

CATHOLIC QUESTION.

The following view of the Catholic Question, as far as Ireland is concerned, is submitted to the consideration of the dispassionate and impartial.

1. The Roman Catholics of Ireland enjoy perfect liberty, as to the acquisition, dominion, and disposal of property, and the exercise of their religion. They are competent to become magistrates, lawyers, grand and petty jurors, members of corporations, and officers in the army, customs, and excise; and are invested with the elective franchise. A College has also been founded and supported by Government for the education of their Clergy. This is not a state of vassalage; nor can further extension of privilege be justly called emancipation. In such extension few are interested, and the remainder are already on an equality with Protestants of the same rank.

2. They are, however, debarred from aspiring to the Throne and the Government of Ireland—from filling the higher offices in the state and the law—from the judicial functions—from the command of the army—and from seats in Parliament. But it is not a subject of discontent, that a Protestant State should have a Protestant Government; especially, as its civil and religious liberties were once subverted by the contrary policy. In all countries, the interests of the individual must give way to the welfare of the public, and even the rights of a part to the safety of the whole.

3. The object of the present application to Parliament is, to be relieved from all these incapacities. The speeches of the leading members of the Catholic body, and other authentic publications declare, that they will admit of no compromise, but must have all or none; and in their petition they demand "a full, equal, and unqualified participation of the benefits of the laws and constitution," and a repeal of all "privations, restrictions, and distinctions." Their purpose then is, that it shall be lawful for the King to profess the Popish religion, to marry a Papist, and to educate his children in the same faith; to select a Popish Council and Cabinet; to appoint a Popish Chancellor and Judges; and to put the command and patronage of the army into the hands of a Popish Commander in Chief.

4. It may be thought, that no King could be guilty of such an abuse of his power. A free country, however, should not leave it to the discretion of any individual to effect such a change. It is more becoming in a free people to say to the Monarch—"We have found, that such a Government is incompatible with our religion and liberties; and if you adopt these measures, you shall forfeit the crown." Such is the language of the law. It is penal and restrictive on the King, and he should not be blamed for discouraging an extension of prerogative to himself, which he thinks may hereafter be injurious to his people. We should rather respect his paternal and disinterested solicitude for the welfare of posterity.

5. That such a contingency may take place, is rendered sufficiently probable by history. We know, that many men of the greatest genius, learning and virtue, have been converted to Popery. We know, that some of our own Kings have been secret abettors and open professors of that faith, at the known risk, and eventual loss of the crown. We know, that it is peculiarly calculated to entangle a Prince, like Charles II. inattentive to religious knowledge, and indifferent to religious principle, addicted to licentious manners, and therefore liable to superstitious apprehensions, especially if exposed to female blandishments and jesuitical intrigues.

6. Such is the present state of their demands. In this extent they are evidently inadmissible; and to this extent the Catholics seem to be irrevocably pledged. If, however, they should consent to moderate their claims, and be content with a partial communication of privileges, it would then become a question, how far such a modification would answer the ends of the State and of the Catholic body. Hitherto such partial measures have not been productive of conciliation; and it may, therefore, be feared, that such temporising policy would only encrease their power, without conciliating their affections. That was certainly a preposterous plan, which proposed to begin by putting the sword into the hands of the discontented.

If the Catholics were made eligible to some of those offices from which they are now excluded, while the higher departments still remained in the hands of the Protestants, they might never be actually appointed even to these inferior objects of their ambition; and then, the sense of eligibility, and the experience of exclusion, might become greater sources of discontent, than actual incapacity now is. Such has been the effect of their exclusion from corporations, to which they are admissible by law.

7. A modification of Catholic pretensions necessarily implies certain arrangements—such as Mr Pitt had in contemplation, and all their friends in Parliament at present deem indispensable. This suggestion, however, though coming from their most powerful patron, seems to have excited disgust. They expect to reduce Government to unconditional submission. How then could the adoption of such expedients be expected to give satisfaction?

Of these arrangements the Veto is one. The French Government has renounced all foreign authority in spiritual matters, within the territory of the empire; and has obliged the Pope to become a subject of France. Now, whatever reason there may be in this principle when applied to France, Great Britain and Ireland must have much better grounds for protesting against the interference of the Pope:—because France professes the Pope's religion, and we disclaim it;—and because the Pope is a citizen and subject of France, the enemy of Great Britain.

