

self master of this Colony; others, no doubt, were led to betray their country, and to forfeit their allegiance, from entertaining political opinions which, if they had been the citizens of a republic, might not have been out of character, but which led them to violate the strongest obligations of duty, both civil and religious, when they prompted them to join the enemies of their Sovereign, and to turn their arms against the Government which had protected them.

It is scarcely necessary to say that the prisoners into whose cases it will be your duty to inquire, cannot be charged with the same description of treasonable acts,—that is, they cannot have been adhering to the public enemies of the Queen, because Great Britain is engaged in no public war. But the violation of allegiance in time of peace, by levying war against the Sovereign, is an act of Treason involving the same degree of guilt, both in a legal and moral view, and is frequently productive of more misery to the community, whose laws are thus offended, than any assistance that can be given to an open and public enemy.

It is not my intention, Gentlemen, while we are thus upon the threshold of the investigation committed to us, to enter minutely into the particulars of those events which have recently disturbed the peace, and threatened the security of this Colony; on the contrary, I desire to avoid, as far as can be properly done, any allusion to those specific facts which it will be necessary for you to inquire into, in order that you may approach the discharge of your duty with minds as much as possible unbiassed. But a reference to the leading features in those occurrences which have rendered this Special Commission necessary, seems indispensable; and we need not affect to be ignorant of what has been too painfully forced upon the attention of ourselves, and of every one around us.

Until the close of the past year, this Province wore the appearance of universal peace, and of perfect security; the