not crush the wretched little

* Times, December 4th, Commons’ Debates.

animal ; he let it escape with a saying which I dare say your Lordship recollects. Let us escape. My Lord, we can do you no serious hurt ; we can only nibble at your measures. Think for a moment of what you deprive yourself and your colleagues by this unrelenting severity. Your Solicitor-General hints to us, that if the seditious meetings' bill be passed, we shall have no more suspension of the Habeas Corpus.* What will you and yours do without the amusement of writing circular letters—of patching up green bags—of framing treason trials—indemnity bills,—without any parliamentary pleasantries. It will be but flat dull work indeed, when all semblance of spirit shall be lost amongst the people ; when you shall lose all apparent object of contention, and the whole of your House of Commons' duty shall be reduced to an official, formal detail of your edicts, and a simple demand for an immediate registry of them. You will find yourself in the same condition as Tiberius, who having completely obliterated the last forms of freedom, was angry and disgusted to find that he reigned over a dull, dejected, inert mass of population—over a senate, whose few good men thought all struggle would be useless to the public and

* Times, Dec. 3, Commons' Debate.

fatal to themselves,* and whose prostitute members annoyed him by fulsome adulation, and by the base, though ingenious expedients of rival servility. The proposition of Mr. Charles Wynne may have given you a fore-taste of what your Lordship will have to endure.†

Leave us our unshackled press. If Lord—Chatham allowed that chartered libertine to be free as air—what can you, so much greater a man—so firmly seated in that place where he preserved with difficulty a short and precarious power—what can you have to fear? There is no deficiency in the present law of libel—a law, by the way, unknown to the common law,‡ and which is of Star Chamber

* Tacit, Agricola.

† Mr. Wynne wished to make the restrictions of the Seditious Meetings' Bill even more severe than Lord Castlereagh. A man who has time might make out a list of obligations which the People of England owe to the Grenville family and friends. Begin with the author of the stamp act, and end, for the present, with the pitiful precedent poacher, that would be Speaker to-morrow, if he could find a single man in the House to prefer him to Mr. Manners Sutton; who, although his warrant has sent me to prison for nothing, and without a hearing, is, I must allow, "a gentle provost."

‡ As now applied it is no law, it is only practice—cruel, nefarious, and every way disgraceful to a country pretending to be free—what will it be when the bills pass?

origin. A jury will always do their duty; for if a jury will not give a verdict according to law, then your new Acts of Parliament will be of no avail, and your next attack must follow up Mr. Solicitor-General's attack; I mean, must abolish trial by jury. Impiety and sedition will not flourish under the present system. Those of whom juries are composed are more pious, are more frightened than your Lordship. Nothing but severe statutes are likely to induce them to give a verdict against law; and Mr. George Lamb was not so far wrong for recommending the juries to apply that remedy to unjust enactments. English juries may get it into their heads that they have *a prior obligation* not to act upon these unjust provisions of the legislature. Paley will teach them this patriotic casuistry, and they will fancy themselves absolved from their oaths. Indeed every man who thinks that your Lordship's laws are dictated at the point of the bayonet, will find himself in the exact predicament of the oath-taker under restraint, whose oath-breaking is excused by the author of that moral philosophy which is taught at the University of Cambridge.

In other words, resistance will be a matter of prudence, as Mr. Fox said; but I repeat,

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