

THE



STAR,

AND CONCEPTION BAY JOURNAL

Vol. III.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22 1837.

No. 135.

HARBOUR GRACE, Conception Bay, Newfoundland:—Printed and Published by JOHN THOMAS BURTON, at his Office, opposite Messrs. W. Dixon & Co's

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

ABOLITION OF THE PUNISHMENT OF DEATH.

Lord J. Russell moved for leave to bring in several bills to amend the criminal law in furtherance of the recommendation of the commissioners on the criminal laws. The first bill abolished the punishment of death for the crime of forgery. His lordship gave a history of the measures attempted to be carried in Parliament by Sir Samuel Romilly, and the Marquis of Lansdowne, for the above purpose; and referred to documents to prove that the crime of forgery had decreased since the punishment of death had not been carried into execution. In those cases in which the law retained the capital punishment there had been in 1834, 35, and 1836, but one conviction in each year, whilst in those cases of forgery in which the capital punishment was abolished the convictions had been 58, 63, and 54. The solicitor to the Bankers' Association, whose time had been up to 1833 principally taken up by attending to commitments, since that period had found a progressive decrease in the crime. A considerable number of the London bankers were anxious for the abolishing of the punishment of death, and while this law continued a difficulty would be felt in finding juries to convict offenders, which is not the case when their lives are spared. In referring to other crimes in which his lordship proposed a modification of the law, he said that conviction more rarely followed a prosecution for the minor than the capital offence, and illustrated his argument by the criminal returns. The punishment of death, both in England and France, being carried into execution only on a very small number of those on whom sentence is passed, it fails to be an object of terror, or to deter persons from the commission of crime. The offences to which they now proposed to apply the punishment of death were, administering poison—attempting to drown, suffocate, or strangle—cutting, maiming, wounding, or doing actual bodily harm, with a manifest design to commit murder in any of these cases. He also proposed to make the law more definite with respect to the words "wounding," "cutting," &c.—For that reason he had thought it right to introduce the words "doing grievous bodily harm, or by any other means manifesting a design to kill." The second offence for which they proposed to retain the punishment of death was burglary, accompanied by an attempt to murder, or by stabbing, cutting, wounding, beating, striking, or any other personal violence to an inmate. The third, robbery, and attempts to rob, accompanied by cutting, stabbing, wounding, or doing actually bodily harm, with any offensive weapon or instrument; and the fourth, setting fire to any building with intent to murder, or to any dwelling-house actually inhabited, or to any building parcel of such dwelling-house or adjoining thereto. The setting fire to dwelling-houses being still capital, it would not fail to be observed that the punishment of death would be removed for the offence of setting fire to stacks, ricks, and outhouses. Of sixty four persons indicted for setting fire to farm buildings only ten were convicted. The other offences to which he proposed to affix the punishment of death were—setting fire to, casting away, or destroying ships, with intent to murder or endanger life; the exhibiting of false lights and signals to lead away ships in distress. To the second branch of punishment would be inflicted transportation for life—the offence of administering poison; of shooting at or drawing the trigger, or attempting to discharge any kind of loaded fire-arms with intent to commit murder; the entering dwelling-houses and putting the inmates in bodily fear, but without striking or otherwise injuring them, and several other cases of malicious injuries to the person without the intent to murder, but with intent to maim, to injure, or to disable. He proposed that no person should be transported for less than ten years, the next class for fifteen years, and the greatest term for life; and that the degree of punishment to be inflicted on the convict should be defined.

His lordship further proposed to bring in a bill to abolish the punishment of the pillory, and to substitute an imprisonment of five years in the Penitentiary in lieu of transportation in certain cases. He concluded by saying that clemency and mercy so extended ought in his judgment to be now ratified by parliament, and that, by the adoption of the measure he proposed, it should be shown that England was not behind other nations in endeavouring to mitigate the severities of the criminal laws, and at the same time to secure the prevention of crime by the better and more certain methods of punishment. The noble lord concluded by moving for leave to bring in the bills, and, amidst loud cheers, leave was given to bring in the bills.

