

was not likely that Mr. Dickens should be accurate in the other.

The Protestant Association he represents as a nonentity. "It had never made any public demonstration; had scarcely if ever been heard of save through him; had never been seen, and was supposed by many to have been the mere creature of his disordered brain." p. 156. Now, setting aside the Scotch riots and pillages which gave at that time a very serious character to all such associations, it is erroneous to represent this association as a mere creature of Lord George Gordon's. It existed before he joined it. It continued to exist, and was defended by Wesley long after the riots. It was started under the pretence of disseminating tracts against Popery; and it was only because Lord George having made himself remarkable by his doings in Scotland that he was invited to put himself at its head. So far from not "having been seen" it had its ramifications all over the island, and at the very period of the riots it had in town its numerous deputations from the country to swell its muster roll.\* One of the divisions of the memorable encampment on St. George's Fields was the Scotch division;—composed of the flower of the Scotch residents in London. Besides this, it had well known clergymen as its directors, and had held numerous public meetings in London, the proceedings of which, as Lord George's trial shows, were watched with suspicion, and carefully minuted down.† But of whom was the mob in palace yard composed? The narrators of the time are not very careful to tell us. With them the mob was not composed of human individuals but is a sort of incomprehensible abstraction which pulls down houses and commits all kinds of crimes and extravagances. This undoubtedly affords great latitude to a writer of fiction to make up his mob as he pleases; and accordingly Mr. Dickens, though he introduces some psalm singing, yet, on the whole, makes the most important characters in the mob—the leaders and directors—a set of the lowest ruffians and cut-throats. This, however, is a grievous error. The mob was, in most respects, a multiplication of the various phases of Lord George's character. There was religious fanaticism, there was Jacobinism, there were, besides, low depravity and crime, which makes the hands and tools of most lawless outbreaks. To understand the true character of the mob, we must recollect that it was contemporary with the first demand for Parliamentary Reform, and preceded by less than ten years, the sanguinary brutalities of the French Revolution, which is dimly heralded. Bearing these things in mind, Sir Samuel Romilly who mingled in the crowd in Palace-yard, shall throw for us a few rays of light upon this dark scene—(Memoirs, vol. i. :)

"A miserable fanatic who accosted me, not indeed with any friendly design, &c., told me that the reign of the Romans had lasted too long."

If the whole character of the proceedings do not demonstrate the essentially religious fanaticism of the mob, the follow-

ing direct testimony of the same competent witness may help us to form a sound opinion:

"I would fain have mingled in a circle which I saw assembled round a female preacher, who, by her gestures and actions seemed to be well persuaded, or desirous of persuading others, that she was animated by some supernatural spirit;—but I found it attended with some little danger. \* \* \* \* \*

My joining, however, in the No Popery cry soon pacified my inquisitors, or rather indeed, gained me their favor; for a very devout butcher insisted upon shaking hands with me as a token of his friendship.

"I have heard from three persons (strangers to each other,) who joined in construction with the populace, that it was a current opinion among them that the king was a Papist. Some were sure of it; they pretended that he heard mass privately, and that his confessor had the direction of all political concerns. A woman told a friend of mine that she hoped to see the streets stream with the blood of the Papists."

But we cannot pursue this subject further. We might extend our observations to a much greater length: but we have said enough to show the enormous deficiency which we see in Mr. Dickens's version of these lamentable proceedings.—There is no doubt that the basis of these proceedings was a very intelligible religious fanaticism. The Protestant Association patronized by Wesley, intended threats of violence, and must have contemplated direct violence in imitation of the Edinburgh disturbances.\* This Association was a very real and widely-spread body which had an existence quite independent of Lord George Gordon.—All their acts of violence were guided by an instinct of religious fanaticism, however low blackguard cut-throats may have been the instruments by whom the violence was actually perpetrated. The influence of Lord George was personal among the mob, and at the lobby of the House of Commons, as the evidence on his trial proves, and not gained by the aid of any strange organization such as that of "Muster Gashford."‡ He wrote public and private letters approving of the lawless doings of the rioters after the plunder had begun. He was no madman in the ordinary sense of the word, and if he were, he retained unimpaired his influence and credit with these gangs of religious fanatics, long after these disastrous proceedings. We may add, that while the Protestant Association owed its very existence to the example of the successful riots in Scotland, the proceedings in London were accompanied with similar outrages in other large towns—Hull, Bristol, &c. and that at the close of the Parliament, even after a violent reaction had set in, Burke was rejected from the representation of Bristol for his share in the refusal to Repeal the Relief Bill—A Bill to which public attention had been directed mainly by the proceedings of the Association.

