

am knocked down with impunity in the streets, and, if I should appeal to the laws as administered at the police-office, I am damned to everlasting fame" by the caricatures of a free press! Again I ask you, dear reader, can you tell me what is liberty?

I am a literary man, and when I have the requisite materials and leisure for writing a book upon a favorite subject, I sit down to my task without fearing that a sword is hanging over my head by a hair. I write away, as I fondly imagine, in the possession of the most unbounded freedom. Before I can get the paper, however, on which I write, I must give a little douceur to the king, in the shape of what he calls a duty. If I write by day I must pay him for my daylight. If I wish to have a little air in my library, I must pay him for that also. If I write on a table, I pay him a timber duty; if I find it necessary to cheer my soul by a cup of tea, or a cup of coffee, or a glass of wine, I must ask the King's permission to do so, which he will not grant me unless I give him a part, and a very large part, too, of the cash which I expect to receive for my book.

Well, I send my manuscript to the printer. Again I must come down with a sum in the way of duty for the paper on which the types are to display my thoughts. When the operation of printing is over, if I let my neighbours know that I have written a work which I wish them to buy, I must again offer a contribution to the king in the form of advertisement duty, and that, too, as often as I renew my gentle hints to the public. But these are very far from being the whole of the *masts* through which I am to go, while availing myself of my personal liberty in adding to the long catalogue of authors. I must present one copy of my work to the British Museum, a second to the library of Oxford, a third to that of Cambridge, four copies to the four Scotch Universities, an eighth copy to the Library of St. College, London, a ninth to that of the Faculty of Advocates in Edinburgh, a tenth to that of Trinity College Dublin, and an eleventh to that of King's Inns, in the same enlightened capital. Latterly the University of Aberdeen, I think it was, sold its birth-right in this respect for a mess of pottage, the Whig Government having bought from it its literary privileges, which they have transferred to the Royal Library of France. Now, if any of these institutions were too poor to purchase my work, they should, in fairness towards me, either do without it, or call for a subscription amongst their members or patrons which might enable them to buy it. But to tell me that I am at liberty to publish what books I may think fit to write, when I am compelled to pay for permission to do so at almost every step I take, and finally to make a present of eleven copies to such wealthy establishments as the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Scotland, and Dublin, and the Bibliotheque Royal of France, is one of the grossest of all impositions.

Finally, did I say? The infractions of my liberty by no means stop here. The critics, a most formidable race, are still in the background. In order to propitiate their good opinion, I am obliged to part with at least twenty-five copies more. Some are directly engaged in a contest with each other. Either they do not agree in politics, or they are rivals in trade. Should I by any untoward accident—the neglect of a messenger or the delay of the binder—happen to send a copy to one before it has been received by the other, the latter inflicts upon me all the vengeance which he feels against his more fortunate antagonist. The newspaper editors generally add presented books to their office libraries, without noticing them either in an adverse or favourable style. As to the weekly, monthly, and quarterly critics, they cut up my work without mercy, if I send it; and if I do not, they will buy it in order to punish me for my apparent contempt of their authority. Talk of liberty, indeed! I am sure that I know not what it is, or where it is to be found, unless you call that liberty which permits the state, the public institutions, and the critics to plunder a literary man of all remuneration for his labour, and even to impose upon him frequently a severe loss for exercising that freedom of opinion, which the constitution and the laws tell him he possesses in the most unqualified terms.

After the Reform Bill passed, I had a fancy to become a member of Parliament.—I addressed the electors of one of the new boroughs, with a view to attain, by means of their most sweet voices, the object of my ambition. I had the tact to incorporate in my speech several flourishing periods about the injury which was done to personal liberty by the assessed taxes; I spoke of the liberty of the press, the liberty of the negro, liberty of worship, magna charta, the major charta, no *cera* laws, no church, no army! The wicket rang with tumultuous applause.—I was elected almost by acclamation. There is a party in the House called the Ultra Whig, when is just not Radical. The principles of this party, as I thought, coincided with mine exactly, and so I became a member of it. I attended the dinners of its leaders, their committees, and even their coteries. For a while I sailed with them right before the wind, as I accepted all their propositions, and voted for all their amendments. By

and by I spoke a little in the House, was well received, and grew somewhat confident in my own resources. There was a question about the Pension List. My friends were resolved upon abolishing it altogether. I looked over the list, and when I found that a great majority of the pensioners were females, receiving from fifty to a hundred or two hundred pounds a-year, I could not for the life of me think of turning those poor gentlewomen adrift. If they received these small incomes, it was to me a sufficient proof that they were in want of such assistance; and as I have from my youth upwards loved the fair, and honoured them for those virtues which they possess in much greater abundance, and practise with infinitely more sincerity than we do, I declared decidedly against a resolution which was intended to be proposed with a view of sweeping off the whole train at once.