PEOPLE OF PARIS AND LONDON.—I shall probably surprise you with one of my opinions. I think the population of Paris, physically speaking, finer than that of London. Fine men and fine women are by no means as frequent, after allowing for the difference in whole numbers, in the French, as in the English capital; but neither are there as many miserable, pallid, and squalid objects. The French are a smaller race than the English, much smaller than the race of English gentlemen, so many of whom congregate at London; but the population of Paris has a sturdy, healthful look, that I do not think is by any means as general in London. In making this comparison, allowance must be made for the better dress of the English, and for their rogs, whose effect is to bleach the skin, and give a colour that has no necessary connection with the springs of life, although the female portion of the population of Paris has probably as much colour as that of London. It might be possibly safer to say that the female population of Paris is finer than that of London, though I think on the whole the males may be included also. I do not mean by this, that there is relatively as much female beauty in Paris as in London, for in this respect the latter has immeasurably the advantage; but looks apart, that the *physique* of the French of Paris is superior to that of the English of London. The population of Paris is a favourable specimen of that of the kingdom; while that of London, Westminster excepted is not at all above the level of the entire country, if indeed it be as good.—*Cooper's Recollections of Europe.*

CONSERVATIVE HALL IN BELFAST.—We learn from the *Ulster Times*, that it is in contemplation to build, in Belfast, a Conservative hall for the province of Ulster. It is to be applicable to all purposes of a public nature by the Conservatives of Ulster, and standing on its own merits, independent of the Belfast, or any other society, but open on certain terms for their accommodation. To build it £12,000 must be raised in 600 shares of £20 each. This hall is to be capable of accommodating at dinner from 1500 to 2000 persons, and to be let from time to time, for such temporary public purposes as may render it most productive, without interfering with the primary object for which it is intended. The building will consist of a great hall, committee-room, and a public news-room, and such other additions as the shareholders may think right, in order to render the most beneficial returns. None but persons professing Conservative principles to be shareholders. This is an excellent proposition, and we hope that it may be practically worked out.

CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE FOR LIVERPOOL.—There is little doubt that had circumstances permitted Mr. now Viscount, CANNING, to come before the electors of Liverpool, as he had promised, he would have been returned to Parliament by them most triumphantly. The very name he bore was a passport to their favour, and his own amiable disposition, sound principles, and pleasing manners, combined to make him a very popular candidate, an excellent person to relieve Mr. EWART from the onerous duties of public life, for which Nature and Education never intended him.

Since Lord CANNING's accession to the peerage, the Conservatives of Liverpool have

been anxious in their search of a properly qualified candidate in this place. There is no dearth of such gentlemen; and, indeed, one difficulty was, from so many eligible and desirable persons to select, not merely a fit, but the *fittest* candidate.

That person has at length been found. A requisition is now in course of signature, inviting Mr. CRESSWELL, K. C., to become a candidate for the representation of the borough of Liverpool in Parliament. We understand that Mr. CRESSWELL will accede to the prayer of this requisition, provided that he perceive, from the number of electors' signatures attached to it, a fair prospect of success. If, therefore, as we believe, the Conservatives of Liverpool are anxious to return a man of character, talent, and principle for, and Mr. EWART from, parliament, they will lose no time in signing the requisition, which will tacitly admit that Mr. EWART—the laughing-stock of the Commons—is fit to represent them.

Mr. CRESSWELL is well known to the public at large as the leader of the northern bar. Possessed of a deep knowledge of the law,—with a mind thoroughly trained to explain its science and expound its difficulties,—eloquence at once commanding and convincing,—amenity of manners such as eminent lawyers too seldom possess or cultivate,—constitutional principles which have been the honorable rule of his thought and action,—independence of mind, and property placing him above all temptations to which members of parliament are liable,—a more than ordinary acquaintance with the commercial relations of the country,—a complete knowledge of the condition of parties in the state,—and a deep and reverential respect for the Altar and the Throne,—Mr. CRESSWELL is the man, of all others, peculiarly qualified, at the impending crisis, to represent this great town. We cannot doubt that the requisition to him will be numerously signed—it must be so.—*Liverpool paper.*

WESTMINSTER ELECTION.

(From the *London Standard*, May 11.)

