

A
VINDICATION
OF THE
CONDUCT
OF THE
IRISH CATHOLICS,
DURING THE
LATE ADMINISTRATION.

BY
A PROTESTANT BARRISTER.

W. C.

“ Ne quieto quidem *populo*, regimen—per socordiam præfecti,
“ quem nota pariter et occulta fallebant.” TACITUS.

DUBLIN :

PRINTED BY JOHN KING, 2, WESTMORLAND-STREET.

1807.

ADMINISTRATION

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The rights of the people, religion—per se, in the
"from the paper of the 'Irish Catholic'."

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY JOHN KING, 22, WESTMORELAND-STREET.

1837.

Houses of the Oireachtas

A VINDICATION,

&c. &c.

THAT the dismissal of the late ministry, and the consequences which have necessarily followed it—distraction of public councils—loss of public confidence in government—the introduction of incompetent men into the imperial councils—discontent at home, and distrust and discredit abroad—are evils which call for the most severe reprehension on those by whose misconduct they have been produced—is a truth too obvious to be denied. It will be readily conceded, that the authors of such mischiefs have proved themselves public enemies; and deserve not only to lose the confidence, but to incur the detestation of their country.

In proportion, however, as the charge of being the authors of such evils is of serious importance to any class of men, the evidence upon which that charge rests should be attentively and closely examined; nor should a rational public lightly, on the

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authority of any man, or otherwise than on a fair and full investigation of all the facts and circumstances which bear upon the case, decide upon the accusation. Fortunately for the parties upon whom this heavy charge has been made, the evidence on which their countrymen are to pronounce a verdict of guilty or innocent, is already in the possession of the public, partly from the nature of the principal facts themselves, and partly from the necessity which has induced the late ministers to disclose the part which they took in the transactions that have led to so unpleasant and unexpected an event.

If truth, therefore, shall not be the result of enquiry on this interesting subject, it must be attributed either to the difficulty inseparably attached to enquiries of a complicated nature, or to the operation of those prejudices, which unfortunately for mankind, always mix in discussions which involve great interests or engage strong passions. It may be impossible perhaps, entirely, to divest the mind of all prejudice in such a case; but the writer of these pages can with truth assure the reader that *he* brings no local or particular prejudices to the discussion;—he is not a Catholic—he was and is unconnected with the late or the present ministers, and may therefore claim the credit of engaging in this task merely with a view to prevent a dangerous and unjust feeling, founded in mistake, and fomented by faction, from growing into a permanent cause of political and religious animosity.

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That it has been made necessary to offer any thing in vindication of the Catholics on account of their recent conduct, is much to be lamented; for they have been too long the objects of factious obloquy—Necessary however it has become. There has been not only an *affectation* of charging the Catholic body with being the cause of the dismissal of ministers, but that charge has been directly made against them in both houses of Parliament: they are accused of having wantonly and wickedly pressed their claims, at a time when they must have known that it was dangerous to their friends and to the interests of the empire to do so—that disregarding the remonstrances of ministers, of whose attachment to their interests they could not reasonably doubt, they pressed those ministers to urge their claim upon the Parliament and the Sovereign, at a moment when they knew success could not be attained; and when failure must have been attended with a dissolution of a popular and patriotic cabinet. For my own part, I cannot assent to this charge in its full extent. On the contrary, it appears to me that on a fair examination of the conduct of the Catholics, and of the executive government in Ireland since the late ministers came into power, though the Catholics may have, in one or two instances, suffered themselves to be *improperly used* by two or three agitators of their body, they have not, upon the whole, been guilty of the facts charged upon them—and that the conduct of the Catholics finds its justification or apology in the conduct of the Castle, and in the temporizing,

riking, imbecile, hesitating, and ambiguous conduct of the Irish executive, since the accession of the Duke of Bedford to the administration of Ireland.

If this opinion be right it should be promulgated; for not only justice requires that no body of men should be unjustly charged, but nothing can be more imprudent than to add to the existing causes of discontent in such a country as ours, by unfounded accusation.

It is unnecessary to enter into any historic detail of the conduct and professions of the late ministers, and of their Irish friends, when in opposition, in order to recal to the recollection of the public the zeal, the energy, the perseverance with which those noble and honourable persons impressed, one may say, *inflicted*, upon the legislature and on the public, the necessity of abolishing, by one grand effort of legislative wisdom, all civil distinctions between the Catholics and their fellow-subjects. It was argued by those gentlemen with eloquence too powerful to be forgotten, and with reasons too strong to be refuted, that the prosperity, if not the safety of these islands, depended upon a speedy conciliation of the Irish Catholics, who were truly said to be the great majority of Irish population; that not only abstract justice called for the unqualified emancipation of that body, but that sound policy, operating on the existing state of things, at home and abroad, dictated the necessity of interesting this great mass of physical

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cal force in the common cause of the empire and the constitution; and that the immediate adoption of such a measure was the only certain mode of rescuing from jeopardy this invaluable member of the British empire. The mischiefs of continuing any restrictions on the Catholics—of cherishing the pride and fomenting the insolence of ascendancy, were aggravated with the highest colouring of rhetoric; and every topic which could heat the imagination on those delicate and dangerous subjects, was resorted to and discussed with unsparing industry.

It was impossible that those efforts of the wisest and most eloquent men in the imperial legislature should have failed of convincing the Catholic that his right to all the privileges of British subjects was indefeasible; and that *political* expediency, as well as *moral* right, justified him in expecting that when honest and wise men should be called to his Majesty's councils, the Catholic claim would have been among the first objects of their consideration, and the full gratification of Catholic hope one of their first measures. What did in fact happen? The unfortunate event of the battle of Austerlitz, which laid Europe at the foot of the French usurper, made even the most sanguine friends of the old administration entertain anxious doubts as to the result of the contest; and evinced, even to the reluctant understanding of the Sovereign himself, the necessity of changing those councils, whose measures had created a crisis so dreadful. The battle of Austerlitz, calculated as it was to add tenfold strength to the argument by which the Catholic had
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been taught to know his importance and his rights, placed in the cabinet those very men by whom, not one year before, the complete emancipation of the Catholic body had been announced to the legislature and to Europe, to be a measure of indispensable necessity, and vital importance to the safety of Ireland, and consequently of the empire.

It was not unnatural that when such men came into power, the Catholics of Ireland should have panted for the speedy, the immediate performance of those engagements, by which the persons who had now become masters of the influence of the crown, and sole directors of those hidden springs which usually actuate the legislative machine, had so solemnly and frequently pledged themselves. They had indeed, been once already deceived on this subject—they had seen Mr. Pitt falsify the most public and solemn declaration, by giving an affected and hollow support to the measure, which had he, as minister, sincerely endeavoured to carry, it was believed must have been successful. But the conduct of Pitt, in that instance, had been a theme of invective and contemptuous irony to the men who now succeeded him in power, and could not, therefore, it was thought, be again practised.

The Catholics, therefore, must have regarded the accession of the new ministers to power, as an accomplishment of that object to which for so many years they had looked, and been taught to look by those very men. In the former discussions which had
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taken place on that subject, "the inexpediency of particular times"—the "wisdom of postponement to future and more convenient seasons," had never been, with them topics of argument or declamation. Reasonable men, therefore, who placed implicit confidence in the sincerity and honesty of the new ministers, could not have expected, that what had so lately been considered as a subject of most momentous concern, should now be postponed to every other; and that so far from being the *first* subject of ministerial discussion, the ministers should observe, with respect to it, a profound silence. Were the Catholic *hasty* in expressing their feelings on these subjects? Let it be remembered to their honour that reasonable as it might have been in them to expect from the new ministry that they would immediately submit their claims to the legislature, they not only did not, for many months, express any sentiment of discontent or suspicion at the silence of ministers on this subject, but they did not resort to *any* measure of *any* kind to call to the recollection of the government the pledges which they had individually given.

The conduct of the Catholics on this subject deserves the more praise for temperance and discretion, because undoubtedly the events which took place in Ireland on the accession of the Duke of Bedford, and the conduct which his Grace's administration had thought it proper to adopt, were not *very well* calculated to satisfy the Irish Catholics, or indeed Irishmen of any description, who had imbibed the principles, and adopted the opinions which those
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very gentlemen who had now acceded to power, had for so many years inculcated on the public. Let us take a short review of the conduct of that administration for the first months after the arrival of his Grace in Ireland. It will be useful to do so, in order to estimate whether the Irish Catholics were justified in entertaining any degree of doubt of the sincerity of ministers, or in taking the liberty (if they had done so) of at length calling upon them for a performance of former professions.

The appointment of his Grace of Bedford to the viceroyship of Ireland, was accompanied by two events, each of which was certainly highly gratifying, not merely to the Irish Catholics, but to every description of men in Ireland, except perhaps those who had been actors in those scenes which for the ten preceding years had been the disgrace of the country. The events I allude to are the removal of Lord Redesdale, in the manner in which he was removed, and the appointment of Mr. Ponsonby to the Irish Chancery bench.

The instant removal of Lord Redesdale was a decorous mark of attention to the feelings of a body of men whose character he had aspersed, and whose principles he had calumniated. It was not because Lord Redesdale had proved himself as bad a theologian as he was a good lawyer, that the people of Ireland rejoiced at his dismissal. It was because the conduct of that silly and ~~stupid~~ bigot, as a political member

member of the Irish government, had rendered him contemptible and odious as a statesman; and because that removal evinced a desire, and was in some measure a pledge on the part of government that they would defer to the feelings of the country.