8. Still it is asserted, that the Papal authority, being purely spiritual, cannot be dangerous to the State.—But, why may not the Pope, at the instigation of the enemy, model a hierarchy suited to his purpose, and by their means forward the designs of France? That this is possible, even without the concurrence of the Irish Bishops, is evident from the 12th and 13th resolutions of the Roman Catholic Prelates at their late meeting in Dublin:

"The recommendation of us Bishops, when concurring, had been progressively advancing in weight and authority with the Holy See." It was "in progress to become a part of our ecclesiastical system, that the choice of persons to fill the office of Bishops, should effectually originate from, and be circumscribed by us; so far, at least, as to make it inaccessible to any foreign temporal influence, or corrupt recommendation."

The election of Bishops by the Deans and Chapters has not been in use, as a general practice, for a long time past; nor are the offices in the Chapters regularly filled. The recommendations either originate with Doctor Troy, Titular Archbishop of Dublin and Legate, as is generally understood, or if they originate otherwise, are transmitted through him to the See of Rome.

If a direct interference were thought dangerous or impolitic, the Pope might, at least, keep a Legate in Ireland, devoted to the interest of his new country. Such a Minister might either directly recommend for the episcopal office such Priests as are known to have imbibed a hatred to the nation and government of England; or by hopes of translation to more eligible dioceses, might induce the Bishops to concur in his recommendation.

Thus the Hierarchy would be devoted to the enemy; the Bishops would have the appointment of the inferior clergy, and the Priests would have a despotic authority over four millions of the King's subjects, whenever they chose to employ those formidable weapons with which they are furnished by the church, and which the stoutest Catholic can neither resist nor despise.

It is not, therefore, a just cause of complaint, that those are excluded from our Executive and Legislative Councils, and from the highest judicial and military offices, who maintain it to be their duty to correspond with the enemy; who avow, that they are under the patronage of a French Patriarch, perhaps of the family of Bonaparte; and who refuse to allow their lawful Sovereign a check on this dangerous interference in his own dominions. There is more reason for them to be thankful, that they are permitted to participate in the municipal Government of the country, to vote for Members of Parliament, and to partake of every privilege enjoyed by the most favoured subject; except those which pertain to Sovereignty.

We bid the Catholic Sovereigns of Europe allow the Supreme head of the Church of England to appoint Bishops, over a large proportion of their subjects, without control?

9. It is not now pretended, that a negative in the appointment of Bishops vested in the crown is contrary to any article of faith; nor do the Prelates rely on this in their late or former resolutions. They only think it a dangerous innovation in the present posture of affairs. This is a question of prudence or expediency, and a matter of choice. They accordingly prefer a continuance of disqualification to a change in their practice. "I think, and am certain (says their Patriarch in his letter to the Gentlemen of Louth) that the Prelates did not mean to decide, that the admission of a veto or negative on the part of the crown, with the consent of the Holy See, in the election of Roman Catholic Bishops, would be contrary to the Doctrine of the Catholic Church, or to any practice or usage essentially and indispensably connected with

might ever truly be attended with consequences dangerous to the Roman Catholic Religion. Such danger, in my mind, and in the opinion of several other Prelates, is of a temporary nature resulting from existing circumstances."

If it be asked, why the King does not claim a similar power over Protestant sects, the answer is easy. They have no connexion with any foreign state:—they have no Bishops, that can model the Clergy to their own views:—and they make no pretensions to the property of the soil, and the rightful dominion of the country.