I soon found myself on the edge of a volcano. Cold looks, stinted salutations in the House; and 'out of it, no consultations, no invitations to dinner, committee or coterie; no more "very confidential" letters—informed me that I had broken with the Ultra Whigs. All this seemed to me very odd. I conceived that I had joined a party who made a peculiar boast of accelerating the march of liberty, and now I discovered that none but the leaders were actually to enjoy it.

The matter did not end here. After the lapse of a few posts, I received a long string of resolutions from my constituents, to all of which they hoped I should give my cordial assent. The first of these was for the abolition of all pensions without any distinction—I read no further. I put the whole series at once into the fire, determined never to vote for any measures of the kind. What! was I a member of a free deliberative assembly, and not entitled to exercise my liberty, by forming and expressing my own judgment on all questions whatever? Nothing of the sort. My polite and evasive letter in reply was answered by another, in which I was required either to pledge myself to the resolutions or to resign my seat. I went straight to the Treasury, and requested an appointment as steward of the Children Hundreds, which the lords of that department gave me with no small delight. I left Parliament—the free and Imperial Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland! as it is called, where I found very speedily that I could not sit, unless I chose doubly to surrender every particle of my liberty, first to my constituents, who wished to bind me hand and foot by pledges; and secondly, to a political party, who were desirous of using my vote solely as an instrument for the advancement of their own purposes. Here is a specimen of practical liberty for you—and that, too, under the regime of reform!

My ideas of liberty,—always rather perplexed in this country,—were never more vague and unsettled than while I was a legislative automaton. The Whigs, as long as they were out of office, declaimed constantly about the grievances of Ireland. The first measure which they proposed, when in office, to a Reformed Parliament, was to suspend the constitution altogether in that ill-starred country. Mr O'Connell declared, very naturally, that such a law would destroy the liberty of Ireland; Lord Althorp assured the House that his plan was the only method for preserving it! The ship-owners complained that the *free-trade* system was tending rapidly to their destruction.—Mr Poulett Thomson demonstrated that, in consequence of that system, they were better off than ever! The manufacturers assured the House that they were reduced to a state of slavery by the corn-laws, which made bread so dear, that they laboured twelve or fourteen hours to earn it, and had no time to read the newspapers. The agriculturists talked not of their liberty, for that, they said, was long gone by; they were reduced to a state of complete velleinage, in consequence of their corn being a great deal too cheap. The House voted, by a majority, against the malt-tax, considering that the liberty of the subject was promoted by enabling him to drink a pot instead of a pint of beer;—the Ministers brought a majority to rescind that vote, stating that otherwise they must destroy the liberty of the subject by imposing a tax upon property! The tradesmen of London remonstrated against the assessed taxes; and, when remonstrance failed of its effects, some absolutely refused to pay them, because they were a gross infraction of liberty. The Secretary for the Home Department sent the Sheriff to compel them to pay, proclaiming through the usual organs, that, unless those taxes were collected, there was an end to the liberty of the country. The Diffusion Society imagines liberty to be synonymous with cheap books;—the booksellers maintain that the said Society, now a Corporation, is itself the very emblem of despotism. The poor declare that their liberties are gone, unless the rates be increased;—the housekeeper asserts that his freedom is no more if they be. The omnibus proprietors cry out that they would not give a farthing for reform, if they are to be prevented from running races perpetually between Paddington and the Bank—between Piccadilly and St. Paul's. The shopkeepers shout that before reform was, they were; and that it is a tyrannical innovation

upon the constitution to have their business knocked up, and their elderly customers knocked down by those frightful machines!—What, I again and again ask, is liberty? Is it to be found in England?