It was on a similar principle that the appointment of Mr. Ponsonby to succeed him was a grateful measure; for though Mr. Ponsonby had acquired no very high character as an equity lawyer, and therefore afforded no great promise as an equity judge, yet as Irish Chancellor, partaking at least as much of a political as of a judicial character, it was gratifying to Ireland, and particularly to the Irish Catholics, to find a man whose professions had been ardent, and his exertions considerable in the cause of Ireland and the constitution, placed in a situation, where, if his professions were sincere, he had such ample means of verifying them—a situation which enabled him to purge the subordinate offices of magistracy, and to remove from various situations, where corruption and bigotry had so long brandished the lash and the sword over the people of Ireland, men, who had become objects either of terror or detestation to an unoffending peasantry, by the prostituted abuse of power.—It was because in that high situation the professed friend of Irish liberty and of British constitution, would be invested with the power, if he retained the will, of gratifying the Irish people with the interesting and novel spectacle of the influence of the Crown, exerted

ed in raising to magisterial station the long-tryed and long-loved friends of the Irish people, to the dishonoured exclusion of men whom that people had been for many years taught by the most atrocious and disgusting abuse of authority, to execrate. This apparently auspicious appointment gave a tone to public feeling which tended to render the parting tears of Lord Redesdale still more contemptible. The feeble sorrows of his Lordship for the loss of office, were connected in the public mind with the extinction of the old system;—and the appointment of his successor, with a new order of things in Ireland, which, by substituting men in whom the country confided, for those whom they must have abhorred, would have not merely given peace to Ireland, but implicit confidence in, and enthusiastic attachment to the government of the country. Unfortunately, those sanguine hopes were soon corrected by the sad realities of experience. The popular administration of his Grace of Bedford when once fairly instituted and inducted at the Castle, assumed an appearance of repose and inactivity, precisely such as would have taken place had my Lord Camden or Westmorland returned to the government of Ireland. In the official arrangements of the Castle, Mr. Marsden, who was supposed to have been the private adviser, or the instrument of every measure which the folly, or bigotry of the preceding administrations had adopted or devised, remained in office, and was the ostensible and apparently confidential agent by which the Bedford administration, who
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came to restore to Ireland the enjoyment of good government on popular principles, was to communicate these blessings to the country.* Mr. Ponsonby thought it consistent with principle, with his own personal feeling, with sound policy, to act with this man, to whom his person and his principles must have been equally objects of dislike, and in a word, no change was visible any where from which an ordinary observer could infer that any thing had been changed in the Irish government but the Viceroy and the Chancellor.

Those forbidding and inauspicious symptoms were corroborated by other evidence. The most obnoxious, the lowest and most detested among those who had been the abused instruments of the preceding administrations, were continued in ostensible situations. Even Major Sirr remained, in appearance at least, as much as ever he had been, the tutelary guardian of the Castle-yard—while every base and odious ruffian, who had distinguished himself under the Orange administrations, by the malignity of his zeal, or the enormity

* It may be said that this man was not really consulted or confidentially used by the new administration—perhaps not—but he was at least the *apparently* confidential servant of his Grace; and being so, the people of Ireland, and particularly the Irish Catholics, whose habits with the Castle had not become much more intimate since the introduction of the *popular* government, must have been governed by those appearances, having no other means by which their judgment could be directed.

enormity of his outrages against the Irish people—continually met the eye of the visitor of the court.

“But these,” it may be said, “are but petty subjects of complaint—errors in the minute detail of official arrangement; which prove nothing but the impossibility of an administration, attending at once to great and to little objects.” I answer, nothing is more momentous to a popular administration on its first assuming power in a country where power has been long abused, than indifference of selection, or ill selection of the men by whom that administration communicates immediately with the people. The converse of the vulgar adage, “*like master like man*,” will ever express the public opinion of an administration who use in the lowest functions of government, men of odious and blasted characters.

But, conceding to the administration for a moment, an impunity for minute errors, let me ask what had been effected by the popular administration in the higher walks of government, to evince a sincere attachment to popular men, and place beyond doubt their fidelity to the public with regard to the great principles upon which the character of that administration, and the peace and contentment of Ireland alike depended? Of *measures*, it may be fair to say, that for some weeks, perhaps for a few months, after their assumption of power, they had not leisure maturely to weigh

weigh and devise the best means of carrying them into effect ; but it was in their *power*, and it was their *duty*, to give security to the country for their honesty as to *measures*, by their conduct towards the *men* in whom the country had confidence. What was the conduct of the new administration as to men? Mr. Grattan, whose name an Irishman cannot pronounce without a feeling of reverence, and of whom an Irish Catholic cannot speak without a sentiment almost of adoration—this gentleman did not on the change become a member of the administration. That Mr. Grattan refused to accept any of those offices which appear to have been constituted for the mere purpose of giving a decent pretence to accept large salaries, I believe. But it certainly was a circumstance unfavourable to the administration, that Mr. Grattan's name appeared *no where* in the new arrangements ; for it was difficult to conceive, that had that exalted man been invited to accept a situation befitting his talents and character, he would have refused to his country the incalculable advantages which must have flowed from the dominating influence of his genius over her domestic counsels. What means were used on this subject—and by whom and how? I ask this question of Mr. Ponsonby—he is in the secret, and can best answer whether, in the instance of Mr. Grattan, the country was fairly dealt with?* But whatever was the cause that

* The subsequent treatment which, if report speaks truth, Mr. Grattan received from the Irish administration, *seems* to prove

that this illustrious man did not accept office under the new administrations—his absence was inauspicious to the country—it was peculiarly so to the Irish Catholics—who must have considered any administration, of which he was not a part, as at least not intitled to their implicit confidence.

There were other men, however, in whom the Irish Catholics habitually reposed their confidence. For instance, Mr. Curran—This gentleman had been for many years the most popular man in Ireland, with the exception of Mr. Grattan, whose paramount virtues and character precluded competition. Mr. Curran had been by the opportunities which his professional avocations afforded him, better known to the people than any of his competitors for popularity. He had from his earliest public life been the bold, avowed, untemporizing advocate of the Catholics. If it were intended to serve the Catholics—if a system of liberal and enlightened policy with respect to Ireland in general were to be adopted, it was not to be imagined, that such a friend to the Catholics and to Ireland, should not have been early taken into the counsels of the
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prove that *they* never could have been *very* anxious to see him placed in high station. Mr. Grattan asked *one* favour, and *one only*, from the Irish government—that favour was, I understand, at first *ambiguously* promised by Mr. Ponsonby—then refused—and when the refusal by Mr. Ponsonby led to a direct application to government on the subject, Mr. Ponsonby urged the government to refuse it, and it was refused.

the new administration. Was Mr. Curran immediately raised to high office, as a pledge to the people of Ireland that the change which had taken place, was total and sincere, and that the principles of government were really popular? was either of the law-officers of the crown removed, to make way for this popular favorite, who, for a period of above twenty years, had been a steady and incorruptible, and fearless adherent to the popular party? No! the *Attorney*, and *Solicitor General*, both raised to their situations, by the sympathizing friendship, and congenial principles* of Lord Redesdale were continued in office and in confidence, while Mr. Curran was suffered to walk the hall of the Four-Courts for above three months, unnoticed by the castle—and without even receiving from his old confidential friend, the Chancellor Ponsonby, the slightest intimation of the intentions of government respecting him.

This certainly did not omen well to the Catholics; it was on the contrary calculated to check their hopes, and had very much the appearance of being
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* With respect to *principles* it may sometimes be difficult to speak with any great certainty. They are often so *thin* and *impalpable*, so *subtle* and *volatile*, as to elude the grasp, even of the metaphysical moralist. It could not, however, have been unfair to infer that the *Attorney-General* and *Solicitor's* principles were *congenial* to Lord Redesdale's, from the indisputable fact that these gentlemen enjoyed much of his Lordship's confidence, and were raised by his friendship. In a professional view both gentlemen are highly respectable—and the conduct of Mr. Plunket on a late occasion, entitles him to the thanks of the country.

meant as a hint to those sturdy expectants, that the new government would not be led into the folly of executing when in power, the professions upon which they had founded their popularity. Mr C. was at last, I admit, made Master of the Rolls, and privy counsellor: honors late and reluctantly conferred, and which seemed rather to have been extorted by fear of the public imputation of deserting an old partizan, than given upon principle. As Master of the Rolls he was removed from that sphere of action in which any of those principles or talents which had recommended him to the public could have been exerted. As a privy counsellor, it is not delicate perhaps to say, he was not consulted—but it may be fair to ask Mr. Ponsonby, “was he?”

But to these observations* Mr. Ponsonby may answer, “if Mr. Grattan were not of the new administration—if Mr. Curran had been forgotten—yet the Catholics had no right—Irishmen had no right to be dissatisfied—much had been done for the country—the places of Muster-master and Post-master were early filled by very popular and very pleasant gentlemen, well known to be friends of the Catholics—Mr. Elliot was appointed Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, and Mr. Marsden was at last removed.”

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* I have taken the liberty throughout this discussion to consider Mr. Ponsonby as responsible in a great measure for all that has been done or omitted by the Irish administration. The high office held by Mr. Ponsonby, and his known influence with the late ministers—an influence of which it was not his habit to forget the use, justify me, I hope, in this assumption.

In truth those appointments, with the exception of the place of First Counsel to the Commissioners, were the only appointments which had been made under the auspices of the new administration in Ireland.—What was the merit of those appointments?—The places of Muster-master and Postmaster were filled, no doubt, to the satisfaction of Mr. Ponsonby, who procured one of them for his kinsman, Mr. D. B. Daly, who, to say no more of him, was not a man whom the Irish nation looked upon as a protector; the other was filled by one who had been a very good placeman under the preceding administration; but of whom, it is fair to say, that perhaps a less exceptionable appointment could not have been made. But as to Mr. Elliot, who had been placed at the head of this popular administration, (I beg Mr. Ponsonby's pardon, I mean next after him) in the name of consistency, and the Protestant church, what reason had the Catholics of Ireland to confide in him? the people of Ireland could not have forgotten that Mr. Elliot had been in confidential office under one of these administrations, which had contributed their full share to involve this unhappy country in civil blood, by reviving religious, and fomenting political animosities. Mr. Elliot was moreover, at least *apparently*, an *Orange-man*—the whole tenor of his political life and connections, led to the belief that his principles, if any principle there was, were *orange*. There was therefore but little in that appointment, upon which the people of Ireland, I mean the Irish Catholics, could have rested with much confidence—Burrowes, the new first counsel to the

revenue board, I admit was a popular appointment, so far as any appointment to a subordinate office, and without political influence or political power, can be a subject of popularity. But whatever might have been the merit of such an appointment, it was much more than neutralized, by continuing in office in the same department, the former second counsel to the board, of whose conduct in parliament for many years, it is only necessary to say, that it could not have *very strongly* recommended him to the people of Ireland.

