

stitutional right of all British subjects—the right of holding meetings for petitioning the Prince or parliament. This right a Legislative Councillor has dared to question and trudge; but woe to every attempt which would lessen the liberties of the people, and vitiate the oracles of truth.

Gentlemen—But for the unnatural, the insidious, the infamous placard which is now placed before you, yesterday would have been a day of concord and confidence: yesterday, the sun of regeneration would have risen to Upper Canada, without a cloud; but it will yet rise, and shine more bright, triumphant over the murky clouds of the morning.

The history of Mr. Clark's unhappy proceedings, and the defence of my own conduct and principles, shall follow, after I have first established the weightier matter of the law—our undeniable and, till now, unquestioned, right of petitioning, and of holding public meetings for doing so. The right of petitioning is one of the grand articles of the Bill of Rights solemnly passed into law, when the British people had driven one Sovereign from the throne, and were about to establish in it another more agreeable to their will. No act of Parliament is half so sacred as this—the second great charter of British liberty. It emanated purely from the people uninfluenced by sovereign power, or unswayed by domineering aristocracy; and the era which gave it birth, stands emblazoned in history as our glorious Revolution. The Parliament of Britain has never questioned this great right of the people, and the people are in the constant habit of exercising their right. The meetings of last year, in England, at some of which 20,000 people were collected together, were all held under this grand constitutional privilege, and not a question was made regarding their legality. The Parliament of Britain never attempted to suppress even the Spa-fields meetings, which excited in the minds of some, the greatest alarm; and I, myself, was in the House of Commons when Lord Folkstone presented a petition from one of these meetings, on the evening of the very day on which it was held.

What is all this which Mr. Clark has set before the people of Upper Canada, as a bugbear to frighten them out of the exercise of their most sacred right? What is this quotation from the statute book? what are these stories to us, which concern the Irish rebellion and the conviction of traitors? Is it possible that Mr. Clark could seriously believe that he could for any length of time

impose, even upon the ignorant, or appal the timid, with recitals of this nature? Can any man read the act of Parliament, which he has quoted, and not perceive, that it has no eye whatever to peaceable meetings.—The act clearly specifies the sort of meetings which it was framed to repress—meetings “tending merely to sedition, and to delude the people into an imaginary assertion of rights.” In the name of God, I ask, where is the symptom of sedition to be discovered in this province? Unless from the mouth of the Hon. Thomas Clark, I never heard a breath in Upper Canada which could, by the remotest construction, be applied to anything of the kind. The pure and ardent loyalty of the people here, has been one strong influence with me in exerting myself towards improving the connexion of Canada with the mother country; and it excited in me peculiar feelings of disgust when I read in the newspapers, that surmises were on foot for bartering away such people, like slaves to the United States. If I am guilty of sedition, why does not the Hon. Thomas Clark do his duty and bring me to trial?—Mr. Clark knew of the Niagara meeting, and of my being present there, yet he suffers me to go at large to advise and attend other meetings—nay, not only am I going at large and doing all this, but I dare the highest Magistrate in the province to lay hands upon me. There is thus no alternative for Mr. Clark, but either to do his duty, and arrest me, or to leave me alone, and thereby satisfy the world that he has been woefully imposing on the public by assailing my conduct and principles—woefully and wantonly scandalizing the rights of the Canadian people. Doubting that the ignorant and timid might not be sufficiently astounded with a quotation of law, Mr. Clark seems to expect that my “headless proselytes” will be certainly driven from their meetings, and appalled, forever, by a reference to an Irish act of Parliament, and a hint, as to what befel the ignorant in Scotland. In the year 1793, everybody knows, that rebellion was nearly bursting out, both in Great Britain and Ireland; and everybody knows that soon after this, it did break out in the latter. I myself visited Ireland, in the midst of its fiercest rebellion, when I was allowed to land and pass along, only from being known to the commander of the King's troops. I had, thus, better opportunities than Mr. Clark, of being acquainted with the state of that country, and the necessity for strong measures on the part of Government; and I was still bet-

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