I go to Spain. I find two political parties—the friends of the Queen, and those of Don Carlos—fighting against each other,—in the name of liberty! I mingle with the nuleteers and the peasantry. I behold them in the sunshine and the shade, always good-humoured, living temperately on their snow-white bread, their cool and fragrant wine, and their delicious fruits. They go to mass—they sing to the guitar—they dance the fandango—they crowd to the bull-fight—just as if no civil war were going on in the country. They never see the police; they hardly know that a government exists, so little do they feel of its operation. They have no poor-rate—no assessed taxes—no eight hundred millions of debt—no rates for watching, and lighting, and paving,—none of the evils, in short, to which we—happy beings in this land of liberty!—are exposed. Yet I am told, when I come home, that the Spaniards are in a state of the most abject ignorance and slavery. For their skill in algebra and mathematics I will not answer; but I will say, that, for all the purposes of practical liberty, they are a much more enlightened people than we are. They have the cheap freedom of common sense, for which we have exchanged the bungling, imperfect, and excessively expensive machinery of freedom by law, to which the patriarchal rule of Austria would be infinitely preferable.

I go to France. The Duke de Fitzjames assures me that the liberty of his country departed from the soil with Henry V., to whom alone he will ever swear allegiance.—M. Guizot and the King desire me to laugh at the Duke; for that their *juste milieu* system, (which means giving way to no party, and subjugating all,) have placed the freedom of the French upon an immovable basis. Louis Philippe repeats the famous scene which he had with the deputation that was headed by M. Lafitte, and triumphs in the victory which he obtained on that occasion, and which, he says, has ever since made him a free man!

But when I look up at the Tuilleries, and ask him what has become of the lilies, the ancient arms of his family, he shakes his head, as much as to say, that his sovereignty is limited by the sovereignty of the people, to which it must yield whenever the two powers come into conflict. If I walk to the *rue Jacob*, I find there a society actively at work for restoring the lost liberty not only of France, but of all the world. The first article of faith to which, however, they ask me to subscribe, is one which declares that *they* are the only judges of what liberty is, and that they have received a mission to propagate it from the ghost of Robespierre! I had once a notion—I think it was that madam Burke who put it into my head—that this same Robespierre was the most notorious tyrant flung up on the surface of the stormy times of the French revolution. To propagate liberty in the name of Robespierre seemed to me, therefore, the most unintelligible mode of interpreting the word that I had yet lighted upon in all my expeditions for the discovery of the true magnetic pole of freedom.

Liberty, thought I at length, flies westward, as commerce does; so I shall cross the Atlantic, and see if it is to be found in the United States. I prepared myself for my travels by reading the life of the President Adams, once the pride of the Federalists, and the friend of Washington; but I found that he was scarcely seated in the chair of the chief magistrate when he began to doubt of his re-election. The popular party turned against him, and against his special auxiliary the Honourable Timothy Pickering, his Secretary of State. Timothy one fine morning—in the month of June—was not a little surprised by receiving from the President the following laconic note:—

"Sir,—As I perceive a necessity of introducing a change in the administration of the office of state, I think it proper to make this communication to the present Secretary of State, that he may have an opportunity of resigning if he chooses. I should wish the day on which his resignation is to take place to be named by himself. I wish for an answer to this letter on or before Monday morning, because the nomination of a successor must be sent to the Senate as soon as they sit.

"With esteem, I am, Sir,
"Your most obedient servant,
"JOHN ADAMS."

Doubtless, said I to myself, if Timothy does not choose to resign, he need not; he will not be compelled to give up his office without some charge of incompetency or inattention, in such a country as the United States of America—the very cradle of freedom! Timothy accordingly replied thus:—

"After deliberately reflecting on the overture you have been pleased to make to me, I do not feel it my duty to resign."

The rejoinder of the President was sent within an hour after in these terms:—

"Sir,—Divers causes and considerations, essential to the administration of the government, in my judgment, requiring a change in the department of state, you are hereby

discharged from any further service as Secretary of State.

"JOHN ADAMS,
"President of the United States."

Certainly a more despotic mode than this of dismissing a public officer, who had held his office for five years without reproach, could not have been adopted in any monarchical state whatever. The Anti-federalists threatened to turn out Adams, and in order to propitiate their favour he turned out Pickering. In the end, Adams failed of his object, and was himself dismissed by the people, no principle of liberty being recognized by any party to any of these transactions, and no motive, in fact, existing to justify the dismissal of Timothy save the intrigues of John, and none to call for the rejection of John save the caprice of the people. These facts staggered my notions of republican freedom.