In the mean time the modest, the learned, the incorruptible Hardy, who from his outset in political life, had in no one instance violated that holy principle by which he attached himself to the popular cause and the popular party, was suffered to remain unnoticed in the solitude to which his honest poverty had banished him—poverty, from which he had, to the knowledge of Mr. Ponsonby and his friends, in more than one instance, an opportunity of redeeming himself, on the terms of abandoning the cause and the party to which he had devoted himself. *

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* This gentleman had served, I believe, in three Irish Parliaments—and frequently distinguished himself by his speeches, which were always of high merit; but was much more distinguished for a steady and inviolable attachment to those principles which had been supported by, and were the support of the friends of the Irish Catholics. Offers had been made him by a former administration, which he had the consent of his party for accepting, but which he indignantly refused.

But let us dismiss the consideration of this topic, important as it is, for a subject of yet greater magnitude—I mean the conduct of administration (which in plain language, is in this instance the conduct of the Irish Chancellor) respecting magistracy. It has been my object in offering these thoughts to my countrymen, not to accuse but to defend—not to arraign ministers, but to vindicate a body of men, whom I believe to have been falsely charged. But upon this subject, the subject of the subordinate magistracy of Ireland, I am compelled to say there had been gross and culpable negligence, or miserable and most contemptible imbecility in the conduct of those in whose province the superintendence of the magistracy lay. The charge against those persons is comprised in this proposition, “that for many months after the accession of the new administration, the Irish magistracy remained in the same state in which it had existed (and in many instances to the disgrace and curse of the country) during several preceding administrations.”

Let us examine a little the relation of the inferior magistrate to the people. The ordinary justice of the peace is the man who comes most frequently in contact with the peasant. He is the instrument by which the blessings of a good, or the inflictions of an ill and partial government, are generally communicated to the mass of the population.

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In Ireland it was by this description of magistrates that the Irish peasant had been taught to feel the full force of the persecuting system. Great numbers of those magistrates were Orangemen—they of course had the power, and in innumerable instances availed themselves of it, of abusing magisterial authority as an instrument of party animosity. Suspended as the power of civil law was, and I admit, in some instances, *necessarily* suspended during the last ten years in Ireland, it requires no profound skill in human nature to know that such power, in such hands, at such a period, must of necessity have been grossly abused. It requires as little knowledge of mankind to be convinced that the peasant who had thus suffered, must look at the men who inflicted those sufferings, with suspicion if not abhorrence.

Of many of the lower magistrates the characters in this respect were notorious—yet not one of them was removed; and up to the date of Mr. Wilson's well-known correspondence with the Chancellor and Mr. Elliot, in which so striking a picture is given of, what I must call, the cold-blooded temporising, timid, left-handed policy of Mr. Ponsonby, the Irish peasant felt no change wrought, with respect to him, by the transfer of the seals from Lord Redesdale to Mr. Ponsonby, and the substitution of the Duke of Bedford for his predecessor. In apology for this most culpable inertness, it has been said, that if any *charges* had been made and *proved* against any particular magistrate, the Chancellor

cellor would have removed him ; and that to have removed any man without accusation or proof, would have been unjust and absurd—that to expect the Chancellor could, of his own knowledge, be able to say who should and should not be removed, would be to expect what was not possible, from an individual so pressed by a multitude of avocations as a Chancellor must be.

To this shallow and flimsy answer the reply is obvious. If a Chancellor is to be intrusted with so large a share of the government of this country as Mr. Ponsonby assumed, he ought to be able, either by himself or his friends, to determine who are and who are not fit to be entrusted with magisterial power. If such a man be placed in high office at a crisis when the object is to convince the public, and particularly the lower order of the population, that the persons whom his Majesty has sent to govern them, to correct past errors, and reform crying abuses, are men in whom they ought to have confidence, that man ought to be capable of acting promptly, vigorously, effectually, in removing from situations they have abused, those persons who have been most obviously offensive.

If Mr. Ponsonby, from being obliged to combine the labours of the student with those of the judge,* and to collect, during one half the day, the equity

* Mr. Ponsonby stated to Mr. Wilson that he was prevented by want of leisure for several months from writing an answer of ten lines.

he was to detail in the other, had not leisure to attend to, what I must call, in this country the *more important* part of his duty, Mr. Ponsonby ought not to have been Chancellor. But the truth is, that though Mr. Ponsonby was no doubt very much embarrassed by what, to him, must have been the *heavy burden* of his forensic business, yet most probably, if one was to indulge in conjecture, it is not to that cause alone that we are to attribute his inactivity with respect to the magistracy, and the removal of many petty evils which goaded and irritated the country. No doubt the *timidity* personal and political of Mr. Ponsonby, must have at least contributed its share to his inertness—*Discretion* too may have operated. Mr. Ponsonby is a very *prudent* man—he had gotten into a very dignified and lucrative office, one of the perquisites of which was the *patronage* of Ireland. Next to the *keeping* of this very eligible situation, the next consideration was, how it could be enjoyed with most ease and comfort; and perhaps it would have occurred to a man, equally discreet and indolent, that the best way of doing that, and making himself comfortable, was to avoid making enemies—to conciliate all. His friends, the Catholics, had already shewn great personal confidence in his political honesty—a confidence which some men, who knew the world, were inclined to say approached to credulity; *they* would be easily satisfied; a few fair words to their principal men, and a dinner now and then to a titular bishop, would be abundantly sufficient to secure the attachment of this *placidum pecus*. To soften the Orangemen, it might have

have occurred to such a person, that suffering all the principal officers who were of that class, to continue in their situations, and leaving the Orange magistracy untouched, would at least secure their *neutrality*, and enable him to evade the enmity of that formidable body.

Such, perhaps, one may safely say, was the principle upon which a gentleman discreet and prudent as Mr. Ponsonby is known to be, must have acted. If so, the perseverance with which the plan was pursued, corresponded with the prudence of the conception; for, from the hour in which Mr. Ponsonby received the seals, to the hour when he received the news of the ministers dismissal, Mr. Ponsonby cannot charge himself with the guilt of having, in any one instance,* provoked the hostility of the Orange faction, by inflicting upon any one of the body, whether public or private, however nefarious had been his outrages against the Irish people, any mark of the disapprobation of government.

It is said by some of the few friends which the conduct of this popular minister has left him, that this perfectly *impartial* administration of power is the best proof of the wisdom and justice of the ministers. But the Irish Catholic surely would not be thought very unreasonable if, on the accession of such an administration as the Duke of Bedford's was thought to be, he expressed some hope that a popular government, who affected to detest

* The few changes in the magistracy, which were so *lately* made in the Co. Wexford, &c. will, when examined, be found not to falsify what is above said.

detest the crimes which had been committed in Ireland, under colour of loyalty, should have at least withheld its confidence from the criminals, and marked their disapprobation. Men who know what government practically is, or have even cursorily observed how, what is called, "the Constitution," works at this day, will easily conceive how this might have been effected, without resorting in every instance to the solemnities of legal trial for what in many instances might not be legal offence. Such men know, that government has an influence, *i. e.* indefinite means of marking its feelings with regard to the conduct of different classes of the community, which may be exercised without the infliction of punishment, and may be *fairly* exercised against individuals without any previous formal conviction of crime.

The intelligible mode of treating this subject is to ask, did government believe that the Catholic population had been persecuted by the Orange faction? If yes, must it not have been the duty of an *honest* government to relieve the Catholics from that oppression?—must it not have been the wish of a *prudent* government, meaning to satisfy the Catholics of the existence of that feeling, to give palpable, public and early proof of it? How were they to relieve the Catholics from the oppression? Not merely by punishing offenders when legally convicted; for such convictions must necessarily be rare, since the poor and dispirited peasant will seldom have the means or the courage to bring a wealthy magistrate

magistrate to justice, even if the offence committed against him were plain, and capable of legal proof; which, while oppression is practised under colour of law or magisterial authority it seldom is. In such cases, therefore, the subject must be relieved not by the mere punishment of offence, but by withdrawing the power of committing it, from those whose *general conduct* has made them fairly liable to suspicion—or in other words, by divesting the *notoriously* factious of all magisterial authority. How could the best and earliest prove the existence of that feeling? By avowedly withdrawing their confidence and countenance from men of that description at the very outset of their government. The Irish administration did none of these things—they adopted an absurd principle of impartiality, not in the dispensation of rewards and punishments, but of FEELING—an impartiality which in the circumstances in which Ireland stood, had the effect of giving impunity and confidence to a principle that had ravaged the land, and called for coercion, while in the persecuted party it substituted suspicion for hope, and from one end of the island to the other, produced an impression of disappointment.

Such were the circumstances in which the Irish Catholics stood after the new administration had existed in Ireland for above TEN months. Here for a moment let us stop—let us reflect on what must have been the impressions—the reasonable and justifiable feelings of the Catholics at this period. If a fair estimate be made of those impressions and feelings, I think I may boldly appeal to a rational public, whether,

whether, thus circumstanced, the Catholics did not shew exemplary temperance in not, long before that time, giving some indications of impatience, and calling on the new ministers for the fulfilment of their engagements. It could not, certainly, have been considered as a premature call on the fidelity of those ministers, had the Catholics, within the first two months of their administration, complied with the advice *formerly* given them by my Lord Grenville, namely, “to petition year after year until their prayer should be granted;” for the abstract merits of their claim remained unaltered; and with respect to *circumstances* and *expediency*, there had been no *salvo* respecting those points in the advice that had been given to them.