One omission we do particularly regret. It relates to the peaceable conduct of the thousands of poor Irish who lived in London at that time, and whose wonderful patience and forbearance under all kinds of provocation, were highly eulogized by Burke. This is a branch of the subject which Mr. Dickens has entirely forgotten. We subjoin the passage from Burke's speech to which we allude.‡

One of the oldest conjunctions of Atheism and Protestant fanaticism we have ever seen is to be found in the life of Lord George by Dr. Watson—a professor of the religion of nature, and a rank Jacobin. The following extract from the life (relating to about the year 1784) will furnish a sufficient ground for believing that the anti-Catholic fanaticism of the riots, was in part Jacobinical. The writer was an intimate friend of Lord George, and the book was written to rescue his friend's name from obliquity at a time when no motive but sincere admiration could have led to such a task.

"The Holy Fisherman of Rome, who holds the keys of Paradise in one hand, and the gates of hell in another; who consistently pretends to be the servant of Servants, whilst he arrogates to himself a dispensing power over the lives and properties of men—this spiritual Tyrant, whose professional practise is ever to devise new crimes, despatched two faithful Jesuits of the true genuine stamp, provided with a pardon for all crimes, past, present, and to come, and on condition that they would assassinate the President of the Protestant Association. These fiends, who cover the darkest and most dangerous designs with an hypocritical sanctity, took up their lodgings near Welbeck-street; but notwithstanding the secrecy of the Church, he was informed that his death had been resolved upon in the Vatican! He was, therefore, consequently, upon his guard, constantly attended by a friend, and very particular in his diet.

At this period he happened to fall sick, and was under the directions of his Physicians when these monsters attempted to excite their orders. They sent a phial filled with a certain liquid, to which were affixed instructions apparently written by his apothecary, with the strictest injunctions to take it immediately. As it was brought by a stranger who hastily departed, it created suspicion, and at the very moment he was about to swallow the draught he hesitated, and sent for the apothecary; the imposition was detected, the medicine analyzed, and found to contain the most deadly poison. These are the arms which his Holiness employs to destroy unsuspecting men who oppose the interests of Popery, and it is to reinstate his adherents that Britons are now in arms; but the genius of liberty is victorious, and will baffle all the united efforts of priests and tyrants."

This biography was of course written during the war of the French Revolution.

\* He who lost his life in his provoked duel with our own O'Connell.

‡ Matters were now drawing to a crisis. All the greatest towns sent deputations to London.—Watson's Life of Lord George.

From the Freeman's Journal.  
LORD GEORGE GORDON'S MOB.

Our readers will recollect that in a late number of the Journal we published a criticism on one of the productions of the popular novelist Dickens, in which he gives a very erroneous and absurd portraiture of the notorious Anti-popery riots of Lord George Gordon and his mob, in London in 1780. We have this week received the following communication on this subject, from a respected friend who was an eye witness to the terrible scenes which then disgraced the British capital.

[The Letter referred to above shall appear in our next.]

† One of the witnesses had for months before the riot been transmitting notes of the proceedings of the Associations, and of the speeches made at its meetings, to Charles Butler. It was as well known as any similar association in our time.

‡ It rests on the evidence of the Rev. Thomas Bowen, who officiated as chaplain in the House of Commons on the 2nd of June, that his Lordship addressed the House in those words;—"The Scotch had no redress till they pulled down the mass-houses; (or, "when the Scotch pulled down the mass-house they had redress,") "Lord Weymouth then sent official assurance that the Act should not be extended to them: and why should they be better off than you?"

§ The mob expressed their willingness to leave the lobby if Lord George bid them; and he was pressed to do so by the chaplain (see evidence of the Rev. Mr. Bowen); but, says the enthusiastic biographer, when the mob asked whether they should go home, Lord George "cautiously wavered the question, and told them that "probably the sessions would soon break up, and their petition be lost forever."

¶ There was a circumstance (justice will not suffer me to pass it over) which, if anything could enforce the reasons I have given, would fully justify the act of relief, and render a repeal, unnaturally impossible. It was the behaviour of the persecuted Roman Catholics under the acts of violence and brutal insolence which they suffered. I suppose there are not in London less than four or five thousand of that persuasion from my country, who do a great deal of the most laborious works in the metropolis; and they chiefly inhabit those quarters, which were the principal theatre of the bigoted multitude. They are known to be men of strong arms, and quick feelings, and more remarkable for a determined resolution than clear ideas, or much foresight. But though provoked by everything that can stir the blood of men, their houses and chapels in flames, and with the most atrocious profanations of everything which they hold sacred before their eyes, not a hand was moved to retaliate, or even to defend.—Had a conflict once begun, the rage of their persecutors would have been redoubled. Thus fury increasing by the reverberation of outrages, houses being fired for house, and church for chapel, I am convinced that no power under heaven could have prevented a general conflagration; and at this day London would have been a tale. But I am well informed, and the things speak it, that their clergy exerted their whole influence to keep their people in such a state of forbearance and quietness when I look back fills me with astonishment; but not with astonishment only. Their merits on that occasion ought not to be forgotten; nor will they when Englishmen come to recollect themselves. I am sure it were far more proper to have called them forth and given them the thanks of both Houses of Parliament, than to have suffered those worthy clergymen, and excellent citizens, to be hunted into holes and corners, whilst we are making law-minded inquisitions into the number of their people.