10. There is an erroneous notion, confidently disseminated and implicitly acquiesced in, that the Roman Catholics are the indigenous or original inhabitants of Ireland, and thus entitled to the property of the soil. That this opinion is not founded in fact must be known to all, who have read the history of Ireland; for, not to go back to the first peopling of this country from different parts of Europe, we know, that the Popish inhabitants of Ulster are very generally emigrants from the Highlands of Scotland; and those of Leinster, as generally colonists from England and Wales; and as to Munster and Connaught they also were partly peopled by English settlers. During four hundred years, that elapsed between the invasion of Henry II. and the Reformation, there was a continual influx of adventurers from Great Britain, who established themselves here, got possession of extensive tracts of land, intermarried with the natives, and are the progenitors of the principal Roman Catholic families now extant. In process of time, they became completely incorporated with the Irish, in property, habits of living and hostility to England. The English by descent were more inimical to the English by birth than the natives were: and even after the Reformation, the conformity of the English to the manners and religion of the Irish was a subject of complaint and alarm. This intermixture, by marriage, relapse to Popery and conformity, continues to this day; so that, it is now impossible for any family to prove that their ancestors were genuine Irish and that they themselves are not a mixed progeny, or altogether English, as the Baronies of Forth and Bargie unquestionably are.

11. Another error on this subject, that has occasioned much prejudice and heat, arises from a misapprehension of the treaty of Limerick. It is often stated that all the Catholics of Ireland are included in the second article; though it is expressly limited to the army of King James, the inhabitants of his garrison towns in five counties, and such as were under their protection at the time of signing the articles.—The only stipulation in favour of the Catholics in general, is, that they shall enjoy the exercise of their religion. (Art. 1.) They were not even allowed "to ride with a sword and a case of pistols, or to keep a gun in their houses," excepting only those described in the second and third articles. (Art. VII.)

12. In this argument, there is no allusion to any principles or practices of the Catholics, civil or religious, ancient or modern.—Every thing that has ever been said in their favour may be true, without affecting the conclusion. It cannot, therefore, be charged with bigotry or calumny; aspersions too freely cast on the exclusiveness of the present day. On the whole, although union and cordiality among fellow citizens be very desirable, it is to be feared, that a perfect incorporation is not practicable; and if not, the question should be put to rest, and cease to be a source of faction, discontent and irritation. If the Catholics think, that such concessions, as may be required, are irreconcilable with their principles, they are right in withholding them; and their most dutiful and dignified conduct is to acquiesce with good temper in those privations which are the price of a good conscience. The Protestants may regret, that the state is thus deprived of the services of many valuable subjects, but they may reasonably hope, that the more enlightened, learned, and aspiring of the Catholic body, will gradually co-operate with them in the service of their common country; for if we allow any influence to the truth of our profession, to the habits contracted by living among Protestants, and to the growing intelligence of the Catholics, it may be expected that their ablest lawyers, their most enterprising soldiers, and their most respectable nobility and gentry, will gradually conform, from conviction, to those conditions, which are indispensable to their succeeding to the Bench, the Staff and the Senate.

RUSSELL

COUNTY OF TYRONE MEETING.

(From the Dublin Correspondent)

On the 4th inst. a County meeting of the Gentry and the Freeholders of the County of Tyrone was held at Omagh, pursuant to public notice. Upon the High Sheriff taking the Chair, the Right Hon. Sir JOHN STEWART, (late Attorney General) addressed the meeting in a most eloquent and impressive speech. Though the occasion was unexampled in that county, and the assembly numerous beyond any which customary occurrences could have drawn together, yet Sir John was accompanied throughout the entire of his speech with the corresponding emotions of his hearers, while he called on them to come forward and renounce, for themselves and their country, those lamentable prejudices which had separated them so long from their Roman Catholic countrymen. He said that as one of those who had signed the requisition to convene the meeting, he felt it incumbent upon him to state his motives for so doing, and in support of the resolutions he should have the honour of submitting to the consideration of the great and respectable body then assembled, to offer a few arguments. Here Sir John went copiously into the history of the penal laws, as they affected the Roman Catholics of Ireland, expatiated upon the policy out of which they had arisen, and then demonstrated the extinction of any cause, real or imaginary, for the continuance of what now casts no light shade upon our Statute Book. He maintained that it was the duty of every man, interested in the welfare and prosperity of the British Church and State, to promote every measure calculated to unite all classes of his Majesty's subjects, and for ever to put down those internal divisions, so ruinous to the welfare and happiness of the State. He proceeded then to make a well merited eulogium upon the Catholics of the county of Tyrone: during those times, when civil discord scourged the land, he said, by their excellent conduct they contributed to the peace and security that County so very peculiarly enjoyed. He was happy, he said, to bear his testimony to the comprehensive merit of this description of his countrymen, and he hoped that the great and independent country then assembled would, by the declaration of their sentiments, that day, lead others to the adoption of like conciliating measures towards their Catholic brethren, upon those principles of security, necessarily connected with the safety of our establishments in Church and State, as the same were handed down by their forefathers.