In fact no considerations relative to these points could have occurred to the minds of the Catholics which should have induced them to desist from, or postpone their application. “*Circumstances and Expediency!*” they ALL tended to press the Catholic to an early application. The circumstances of their friends—friends of the country—liberal and enlightened men assuming the administration of affairs, must have been powerful reasons for seeking at their hands a measure so repeatedly, so emphatically, sanctioned by themselves, and so concordant with all the principles upon which they professed to govern. As to *expediency*; were the times critical? was the enemy powerful? was it a season of danger to the empire? If so, must it not have been emphatically

cally *expedient*, at such a crisis, in the Catholics to call for, and in government to grant a measure, acknowledged to be essential to the perfect tranquilization of Ireland, and to the consolidation of the strength of the empire? I admit, that, if it could be conceived the ministers were now become, for any reason, adverse to the measure which they had so often inculcated on their predecessors, and that the discussion of the question must therefore be a conflict with those ministers, which would divert their attention from those important functions of their office, more immediately relating to the defence of the empire—a perfectly impartial man, (which, by the bye, the Catholics, parties so deeply interested, could not be considered) might wish that discussion to be postponed till a season of less danger would render the discussion safe—But could the Catholics have believed that, if ministers were honest, there would remain any impediment in the way of the Catholic claim, when the very men, by whom they had been excited to make it, had now the influence of the crown in their own hands—that *very* influence, to the abuse of which, when in other hands, they had attributed the failure of that claim, when formerly made?

It is true, that recent events have shewn, there *were* difficulties in the way of ministers on this subject; but I am now defending the Catholics, in acting under the circumstances as they existed previous to the late dissolution. At that time, the *arcana imperii* had not been divulged; they had no
reason

reason *then* to think, that the question on their claim was to be decided in any other way, or by any other power, than that by which *other* questions of government were decided. It could not *then* have occurred to any man, that there existed in a certain place, prejudices on that subject, which even ministers themselves, or the pressing exigency of the times, or the wishes and rights of five millions of subjects, could not surmount.

The Catholics were ignorant of all those circumstances; and therefore, I say, they must have been considered as perfectly justifiable, had they even within the first months of the new administration, repeated their petition to parliament. How very signal a proof then, of temperance in the Catholic body, and of their confidence in the new ministers must it be considered, that they did not for *ten* months, either directly address the legislature, or utter a murmur of complaint on the unaccountable, or unaccounted for, postponement of their hopes.

If then, up to the late dissolution, the Catholics have been not only blameless, with respect to the late ministers, but have a claim to the praise of exemplary and patient forbearance; let us enquire whether by their conduct subsequent to that period, they have forfeited their claim to that praise. To institute this enquiry on fair grounds, their conduct must always be examined, with reference to their *actual*

actual situation, and their knowledge of *facts* at the time; and taking those into consideration, I venture boldly to assert, that the *Catholic body* are *innocent* of the charges which have been so confidently made against them, by high authority.

I contend for the innocence of "the Catholic body," even though I should *not* define my meaning by that phrase, to be the "great mass of the Catholic persuasion, spread over the face of the island," distinguishing between them and that portion of the body, who, in the metropolis, have assumed the power of speaking for the Catholics, without any shadow of express or virtual representation—and with whom the Irish administration has in so unstatesmanlike a manner, and with so much imbecility and inexactness, treated as with a legitimate representative of the Irish Catholics.

Of this self-constituted body, no doubt, some of the members have acted and spoken as rational, sensible, and well-intentioned men ought not and would not have spoken. I defend them not: but the public conduct of the body, which has been disgraced by their association is, I think, defensible even when judged by the severest test.

When ministers upon the termination of the late unsuccessful negociation of my Lord Lauderdale, dissolved the parliament, they made a bold appeal to the public upon the whole of their conduct—an appeal,

appeal, which unquestionably they would not have made, had they not themselves believed they had a firm hold of their places, and possessed the confidence and approbation of the people, as they enjoyed the favour of the king. It is perfectly inconceivable, that they should have unnecessarily resorted to such a measure as the dissolution of parliament, with which they had so long worked well, from any other motive than a consciousness of superabundant strength. Whether that consciousness were well or ill founded is beside the present question. Its mere existence proves it was not premature in the Irish Catholics to infer, that the ministers at length thought themselves "*settled in their seats*" and were now enabled to govern upon their own principles. A new parliament is convened, and in that parliament the ministers find their confidence in their strength verified—and as to *leisure*, they demonstrate they have sufficient of that upon their hands by engaging in measures which, however well-founded they may be in sound policy, and whatever ultimate benefits they may be calculated to produce, certainly could not be considered as of immediate and pressing necessity—they look to another hemisphere for the slave trade as a subject of reform, and though in effecting the abolition of that nefarious commerce, they had to maintain a conflict with the interests and prejudices of a very large proportion of the monied and trading interests of the empire; they shew themselves so much at ease under this voluntary accumulation of their labours, that they gratuitously create for themselves yet further occupation,

pation, by taking up *spontaneously* two new and speculative topics of reform—the amendment of the Scotch judicature, and the improvement* of the complicated, but long tried system of British common law. Good God! can it be seriously argued, that ministers thus sedulously encreasing their own labours, thus wantonly involving themselves in metaphysical combat with the judicature of one part of the island, and declaring war against some of the oldest and best established principles of the common law of the other, were oppressed with difficulties—unsettled in their places—and too deeply occupied with measures of indispensable and present necessity, to hear and discuss the claim of four millions of Irishmen, a claim not of a new, dubious, or fanciful right—but of the common privileges and benefits of the British constitution! Will it be said by any dispassionate or candid man, that it was not *then* a proper time for the Catholics, if ever a proper time were to come, to put forward that claim which had been already so often sanctioned by the very men to whom it was to be made.—Surely, surely, if those circumstances which have been so lately disclosed to the public, were not *then* known to the Catholics, the Catholics must have been considered as relinquishing and abandoning all their former pretensions, if they did not seize such a crisis for calling the *unoccupied* attention of the ministers to those claims, which they had so often pledged themselves to support.

But

* The Bill for making freehold property assets for payment of debts.

But it is said, they knew the time to be improper, because they were informed, that the measure could not be carried—that to press it would endanger the ministers, and that to urge it at such a time, would not only be injurious to the Catholics themselves, but might eventually injure the public at large, by creating dissention in the cabinet, and perhaps overset it. Two answers occur to this, first, admitting that the Catholics had been properly and authentically, and publicly informed of the opinion which ministers entertained on the subject as to the success of the petition, it is going much too far to say, that the Catholics were bound in duty, or in policy, to suspend their claim on that account—secondly—the fact itself “that they *were* fairly and publicly apprised of the difficulties which stood in the way of the petition” may be well denied. With respect to the first, what effect should that information have produced? When men in power, who had reproached Pitt with not having carried the measure, because he had pledged himself to it, and as minister of England, had the power to carry it—when such men inform the Catholics, that the measure which Pitt might have carried when in power, they *though* in power, are unable to carry, it must undoubtedly excite some *suspicion*. Were the Catholics immediately, and on the mere statement of ministers, implicitly and without any pretence of proof, to believe that the influence of the minister was less powerful now than when Mr. Pitt held the reins of government? Were they instantly, because called

called on to do so by Mr. Ponsonby, to recant the opinion which Mr. Ponsonby and his friends had taught them, that the conduct of Pitt with respect to the Irish Catholics was hollow and insincere, because he might have carried this measure and did not? Were the Catholics to believe, without any other evidence of the fact, than the assertion of a minister in power, that a measure he had pledged himself to, ought not now to be pressed on him, because if pressed, it could not be carried, and if pressed unsuccessfully, it might endanger his place? In what part of the declaration of faith of those gentlemen did the Catholics find it laid down, that the people should implicitly take the advice of a minister on the question, whether the present was, or was not, the time for pressing a popular and recognized measure? But it will be answered, "the Catholics must have known that the ministers were their friends, and that they were sincere in their professions towards the Catholic claim." It may unluckily be answered, that all the proofs of attachment to the Catholic claim which the ministers had ever given, were given while they were *out* of office—that during the ten months which had elapsed since they came into power, not only nothing had been done for the Catholics, but even the promises of ministers had not been repeated; and in Ireland, as I have already mentioned, though much, very much, had been in the power of the executive government, and particularly in the power of Mr.

D Ponsonby

Ponsonby as Chancellor—that executive government and that Chancellor, had not in the slightest instance exercised their power for the gratification of, or with a view of giving confidence to, the Catholic body. The Orange magistracy remained in office ; and I have already stated, that scarcely any appointment* had been made either in law or revenue, which could be considered even as a slight indication of good will towards the Catholics, or towards the popular cause.

Upon what was it, then, that the implicit confidence of the Catholics in the ministers was to rest? The Cabinet itself had been formed of materials that appeared

* I had actually prepared a list of ALL the appointments which have been made in Ireland since the accession of the Bedford administration—and particularly those made under the auspices of Mr. Ponsonby, for the purpose of submitting them to the public as a proof of what was done to *content* or *conciliate* the country, and particularly the Catholics. I had annexed some annotations by way of *illustration* ; for of some of those appointments it was difficult, I thought, to conceive, from what *popular* motive they had been made. It struck me, however, on a review of those personages, that as some of them might not derive much pleasure from being exhibited to the public in such a view, they might, perhaps, question the *generosity* of an *anonymous* writer in so exhibiting them ; unwilling to give pain, having no object of a private or personal nature in view, and convinced that the merit or demerit of every *important* appointment made within the period I speak of, must before this time be known to the public, I have therefore desisted.

appeared but little likely to give great stability to the structure. If the Catholics had reason to believe the ministry would be short-lived, was it not incumbent on them to avail themselves of the power of their friends while it lasted, to carry the question? If on the contrary the ministers were solidly and firmly fixed, no injury, no danger could follow from their proposing and pressing the measure.

