

by political rancour and sectional prejudice, and that every nerve was strained by the party out of power at the time to make it appear that he had clearly transgressed the law of purity imposed by himself on the Navy Department in 1785. "The charges against Lord Melville were groundless," Lord Cockburn says in his "Memorials," "and were at last reduced to insignificancy. To those who knew the pecuniary indifference of the man, and who think of the comparative facility of peculation in those irregular days, the mere smallness of the sums which he was said to have improperly touched, is of itself almost sufficient evidence of his innocence. If he had been disposed to speculate, it would not have been for farthings."

Lord Cockburn then goes on to remark on the benefits which accrued, especially in Scotland, to the Whigs, by the impeachment, notwithstanding its failure. "It did more," he says, "to emancipate Scotland than even the exclusion of Melville's party from power. His political omnipotence, which without any illiberality on his part, implied, at that time, the suppression of all opposition, had lasted so long and so steadily, that in despair the discontented concurred in the general impression that, happen what might, Harry the Ninth would always be uppermost. When he was not only deprived of power, but subjected to trial, people could scarcely believe their senses. The triumphant anticipations of his enemies, many of whom exulted with premature and disgusting joy over the ruin of the man, were as absurd as the rage of his friends, who railed, with vain malignity, at his accusers and the Constitution. Between the two, the progress of independence was materially advanced. A blow had been struck which, notwithstanding his acquittal, relaxed our local fetters. Our little great men felt the precariousness of their power; and even the mildest friends of improvement—those who, though opposed to him, deplored the fall of a distinguished countryman more than they valued any political benefit involved in his misfortune, were relieved by seeing that the mainspring of the Scotch pro-consular system was weakened."

A satirical poem of the day which I possess, entitled, "All the Talents," by Polypus, expresses the Tory feeling in regard to Melville and his chief accuser, Whitbread. It thus speaks:

"Could Whitbread catch a spark of Windham's fire,
To deeds more dang'rous Whitbread might aspire;
But as it stands, our brewer has not *voûc*
To lead the mob or to mislead the House.