But when I went to Philadelphia, and found the white man every where turning up his nose at the black, and that I deeply, though most unintentionally, insulted a relative of my own, by asking him to take a glass of wine with myself and a person who happened to be next me at the *table d'hôte*—the said person having been unfortunate enough (as I afterwards perceived) to retain on his skin the fiftieth part of a shade of the hated negro hue, I gave up my pursuit after an explanation of liberty in America. The name was there, but the thing was neither there, nor any where else, that I could ever discover.

M. M.

Imperial Parliament.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, JUNE 5.

NEWFOUNDLAND FISHERIES.

MR ROBINSON rose to bring in his motion respecting the rights of British subjects to prosecute the fisheries on the Coast of Newfoundland, and in all the bays, harbours, and rivers thereof. The hon. member said he felt it a painful task to introduce to the House a subject in which so few persons felt personal interest; but when the importance of the fishery, the distance at which it was placed, and other advantageous circumstances connected with it, were taken into consideration, he trusted he would receive their indulgence for a short time.—The noise in the House rendered the hon. member for a short time inaudible. When we did again catch him he was going on to observe that by the treaty of Utrecht, the right of fishing had on that Coast been permitted to the French, but he denied that that right at all interfered with the right of our fishing on those shores.—He wished to have the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown upon this question, both of whom he was happy to see in their places. What he wished to maintain, was, that the French and English had a right to fishing on these shores. He had no wish to provoke any hostile collision, between the French and English subjects upon this question. But the fact was, that the Coast of Labrador was to be passed by our fishermen beyond the French lines, which occasioned great and serious difficulties. In the year 1830 a letter was addressed to the then Secretary for the Colonies by the Chamber of Commerce of Newfoundland upon that subject, and while he regretted the absence of that Right hon. Gentleman upon the present occasion, he did not mean to impute the slightest blame to him. However, an extraordinary answer was given to that letter, inasmuch so, that the Governor of that Colony was left in doubt, as to the course he should pursue. In this state of doubt, the people took the only course open to them, which was to fit out a vessel in June, 1830. An intelligent man was also employed, and he fulfilled his mission with satisfaction, to those who had employed him. He proceeded to the French Coast to try the question of right but at the same time to avoid all unnecessary collision. The duty thus entrusted to the Captain, was exercised with zeal and discretion. He remonstrated with the French Captain on the Coast, who said he would do nothing uncivil, but that if the British Captain interfered, he must have recourse to force. The English Captain finding he could not fish there, entered a protest, which was served upon the French Captain, when a French brig of war appeared in sight. The English Captain immediately stated to him, that he had orders to fish there, when the French Captain said, if he persevered, he would expel him by force, and the English Captain left the Harbour. Under these circumstances, he called upon the Government, and not the House of Commons, to ascertain and state the international rights of the French and English subjects; but still he would call upon this House to move an humble address to His Majesty, praying that he would be pleased to instruct the Law Officers of the Crown to look into the treaties connected with this matter, and to state their opinion respecting them. This question was one of great importance, though it was treated (he was sorry to say) with great apathy, for the fisheries were one of the greatest nurseries for our seamen. He was also sorry that our Government had repeatedly made concessions to the French and Americans, which were injurious to our interests. If the Government did not take up this subject, what could be expected but that our subjects

who we would did our sive co they a were n one of treaties allowed contin ing wi elusive French sive rig ly a rig secure sjects, right— convey the tin ment v and lo respect sisted. The Co sent ty shippi He wa this n Crown that n could. would know circum on the and tr would that a Majest to ord inquir tain an on the foundl rights fisherie harbour MR to opp formal Crown nation to obta could would membe siderat was tal in one- to be g terested he wou respect ward a having ject wa ed frie details ed with had rel the treat by t strong This q tion of and coi specting and by Mr Pitt would a cultv— of the would once, by sion, an circum further member the disti jesty's G to the st rrange question that we claimed could as riod, tw American sert they went aw said, tha the form but leav tion. MR R he had b sideration and he s should b However so strong to a spee should in Governan period quarrel w was high French a ntely set left in do avoid all he hoped stion of P be settled