But even admitting for a moment that this reasoning is not valid, it will at least be conceded to me, that if ministers were conscious they were so circumstanced that they could not redeem the pledge they had given to the Catholics, they ought at least to have acknowledged the debt, and stated to the Catholics why it could not then be discharged. Was it right that, after all that had passed between them and the Catholics while out of power, they should have observed a profound silence on the subject for so many months after they had come in? Would not the fair and candid and natural way of acting have been, early to have stated to the Catholics, that the wishes of ministers on the Catholic subject remained unaltered?—that they were resolved, on the first probable opportunity of success to bring forward the measure? And let me ask any man who knows any thing of the people of Ireland (for after all the Catholics and the people of Ireland mean the same thing) whether such conduct would not have secured the confidence of those people and their compliance

pliance with any proposition of postponement or modification of their claims which ministers would have suggested? Undoubtedly it would. The Catholics then, even those of them who became the self-constituted representatives of the body, cannot be justly blamed from at length taking means to recall to the recollection of ministers that most important and vital measure, "the emancipation of the Catholics," which for so many months they had so unaccountably forgotten? It remains then to be considered, whether after the Catholics had begun to stir this question, they became guilty of intemperance, obstinacy, ingratitude, &c. with which they have been so liberally charged—or was it the dark, oracular, unsteady, vague, and uncandid conduct of those who treated with the Catholics—the diplomatic finesse of the negociators on the part of the ministers—that are fairly chargeable with all that subsequently occurred? In my mind the Catholics, on an impartial examination, will be acquitted, and the blame be found solely to attach to the agents of the Irish executive.

If the Catholics, when their patience had been tried by many months silence of the popular ministers, had evinced an insolent and impatient spirit, by seditiously and clamorously calling for a performance of the promises which had been made them—had they assembled in a tumultuary manner in various parts of the country, and published angry or
 inflammatory

inflammatory resolutions, or demanded from the government more than the men who composed that government, had so often taught them to expect,* the enemies of the Catholics, or the friends of those men who treated with them in Ireland, would have some foundation for the charges that have been made against them. But what was actually done? Instead of numerous and inflamed meetings which might have naturally been looked for when four millions of men were driven to speak the warm language of disappointed expectation on the most important subject which can occupy the attention of men, the government of Ireland was not embarrassed by so much as ONE COUNTY or even PARISH meeting in any part of Ireland—the metropolis excepted; and even there, though two or three intemperate speeches were made, yet upon the whole, those meetings appear to have been held rather with a view to an amicable adjustment, and the establishment of a confidential intercourse with the Castle on the subject of their claim, than of any adverse or hostile spirit. At all events the Irish executive, had placed within the very focus of the Castle, under its eye, and within its easy reach, the only troublesome part of the Catholic population, concentrated—in a form most easily treated with, managed, informed, soothed, persuaded; and if there were in the men who

* See Lord Howick's speech, or exposé of the circumstances which led to the dismissal of the late Ministers, March 13, 1807.

were to treat with the Catholics on this most important subject, either address enough to lead the passions, or a sufficiency of simple and manly honesty to appeal boldly and openly to the understanding of the Catholics, after a fair and full disclosure of the true state of the circumstances in which the ministers stood with respect to this great measure I believe there is not an honest and unprejudiced man in Ireland, who does not in his conscience believe that even those Catholics might—*easily* might—have been induced to forego their claims, and suspend their hopes for the present, in deference to the British ministers, particularly my Lord Grenville, of whose continuing friendship and attachment to their cause, they would in that case be convinced.

Instead of this manly, honest and plain dealing, what was the conduct actually pursued with respect to the Catholic body?—Very much indeed did it differ from manly and honest plain dealing. The communication was carried on with an air of anxiety, of secrecy, of mystery—it assumed the appearance of a court intrigue under the old regime.

It was indeed intimated to the Catholics that ministers did not *now* think it was a proper time to press the measure—they were occupied with very *important* and *pressing* business—the *affairs of the empire*—the *management of this momentous war*—the *short time* they had yet been in office, &c. &c. &c. In a word they

they were circumstanced *just* as the old ministers had been, when they declined acceding to any popular claim, which they could not deny in the abstract, and which, therefore, they could only refuse, as “inexpedient under existing circumstances.”

What had the Catholics reason to think of these excuses—excuses given in a cold, hesitating, mysterious manner?—not voluntarily made, but extorted by the beginning murmurs of suspicion. Had they been made *before* the Catholics had themselves begun to stir the question—had the ministers *early* after their accession to office, and before they found leisure for the extinction of African slavery, and the reform of Scotch and British judicature, spontaneously come forward through the medium of their Irish minister, Mr. Ponsonby, (for Mr. Elliot even then would certainly have been an ungracious agent on such a subject) and with an appearance of honest sincerity told the Irish Catholics, that though ministers would, for a time, be obliged to abstain from the introduction of the Catholic question, yet ministers retained, and now re-avowed, their former opinions on that question; and had they accompanied that declaration by a distinct engagement (which in my mind they were bound to make) that if they should ultimately find themselves unable to carry the question, and restore to the Catholics the privileges of the constitution, they would resign their offices; *then* indeed ministers would have had a just claim to
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the continued confidence of the Catholics of Ireland; and if that confidence was suspended for an hour, even in appearance, by any authenticated complaint coming from that body, or by any remonstrance or petition on the subject, until the ministers should have been found guilty of a wilful and faithless violation of their engagements, they would deserve to be branded as ungrateful, and unworthy the support of such men as ministers would, in that case, have appeared to be. But that such was not the conduct of the Catholics, they have, happily for them, the testimony even of my Lord Howick himself—of my Lord Howick, too, on his departure from office, and when he must have been inclined to describe the conduct of the Catholics on this occasion with as *little* favour as possible. Even my Lord Howick, when stating to the House of Commons the events which led to the dismissal of himself and his colleagues, does not venture to impute to the Catholics, even at the moment when they must have known, by the experience of ten months, that the principle of action with his Majesty's ministers with regard to them and their claims, was not to promote those claims, but, to use his own words, "TO KEEP THE QUESTION AT REST," even then, I say, my Lord Howick does not venture to impute to the Catholics any seditious, intemperate or troublesome conduct—he merely states that the government of Ireland had informed ministers that "a DISPOSITION had arisen among the Catholics to prosecute the

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the claims that they had so lately and so unsuccessfully urged in the Imperial Parliament." Is this testimony of Lord Howick, touching the conduct of the Catholics, worthy of credit? Upon what principle can it be impeached? and if it be credited, does it not demonstrate that the Catholics of Ireland, so far from being guilty of an hot, hasty, premature and ill-judged assertion of a doubtful right, have evinced by their conduct in this trying crisis, more of temper, self-denial, confidence in ministerial honesty, and of discreet forbearance, than the history of any country furnishes under parallel circumstances? What! four millions of men deprived for above a century of the common benefits of the constitution of the country in which they live—irritated by the insolence, and goaded by the oppression of an overbearing faction, united by oath against them; with the yet recent examples in their memory of their dwellings burned, their kindred banished or executed without trial—their wives and daughters violated, and every right of private and public life superseded under the cruel auspices of that very faction—these evils aggravated, if any language can aggravate such evils, by the eloquence of able men, exerted not only to teach them to feel what they have suffered, but to demonstrate to their reason, and inculcate on their passions, their indisputable right to the fullest benefit, and the most valuable and honourable privileges of the British constitution! Four millions of men so
circumstanced

circumstanced find their friends—their advocates—advocates pledged in the most public and solemn manner to assert their right, come into full power—they find those men for many months utterly forgetful of them—of their privations, and of their claims—they find them not only not active to promote their claim to relief, but careful “to keep the question at rest!” And YET the utmost feeling which those manifold and irritating causes of complaint excite in the mind of this mass of suffering and injured men, is, a reluctant, tardy, “DISPOSITION to prosecute their claims!” And yet these are the men who have been charged with indiscreet and intemperate *haste* in pressing his Majesty’s ministers prematurely! I know not on what scale of morals those persons who thus charge the Catholics, judge the actions of men; but in my estimate of human conduct, the Catholics have, by the cool and self-denying abstinence which they observed since the accession of the late ministers to their dismissal, given one of the most striking instances of political temperance that the history of any times can furnish. Let those who accuse them quote a parallel to it, and I shall then acknowledge, *not* that the Catholics have been intemperate, but that they cease to have claim to the *highest* praise to which forbearance can give title.

In what I have offered on behalf of the Irish Catholics, I do not mean to charge the late ministers
with

with having violated good faith with the Catholics— with having abandoned the opinions formerly avowed by them on the subject of Catholic rights, or even to say, that upon the whole ministers were not warranted by facts within *their* knowledge in not earlier putting forward the Catholic claims—but I distinctly alledge this, that the facts upon which the ministers were justifiable, were within *their* knowledge *only*, that the Catholics and the people of Ireland generally were ignorant of those facts, and therefore cannot be justly blamed for not having acted upon them. I go further and say, that not only the Catholics knew no facts upon which the conduct of the ministers with respect to them could be satisfactorily explained, but that upon a fair view of *apparent* facts and circumstances, the British ministers, and more particularly the persons entrusted with the Irish government, were justly chargeable with gross forgetfulness, if not abandonment of former principles and professions. If there were no reasons more strong than those avowed by the Chancellor and the Secretary for the postponement of the Catholic claims by the ministry, the ministry stood in the same situation, and made the same defence as those former ministers had done, who covered their palpable and shameless tergiversation under the threadbare cover of **INEXPEDIENCY**. But I appeal to Mr. Ponsonby himself whether any reason *was* urged by him to justify the inertness of ministers on that subject *but* inexpediency. It is said, indeed, “the character

character of the ministers should have prevented suspicion in the Catholics?" Why? Is it because men who were honest when *out* of power, must be taken to remain honest when *in*? I refer to the speeches of the late ministers themselves, when *indisputably* honest, for an answer to that argument; but I also refer to the experience of mankind, and particularly the experience of the people of Ireland, whether it is not justifiable and reasonable to fear that the enjoyment of public station will tend in every particular instance to sap public virtue—whether it is not imprudent to the last degree to rely with implicit confidence on an honest and undeviating adherence to popular principles, when he who professed them has become a minister.

But again, “the *manner* in which the Chancellor and the Secretary communicated with the Catholics,” (*i. e.* with the five or six persons whom *they* thought proper to consider as representing the Catholic body,) “was such as must have convinced the Catholics that ministers remained honest and unshaken in their attachment.”