Sir JOHN having read the resolutions, purporting the concurrence of the county in the emancipation of their Catholic countrymen, upon such grounds as may preserve unimpaired the present form of the Constitution; Major CRAWFORD seconded them, observing that he fully concurred in the able learned and eloquent speech so happily delivered by the Right Hon. Baronet.

Capt. BORNSTOR, Tyrone Militia, deprecated any agitation of the question at that time, and tho' he had given the subject much consideration, yet the shortness of the notice to come to a decision on so many various questions, induced him to move an adjournment sine die, leaving the matter to Parliament, and their worthy representative in that body.

Mr. JAMES VERNER said, he was for the adjournment, and that he came to the meeting in order to remove those prejudices that had existed so long against himself and his family with regard to their opposition to Roman Catholics; he alleged that his son had lately let his estate to persons of great persuasion on long tenures; that he could appeal to the Priest of the parish for the cordial sentiments of his family, who were not hostile to Roman Catholics, but that he and they, during the rebellion, had taken an active part in uniting a body of men in support of the King and Constitution. He would, however, on the present occasion vote for an adjournment, as best calculated to insure the peace of the county.

Mr. SINCLAIR, of Holy Hill, said he would not agree to the adjournment upon any of the grounds stated. As to the short notice, the very numerous and respectable meeting from all parts of the county was the best answer to that objection, and surely no question could be more important than the one under consideration. Was there not an imperious necessity at this crisis for that great Protestant county, to express their sentiments of conciliation and regard for their Catholic brethren? What could tend so much to allay those dissensions, and extinguish discord unhappily too, too long existing among Irishmen? therefore the resolution should have had determined support.

Lieut. Col. STEWART, of the Tyrone regiment, followed and declared himself for the adjournment; that his father's sentiments were well known to the county and approved of; as the best proof of which was, that they had returned him as their representative for 42 years.

Mr. GEORGE PERRY said, he could not acquiesce in the adjournment of a meeting tending so much to conciliate and draw together the energy of the county in support of our

lutely necessary, as upon a former occasion the Grand Jury, who may be called the representative wealth of the county, addressed their representatives to oppose the claims of the Roman Catholics; and therefore to loose them from their shackles. We would vote for the resolutions, and then publish "the happy change of sentiment on this momentous question."

Mr. JAMES BUCHANAN, of Common Green, near Omagh, stated, that he was an Orangeman of 1798, and that he rejoiced "to have an opportunity of expressing his sentiments in favour of Catholic emancipation." He was intimately acquainted with many of the Catholic body, and was deeply interested in the peace and prosperity of the country—and he was fully convinced no measure would tend more to the best interests of the British empire, and of Ireland in particular, than to put an end to those dissensions that have so unhappily, and so long divided and distracted this otherwise highly favoured country." Mr. Buchanan made some apt remarks upon what fell from Lieut. Col. Stewart, who had advanced no reason for voting for the adjournment—and then proceeded to express his hearty concurrence in any resolution of the tendency of those proposed, and which would show our Catholic countrymen that the Protestants of the great, loyal, and tried county of Tyrone were favourable to concession on their part, and that as the present political situation of Europe, and the Pope, who was now the subject and prisoner of France, required of them a guard against the influence of Bonaparte, whom all must consider to be the greatest enemy in fact the Papal power had ever experienced—the Roman Catholics, he doubted not, would shew on their parts an equal degree of concession, which to many appeared essential to the general peace, happiness, and stability of the empire.

The question was then loudly demanded, and the resolutions were put and carried, without any other dissentients than those that were for the adjournment.

The meeting was called at the requisition of the Earl of Belmore, Sir John Stewart, Br. T. C. Murray, George Perry, James Crawford, James Lowry, James Sinclair, Samuel Galbraith, George Lendrum, J. McCauland, Robert H. Lowry, Theodore Bailie, Acheson M. Moore, John H. Knox, James Caulfield, Esqrs.