Sir FRANCIS BURDETT came forward, and was hailed with loud cheers, and waving of hats and handkerchiefs, but the adverse party of course were not idle in raising yells and groans. The hon. Baronet spoke as follows:—

"I never presented myself to the electors of Westminster on any occasion with more satisfaction than that which I now feel in meeting them, when they are called together to decide what are the great constitutional principles to which they will attach themselves in the new circumstances which have recently sprung up around us. It is a matter of satisfaction to me, as it must be to all of you who now hear me, that we live under a form of government which enables us to assemble together on great and important occasions, and to make known and express to each other our mutual opinions. We may be mistaken on many points, perhaps we are as to one another, but we all, as true Englishmen, keep those opinions of our own which we think right for the public good, as we judge of it, and which we, standing as candidates for the suffrages of the electors, are in duty bound unambiguously to declare. It is of little importance what the names of the candidates are, or how long or how short their standing may be in the eye of the public when they offer themselves to your notice; because this, I maintain, is not a question of personal contest between individuals; but the question which you have to decide is this,—are the electors of Westminster the determined friends of the Constitution of England as it is now established or are they in favour of further changes? Will they give their votes to those who advocate those changes? Are they for these further changes which, as I conceive, will tend very much to impair that constitution and some of which as proposed, will, in fact of themselves subvert it? Gentlemen, it cannot be expected of me that I should advert—indeed I should be scarcely worthy of your notice if I did advert—to all the various aspersions which have lately been thrown

upon me, not from any malevolent motive, as I believe, but from the sincere, though I think, conviction, that I have changed my sentiments, opinions, and principles. An hon. gentleman now present, and near me, who has expressed his high opinion of me in former times, and who now also expresses his regard for me, wrote me a letter wishing me to answer a particular question, and to explain my sentiments as to the particular side which I may take on a particular occasion. It is quite impossible for me to give any answer to a question of that description, put under such circumstances, because from its very nature, it involves another question—namely, whether I am willing, in this year, 1837, to propose annual parliaments, universal suffrage, and vote by ballot as I proposed them in 1818. Now, I am not ashamed to say, that I abandoned my plan for that which has since been adopted, because I found that many would agree to that plan whose consent it would be impossible to obtain to that which I proposed. I will not, therefore, bring in or support any new plan of reform, as that which is now adopted met the wishes of the greatest number of reformers, and as there are many reformers who would not have agreed to any other. In the mutual concessions which were then made, there was one exception from the compromise to which all classes of Reformers came—and that was the vote by ballot. I never had any objection to the vote by ballot, though I think the Reform bill which has passed has rendered it not a matter of minor importance. I have been accused of inconsistency, because I am not willing to do it one time what, under different circumstances, I thought expedient at another; but I consider myself precluded, by the passage of the reform bill, from making any alteration in our elective system, save that which I have already excepted. There was another plan of reform proposed many years ago, which I thought better than that proposed in the late reform bill, and I see no inconsistency in my now being opposed to those theories and propositions which the passing of that bill has rendered unnecessary. For, I always have been a Reformer. I supported Mr. Grey's plan of Reform in 1793, which I think was better than that since adopted; but was I therefore inconsistent because I waved some minor objections and supported the Reform bill? There is no moral turpitude in the inconsistency of opinions at different times, provided that a man always acts up to what he honestly believes to be correct. The moral turpitude is not in the change of opinion, but in the change of opinion arising from corrupt motives. If self-interest can be shown, then it will be a reproach to a man, and it will be more than a suspicious circumstance attaching to his character. I defy any man living to say that any act of mine, in the course of my long public life, has been tinged with any interested feeling of any description. (Cheers.) I have always considered the public good—I have always looked to the wants and wishes of the people of England—to consult them has been my leading and great principle of action. Such shall continue to be my principle of action. Good practical measures the people of England must look to, more particularly the working classes of the people of England, whose condition, if it is possible at all to review, mend, remedy, or alleviate, I shall, I need not say, not be backward—I shall be the first to do all in my power, to promote that most desirable object.—(Cheers.) Gentlemen, that is the noblest principle that can actuate any public man. It ought to be the first view of every government to better the condition of the lower classes of society. It is the most important in my mind—it should be the paramount object which every government should have in view.—(Cheers.) With respect to the new propositions that have been recently broached, I am against them all, because I think them all mischievous and essentially dangerous to the liberties of the people.—(Cheers.) I don't at all approve of the changes or alterations that are making, or proposed to be made, with respect to the Church. I don't believe they will conduce