I shall not waste words in shewing the absurdity of expecting that the Catholics of Ireland should have felt the influence of the bland manner in which a minister, a deputy minister, or a gentleman usher communicates to a committee of *six* an unfavourable answer to a popular hope—I will grapple more closely

closely with the argument by denying the assumed fact upon which it rests. I deny, then, that there was even in *manner* any thing bland, conciliating, confidential, in any of the interviews to which his Majesty's government in Ireland thought proper to admit the persons whom they treated with as representatives of the Catholic body. The late Chancellor may be a very honest man, and for aught I know, a very good-natured man; but I must say, and I refer for my authority, to all who were present at those interviews, that the manner in which they were carried on, was either bland or conciliating or confidential. The answers of the Irish executive on these occasions, were the dry, official court communications, which are generally made by official men to obtrusive troublesome, suspicious, and unwelcome applicants. Good manners, no doubt, must in all such cases have been used, but it would be very difficult, even for an aid-du-camp in waiting, or a gentleman usher, to prove that any mark of confidential or friendly feeling was shewn at any one of those meetings to the individuals who personated the Catholic body.

Not being myself a Catholic, and therefore not present at these interviews; I cannot, from my own immediate knowledge describe the particulars of those much talked of conferences—those *apparently* important, but *really* very silly and absurd meetings between his majesty's government in Ireland, and

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four or five individuals of the Catholic persuasion, who were taken, upon their own assertion, as authorized in treating for all the king's Catholic subjects in Ireland. I know, however, what was the impression which those persons communicated to the rest of the body as received by them at those interviews, and most certainly it was not *very* favourable to the sincerity or the kindness of the government. But I am ashamed to waste so much time on the miserable subject of the manner in which the Irish government communicated with those persons—I have done with it, and shall apply myself to a much more important consideration.

I have already endeavoured to shew, the public will judge with what effect, that the conduct of the Catholics in “entertaining a disposition to prosecute their claims” was not only fully warranted by the conduct which ministers had observed with respect to them, and particularly the conduct of the Irish ministers—but that in doing so they were to an extraordinary degree temperate and prudent, even taking the acts of the Dublin Meeting, as the acts of the Irish Catholics. I now assert two propositions—first, “that even admitting for argument, what is not true in fact, that the Dublin meetings were identified with the Catholic body, the proceedings of those meetings are attributable to the mismanagement of the Irish executive, and that had that executive communicated to the Catholics in a proper way, and by adequate channels, that the British ministers
were

were for the present unable to carry the great question in their favour, those Catholics would not have pressed the measure, but would immediately have desisted from any public declaration of their feelings on the subject." I assert a second proposition not less important, nor to the ears of an English minister, who considers himself as having been driven from office by Catholic intemperance, less strange, "that in fact the Dublin meetings and the Catholic body were not identified, and that the Catholic body have not to this hour made *any* public declaration of their feeling on the subject, that the persons who managed the Irish executive have been misled, grossly misled by false appearances—that they have miscalculated the symptoms of the disorder of which they presumed to judge—that they made a false prognostic, prescribed a strong and inapplicable remedy in a case where none was required." How do I prove these assertions? I prove the first in the only way in which a proposition relating to the opinions, the feelings, and the possible conduct of great bodies of men under certain circumstances, can be proved by a reference to the experience and judgment of those to whom the opinions and feelings of those bodies are, and long have been best known—by an appeal to analagous facts, and to the previous and subsequent conduct of those bodies. I prove the last by facts which have actually happened, and which admit of no dispute.

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With respect to the first, it will, I feel, be very difficult to persuade an English man, to believe that a body so numerous—so important in the population as the Catholics are, could be *easily* persuaded to suspend, even for a short time, the right to press their claims upon a ministry, who had admitted and enforced their justness—Englishmen would scarcely, under any circumstances be brought to do so.—But let the question be put to the majority of Irish Protestants, whose intercourse and habits with the Catholics have given them the best means of pronouncing upon their conduct;—let those Protestants be asked, whether from what they have known of the principles of the Catholics, they do not believe that if the Catholics had been informed through the medium of men whose good will to them and to their cause they were assured, that the king's ministers continued to cherish in office the same principles which they had avowed while in opposition—and that it was only because circumstances existed, that rendered the success of the Catholic claims at present impossible—that those claims had not been put forward—that ministers still remained so firmly convinced of the truth of the opinions formerly declared by them on the Catholic subject, that if the Catholics called on ministers to press it at the peril of losing their places, they would propose it to the legislature and then resign if not successful. I ask every Protestant who knows the Irish Catholics, to put his hand on his heart and say whether he does not believe that if such language

guage had been held to them they would not cheerfully relinquish their claims for the present, and rely on the good faith of ministers to serve them “ *when they could.*”

I make this appeal boldly—I make it in Ireland, where every man who reads it will be able to decide upon the truth or falsehood of the assertion.—I call upon English-men to enquire whether what I state be not founded, and I pledge myself and the character of this tract, if an anonymous tract can have any, that upon such enquiry, fairly made—among men who know any thing of the principles and feelings of the Catholics of Ireland, they will answer, that the Catholics would have acted in the manner I have stated.

I do not, however, rely upon the opinions which men, of whom such enquiries may be made, shall entertain—Their evidence, I know, will be with me—but I have still stronger proof—the actions even of the Dublin Catholics furnish it—actions which speak their feelings too clearly to be misinterpreted.—What has been their conduct? After the late ministers had been dismissed, and when they no longer had any motive of policy or of prudence, to restrain them from pressing their claims on the legislature—those very Catholics, on the slightest suggestion of the ministers, desisted—by a public resolution desisted—from their petition. This simple and insulated fact demonstrates more powerfully than a thousand arguments, that

the Irish Catholics are temperate, docile, capable of placing, and that they actually place a generous confidence in those whom they know to be their friends; and therefore it demonstrates, that had the late ministers while in power, acted by their subordinate ministers in Ireland, in such a manner as to induce a belief of the sincerity and continuing friendship of the ministers toward the Catholic body, those Catholics would have, at their instance, desisted from claims, which at the instance of those very men they did desist from, when their motives for urging them were strengthened by every feeling that anger, disappointment, and calumny have a tendency to excite.

But it will still be objected, that though the great body of the Irish Catholics, might under such circumstances have suspended or forborn their claim, the factious, interested, and intemperate individuals who had assumed the management of the Catholics, and under whose guidance the Catholics had tacitly placed themselves, would not have acted in the same manner; but would have pressed forward the Catholic claims, with reference rather to the benefits which they might derive from becoming conspicuous agitators, than to any benefit which the Catholics might hope from embarrassing the ministers.

I am willing to admit, that there certainly was a very marked distinction between the Catholics of Ireland and the very few *active* members of that persuasion,

persuasion, who collected, actuated, and governed the late Catholic meetings—I admit also, that in fact those self-appointed leaders evinced a spirit incalculably more turbulent, troublesome, and dangerous, than the Catholics of Ireland as a body have ever shewn. But I yet contend, that admitting this distinction, it is still clear that those persons, factious as they may appear, might, in the manner I have mentioned, been induced to withhold the Petition—and if that be true, it proves irrefragably that had the Irish Executive acted properly, the Catholics of Ireland as a body, might with still greater ease have been prevented from creating any embarrassment to ministers on their subject. But what evidence is there that these men might have been kept quiet by a candid and honest communication? I refer again to the evidence of their subsequent conduct—It is manifest that even those gentlemen, the movers of the late Catholic meetings, intemperate as they have been, were by the mere circumstance of being convinced that the measure could not now be carried, and that the ministers had been sincere in their professions on the subject—induced to abandon the Petition—Now, let me ask, can any man believe that those very persons, who thus abandoned a favourite measure, and imposed silence on themselves on this favourite topic, when they gratified by doing so only a dismissed minister—would have pertinaciously persevered in that measure, when by doing so they would have gratified only their personal and avowed enemies, and would have

digusted and alienated their professed and powerful friends?—If their object was ambition or place, *that* would have been best attained by an humble or convenient compliance with the minister's will; why therefore would they not temporize?—If their object was sedition and tumult, without reference to self, *that* might have been most safely and consistently atchieved by an unprincipled perseverance in pressing the new ministers, after the former had been dismissed.—Why therefore did they not press them? No answer, I think, can be given to these questions that will not support my position—and surely it will follow, that if Mr. Keogh and his coadjutors, were not likely to disturb the tranquillity of ministers on this subject, those ministers could have but little to dread from the Roman Catholics at large.

Let me now come to the second proposition, which I have undertaken to establish—“that in fact the Dublin meetings were not identified with the Catholic body—and that the Catholic body did not since the late ministers came into power, by any act of theirs avow any intention of pressing their Petition.”

When one considers the grounds upon which the Irish ministers thought proper to alarm their principals at the other side of the water, on the Catholic subject, one cannot help feeling some surprize that men of the world—one of them a man conversant with Ireland and its people—should have so egregiously mistaken appearances for

for facts on so important a subject—appearances too, which if considered by the plainest understanding, and with the least possible portion of political sagacity, will be found not truly to indicate even “a disposition in the Catholic body to prosecute their claims.” What were those appearances? The first, strange to tell! is “the recent disturbances in the west of Ireland!” It would require the very highest authority to obtain credit for an assertion apparently so wild, as that a British minister, deriving his information from so authentic a source as the Lord High Chancellor of Ireland, and the Chief Secretary of my Lord Lieutenant, should publicly declare, that in his mind the outrages of the Threshers were connected with the claims of the Irish Catholics.—The assertion, however, unhappily has the highest authority to support it—That authority is found in the *exposé* of my Lord Howick, to which I have before alluded. The correctness of his Lordship’s printed speech has not been disputed, and therefore I am justified in assuming it as his—In that exposition of the conduct of himself and his colleagues, respecting the Catholics, his Lordship does broadly state, first, “that ministers had hoped by conciliation to keep the Catholic question at rest”—and secondly, “that having succeeded for some time, those disturbances in the west of Ireland, at length called upon his Majesty’s ministers for attention.” Is not this an open avowal that in the opinion of his Majesty’s ministers the felonies of the Threshers and the claims of the Catholics were identified? That those felonies of the
 Threshers

Threshers were the first moving cause which induced the ministers late and reluctantly to attend to the Catholic claims? But if any doubt could remain on the public mind on the subject, his Lordship removes it by telling the public through Parliament, that “this occurrence” *i.e.* “the spirit of disturbance that had been manifested in the west, and had been reduced by the rigorous exertion of the laws alone” “naturally led to the consideration of some measure which might give satisfaction to the people of Ireland.” Sorry am I that such a man as my Lord Howick—able beyond doubt, but still more honest than able, should have fallen or been misled into an error so gross in itself, and so dishonourable to the great mass of Irish people as this certainly is. What! the Catholics of Ireland speaking through the outrages and crimes of the Threshers! If they did so speak, the ears of a wise government should be shut against them.—If the Threshers are an emanation of the Catholic body—having a community of feeling and of principle with that body, the Catholics cannot be the loyal, peaceable, and deserving subjects which they have been for at least half a century, considered. If, on the other hand, the Threshers are unconnected with the Catholic body as Catholic,—if their crimes and their treasons are the abhorrence of the Irish Catholics; where is the link to be found which unites them, and how have “the disturbances in the west *naturally* led his Majesty’s ministers to the consideration of some measure which

which might give satisfaction to the people ;” *i. e.* the Catholics of Ireland ? The misinformation—the very gross misinformation, which led my Lord Howick to the adoption of so dangerous an error has placed him in a dilemma from which he cannot escape without suffering some injury in his character for understanding.—Who it was that so misinformed his Lordship, it is not necessary for the Irish Catholics to enquire.—It is sufficient for them to refer, for their justification from this dishonourable imputation, to the opinion of their Protestant countrymen, to whom they are much better known than they can be to my Lord Howick, or any English Minister, who derives his intelligence from the same source ;—it is sufficient for them to appeal to the facts proved upon the trials of those miserable offenders, or to the persons concerned in their prosecution. The testimony of those persons, and of these facts, will demonstrate that those “ disturbances in the West,” which have been exaggerated into a factitious importance sufficient to put an empire in motion, were no other than a few paltry outrages—the growth of that inveterate discontent, which for above half a century, has at different times, and in various forms, actuated the peasantry of the south and west of Ireland,—a discontent however in no other way chargeable upon, or connected with the Catholics as Catholics, than that the *peasantry are Catholics*.—Within the recollection of Lord Howick and of Mr. Ponsonby the White Boys, the Hearts of Steel, the Hearts of Oak, disturbed

disturbed this country—those offenders generally were Catholics, but it never entered into the contemplation of the statesmen of those days to charge those offences upon the Catholic body as Catholic, and to decide upon the principles or judge of the “*dispositions*” of that part of the population of Ireland, from the crimes of a handful of misguided wretches who thought fit to commit felony in groupes and under particular denominations, because these persons were Catholics. Why the unhappy vagrants of the west of Ireland, who with the same professed views as the Whiteboys and Hearts of Steel, formed similar felonious associations, and perpetrated similar crimes, should be thought more intimately connected with the Catholic body, or be supposed by a grave minister to speak the sense, or act from a common feeling with the Catholic body, my Lord Howick or Mr. Ponsonby, from whom it is reasonable to suppose his Lordship got his information, would do well to explain. But however my Lord and his friend may account for their errors on this subject, the Catholics of Ireland proudly disclaim the connexion with which it had been sought to dishonour them, nor will their Protestant countrymen yield an easy assent to the odious and incredible proposition—that “a few felons in the west are an organ of Catholic feeling, from which the Imperial cabinet should collect their sense.”

What is the next fact, from which ministers inferred that the Irish Catholics became *disposed* to assert

assert their claims? The meetings in the metropolis—Let me not be understood to mean any thing offensive to the individual gentlemen who assembled on those occasions, or those by whose exertions they were collected, when I say that neither the persons assembled at those meetings, nor the persons by whom they were assembled, had any right or authority to speak or act in the name of the Catholics of Ireland. At any time, and almost upon any pretence, two or three active spirits can convene a meeting of some hundreds, if the executive Magistrate shall think it prudent to permit them. We all know what is the *value* of an aggregate meeting—Of still less value is a meeting of a particular description of men promiscuously collected—Now let me ask any man who has resided in the metropolis while those meetings were had, some of them at a tavern, some in a stable yard, and some at the Rotunda—whether he does not know, that nineteen twentieths of those assemblies were composed of men whom no motive but curiosity or idleness brought together—men of little, or of no property, and of less intellect. Let me ask him, does he not know that the proceedings of those bodies were suggested and carried by *three* or *four* persons, whose opinions, if they were considered with reference merely to the individuals who held them, would be thought too insignificant to weigh for a moment with any class of men, much less with a rational *cabinet*? Why therefore should the proceedings of those bodies be considered as the sense of the Irish Catholics?

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Will it be said, “because at those meetings were the leaders in point of rank and property of the Catholic body?” My answer is, the Catholic body in Ireland know no leaders—none who have right or authority to assume that title—If Lord Fingal, and two or three other well-known names have been conspicuous heretofore in transactions which interested the Catholic body, they do not *ipso facto* become perpetual representatives of the Catholics with full power to compromise the claims and the character of the four millions of their brethren—But even if *rank* and *fortune* gave an indisputable right to represent the majority, there was but a very small proportion of the *rank* and *property* of the Catholic body, concurring with the meetings of which we speak. Even my Lord Fingal himself can scarcely be said to have given them the sanction of his name, when the manner in which his concurrence was obtained is looked at—If his name added so much weight to the decisions of those partial assemblages, surely the *Irish* ministers ought to have been informed how far, and under what limitations, the sanction of his Lordship’s name was really given.

But it is asked—“as the Catholics cannot by law formally elect deputies or representatives, how can their sense be ever had but by taking it from the acts of such meetings?” The man who asks such a question is but little qualified to govern a nation—To such a man it will give but little instruction (he cannot comprehend it) to tell him that

that a statesman, I mean a man *really* such, and not merely by *virtue of his office*, has innumerable modes by which he can collect a people's sense, without resorting either to assemblies of delegates or tumultuary meetings in aggregate—nay perhaps those are the very last modes to which he would recur for such a purpose—he well knows that such meetings are used, not to *express*, but to *excite* public feeling—that they are rather the *cause* than the *effect* of the existence of those opinions and sensations which they profess to declare, and are much more frequently the instruments of sedition in the hand of the demagogue, than the organ by which a government receives the sense of its subjects. But if those coarser modes of avowing public sentiment *must* be resorted to, surely it will not be contended that a tumultuary meeting of two or three hundred men, collected of an idle day, in a public street of a metropolis, is the just and true declaration of the sense of four millions of people. Such a meeting can never be looked at by a prudent government as proving more, than that the persons who called such a meeting, were desirous to agitate a plausible and popular question,—and if that proposition be true in the general—the circumstances which exist in the present case not only demonstrate its truth in this particular instance, but prove that it was something bordering upon fatuity to consider the Dublin meetings, as speaking the sense of the Irish Catholics. What are those circumstances? First, it is an historic fact that in former instances when
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the Catholic body considered it necessary to speak its hopes or its wishes on any topic of general concern, the Catholics in every part of the kingdom declared their sense expressly by local meetings, nor did they venture to trust to the Catholics of Dublin alone for the declaration of their sentiments. Thus when in 1793 the Irish Catholics applied for those remissions of the penal laws, which were then obtained, the voice of the Catholic body resounded from every quarter of the island, as it will ever do when the Catholic body *really* speaks.—Secondly, one of the measures adopted by the Dublin meeting was, a call upon the Catholics in the other parts of the kingdom, to second the Petition which the Dublin meeting had resolved upon. That call was made, but it remained unanswered—There was not a single parish in Ireland which honoured the Dublin meeting with a single resolution in support of the Petition, nor could even a respectable number of private signatures be collected. Could the Irish Ministers be ignorant of *that* fact? and if they were not, how could they so shamefully misinform or mislead the British ministers, as to drive them, through terror of Catholic violence, to precipitate themselves into a premature and dangerous proposition of the Catholic claims? Thirdly and lastly,—Though the Dublin meeting had resolved on a Petition, it was known to almost every man in Ireland (except I presume the Irish ministers) that much more than the two thirds of the propertied and respectable part of the

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the Catholic communion positively disapproved of that measure—disapproved of it as well because they were *yet* willing to confide in the fidelity and prudence of the ministers, as because they neither felt, nor were willing to adopt, the faucy and seditious sentiments which some one or two of the advisers of the measure had the temerity to obtrude on the public, in the discussion of the subject.*

But it has been said, that though none but the Catholics of the metropolis declared any opinion on the Petition, yet the Catholics of Ireland did not disavow the measures, or disclaim the opinions of their brethren in Dublin, and therefore must have been considered as concurring in them. Upon what principle of political logic it is that this reasoning rests, I am at a loss to guess. What! If two or three hot spirits in the metropolis, *happening* to be Catholics, and *wishing* to be agitators, obtrude themselves upon the public and are suffered to promulge the hasty and ill-considered conceptions of heated zeal and hopeless ambition,

* The reader will easily perceive that the speech of Mr. Keogh at the Catholic meeting is here alluded to—that speech has justly excited the indignation of the majority of the Irish Catholics—and if the Irish Executive had soberly considered the circumstances in which that gentleman stood, and the degree of *political* reputation he enjoyed among his brethren since the year 1798, they surely would never have regarded *him* as the spokesman of the Irish Catholics: yet Mr. Ponsonby, I understand, visited and confidentially *consulted* this gentleman!

tion,—in the assumed name of their communion, must the PEOPLE to whom they belong be found guilty by implication unless they disclaim and renounce? Will not the dignified SILENCE of MILLIONS sufficiently mark their disapprobation, or contempt, of the handful of shallow declaimers who presume to personate them? Are we to understand that in future the harangue of every demagogue is to be deemed the declared sense of the nation, unless the nation rises to chop logic with him, to falsify his facts and expose his sophisms? How long is it since this new principle of government has been adopted? or in what *other* instance than the *present* has it been acted upon by the statesman or the legislator? Heretofore it has been the habit, even when addresses poured in upon the legislature from every quarter of the kingdom, urging a doubtful measure—to deny that they spoke the public sense; for addresses may be procured by the arts of dishonest intrigue, while the mass of the people remain silent either from dissent or indifference. Is it, then, only when the question relates to the Catholics that silence is to be taken for a declared assent, and that the nation is to be identified with the intemperate and seditious demagogue? Can the errors of Mr. Elliot and Mr. Ponsonby be no otherwise sheltered, than by arranging, trying, and convicting the Catholics of Ireland in the person of Mr. Keogh, without any other proof of their *privity* than *silence*!

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But what is it that the Catholics could have been expected to disclaim? Is it the private opinions avowed by the individuals who harangued at the Rotunda? or the indecorous and inflammatory language in which some of those opinions were uttered? Were the Catholics of Ireland to call county, and city, and parish meetings to investigate the propriety or absurdity—the truth or the loyalty of the opinions which Mr. Keogh or any of his coadjutors professed themselves to entertain? Were they, after having duly discussed and pronounced upon the *opinions* of those gentlemen, then to enter upon a critical disquisition of the *language* in which they had been expressed; and next to publish their decision on those *interesting* subjects, for the edification and government of all future orators at Catholic meetings? Truly this is too ridiculous a notion to need serious refutation—But what remained for the Catholics to disclaim if not the opinion or the language of the Catholic agitators? Why one thing only, and that is—the abstract proposition, “that the Irish Catholics conceived themselves intitled to the privileges of the Constitution, and that a Petition should be presented to the Legislature on that subject.”

Now will any man of common understanding say that, however the Catholics of Ireland might disapprove of the hasty and intemperate manner in which some of their body in Dublin had conducted themselves, those Catholics should have publicly come forward and disavowed their hopes
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and their claims—hopes and claims long cherished—nearest to their hearts, and respecting their most loved if not their most valuable interests? Was it to be expected that the Irish Catholics, in order to prevent the consequences which were likely to follow from the indiscreet sanctions * given by the Irish Executive to the hasty zeal of the Dublin meeting, should have openly and solemnly declared that “they did NOT now wish to be restored to the rights of British subjects—and that this was an IMPROPER TIME to solicit that restoration from the legislature.” Could they be expected to do this, too, at the moment when an Irish Chancellor and an Irish Secretary were actually overseeing in the metropolis the steps taken to forward the Petition, and for ought that the other Catholics of Ireland could know on the subject, tacitly assenting to them? Surely it was enough that they were silent, that they suffered the ministers at the Castle to manage the proceedings of the metropolis without embarrassing or distracting them by a single memorial, remonstrance, or resolution from any part

* The *sanctions* to which I allude will be found in the conferences held by the Chancellor and the Secretary with some very insignificant persons, who had attended at the Catholic meetings, and whom from that reason alone, as it should seem, the Chancellor and Secretary thought it right to treat with on the Catholic claims. One of those persons, Mr. O'Connor, is mentioned in my Lord Howick's *exposé* as having put to Mr. Elliot the question which puzzled him. The reader is apt to suppose this must have been Mr. O'Connor *the eminent Catholic Merchant*. How will he be surprized to learn that it was a young *attorney*, a man not known even in *that* capacity!

part of the country. Until it can be stated upon what principle of human action, or from what motive of policy or prudence the Irish Catholics could have been expected to go further in assisting the Irish Executive, the advocate for the Catholics may surely be silent.

Such are the observations, which, as an Irishman anxiously desirous to prevent jealousy and misunderstanding among the liberal and the honest of my countrymen, I have been led to offer in defence of the Irish Catholics. They derive, I am conscious, no aid from the arts of composition, and are submitted under the many disadvantages of anonymous publication. But simple and unsupported as they are, I am yet confident enough to hope, that they fully vindicate the Catholics from the heavy charge of having overturned a popular administration, by a premature, intemperate, unjustifiable obstruction of their claims. The Catholics of Ireland, it is obvious, might be defended against that charge upon other grounds—particularly by shewing that in truth, it was *not* the Catholic Petition which turned out the ministers, but either the indiscretion and imprudence with which ministers conducted themselves in a transaction, which was no otherwise connected with the Catholic Petition than that it was a temporising and temporary expedient to prevent that Petition from being urged; or, that they owe their dismissal neither to the Petition nor to their indiscretion, but to a previously existing prejudice, in a certain place resolved on their destruction, and which only waited an opportunity to effect its purpose. But I avoid those topics; and shall

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only say, that though I am persuaded the measure proposed by the British ministers as a present substitute for full concession to the Catholic claims, was an inadequate and injudicious measure, which would not have produced any of the effects expected from it; yet I am equally persuaded, it was founded in an honest and anxious desire to serve the Catholics, and promote the common good of the empire—that the Catholics owe gratitude to the British ministers for what they have attempted in their favor, and have only to lament, that the unaccountable mistakes and mismanagement of affairs in Ireland, should have led ministers to adopt measures that produced such unfortunate consequences.

In what I have offered with a view to vindicate the recent conduct of the Catholics, I have avoided the discussion, interesting and momentous as it is, whether the Catholics ought to press, or a Protestant government should in prudence grant, the claim that has been made to an unrestrained enjoyment of all the privileges of the constitution. Whether the Catholics, having already obtained, as it alleged, all that is necessary or useful to the free toleration of their religion—to the full security and enjoyment of their property and liberty—are justified in claiming to share *political* power with the professors of the religion of the state—whether, in fact, that power can be shared with them to the degree in which it is demanded, without manifest danger to the religious establishment of the country—these are questions which did not fall within the scope of my design, which was to justify
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the Catholics against the charges of those who have already in numberless instances, decided those questions in favor of the Catholic claim, and have acted upon that decision. I have taken it, therefore, as conceded, that the claim of the Catholics is founded in justice, and supported by every sound argument of political expediency and legislative prudence. But, if this question were to be argued, surely it would be sufficient to refer to the unanswered and unanswerable arguments by which a Grenville and a Grattan have already supported the Catholic pretensions; and if they wanted supplemental aid, a reference to what is daily passing before our eyes would fully demonstrate, that reason, safety, and expediency, all require the abolition of a distinction which it is proved by *recent* fact, enables every base faction that accident or abuse raises into place, to convulse, for the most dishonest purposes, the good order of society; and all but extinguish every trace of civilization among us—to arm the hand of citizen against citizen, and to protect the worst corruptions of government by the unhallowed fury of religious rancor!

I am well aware, that the observations which I have thus offered in vindication of the Catholics of Ireland will please neither of two parties; that of the partizans of the late Irish Executive, or that of the *violent* Catholics, with whom the proceedings of the recent Dublin meetings originated. The satellites and sycophants of an Ex-Chancellor or an Ex-Minister, whose return to power may be a plausible object of speculation, will not easily assent to reasoning, or admit facts

which impute imbecility or mismanagement to their patrons—and the *violent* of any party will be content with nothing which is not, in language and in action, as intemperate as uncultivated and faucy ambition impels its votaries to be. I am alike regardless of the disapprobation of both—because I am persuaded there is a class of men in both countries, men whom I more highly value—by whom at least the *principle* of these pages will be approved—men whose great and only object is the *peace* and *well-being* of the empire—to whom it is a matter of indifference whether this or that man be in power or disgrace, provided the Catholics and the Protestants of Ireland be brought to regard each other with confidence and kindness.

Of such men I am sure I shall have the concurrence, when I say to the Catholic, as his friend—a friend, anxious as he is himself, for the ultimate success of his present claim—that **NOTHING** can ever prevent that success, but **INTEMPERANCE** or **APATHY**. Let the rational Catholic look back on the history of his country for the last forty years; he will find that within that period he has been gradually but steadily rising in the Constitution. The interval which marks his ascent may excite his wonder, if he has intellect enough to trace the causes of his own success, he will find that it was not the result of strong language—of swaggering threats, or of seditious menaces—but the natural and certain effect of mitigated prejudice, and more enlightened policy on the one hand—and of steady loyalty—a well ordered *sensibility* to the blessings of freedom—and, *perhaps*, diminished

minished superstition on the other. Let him continue to tread the same path with inflexible steadiness, and his ultimate success is beyond the power of chance. Wealthy and numerous as the Catholics of Ireland now are, let them discountenance the petty agitators and seditious demagogues who have abused their name; let them avoid the arts of political intriguers, who are ever ready to convert them into instruments of private interest—let them at the same time, on every proper occasion, evince to their friends, and to their enemies, that they love freedom too well not to pant for its enjoyment—let them act thus, and the claim of the Catholic Body will acquire a *momentum* not to be resisted: as well might a mound of sand, raised by infants, repel the ocean, as the artifices of a minister or the prejudices of a faction frustrate the Catholic, thus acting, in pursuit of his high purpose!

But let him adopt an opposite principle of action, substituting intemperate heat and seditious arrogance for cool, persevering, and constitutional effort—constituted as these countries are, the *first* certain result must be the degradation of his own character; the *next*, probably, blood; blood, either on the scaffold or in the field—the extinction of his best hopes and his remission to that state from which the wisdom and the virtue, of a century have redeemed him! Should numbers in such a conflict, contrary to every rational calculation, produce temporary success—even success would be destruction. Great physical force may sometimes, like the mountain torrent, overbear all obstacle—but its progress is devastation—its triumph

umph, death! In the hour of victory it weeps over the wreck of social order—and its only conquest is over national civilization—public happiness—and all the charities of private life!

But of the continuing loyalty and good sense of the Catholic body, it were as absurd to doubt, as of their final success—both are certain. Unhappily, however, for the Catholic, he is likely to be admitted to the benefits of the Constitution when the Constitution itself seems declining to its grave—as if but to enjoy the melancholy privacy of an unfavoured son—a death-bed reconciliation with a relenting parent! Whether it be reasonable to hope, that in the vicissitudes of mortal affairs, we may yet witness a renovation of that exhausted and expiring wonder, or whether it be now sunk or sinking into eternal night, from which no revolution of human opinions or passions shall ever raise it; in either case prudence and virtue point out both to the Catholic and Protestant Irishman the same course—to forget religious distinction as causes of party animosity, to remember that they are christians and countrymen—and to act as if they believe, what is indubitably true, that whatever disturbs the public peace or foment the angry passion of party, is equally and certainly injurious to the Catholic and the Protestant Irishman.

FINIS.