

THE ELECTIONS.

WHAT an apple of discord is an election, setting a whole people by the ears, inflaming their passions, giving license to their tongues and lawlessness to their actions, as if the more each man broke the law, the better he would be qualified to choose a law-maker. If an utter absence of every property that ought to distinguish men on such an occasion be the best qualification for discharging its duties aright, then we may look to an election for the perfect triumph of law, reason, truth, candour, charity; but if the highest political duty require an appropriate exercise of the mind, then we may regard an election as being an occasion on which men may discharge their spleen, gratify their hate, or indulge their revenge, or do any thing rather than what they profess to do.— If a man were asked to select an act that should demand the most anxious enquiry, grave deliberation, and sober judgment, he would take that act by which we choose those who shall frame our laws, decide our quarrels, maintain our rights, promote our interests, form our manners, consolidate and perfect our institutions, infuse through the public mind the spirit of order, unity, intelligence, and virtue, and be in fact what they are in name, the “collected wisdom” of the whole people. No one could imagine that those who are to sustain these high functions would be chosen with less care than men choose a pig or a parrot, the one because he is fat, the other because he is fine. It would be supposed that men who are to perform intellectual duties would be chosen by an intellectual effort, and the higher the duty the higher the effort. It would also be assumed that before addressing themselves to this effort, an accurate survey would be taken of the public state, wants, capacities, and prospects, and that afterwards those persons would be selected who could best answer the various demands that would be made upon their intelligence and patriotism. Little would it be thought that an election was a kind of carnival, an “*All Fool's*” day, or was called to determine who had the thickest skull, and could take the heaviest knocks without loss of life, destroying several lives in the trial, or that passion and prejudice

were to hold the scales, instead of calm reflection and inflexible justice.

These things, we say, might not have been supposed; but what are the facts of our late elections? To detail them in full might be taken for a libel on the community, or a bitter satire on the elective franchise, a kind of indirect proof that our people are not yet qualified to decide intellectually a great public question, but are in that rude state of society in which brutal violence usurps dominion over reason and law. It would not be fair, however, to fix this brand upon all the people, for a large majority of them are strongly opposed to all violence under any pretext. The guilt without doubt attaches to a portion of the Tory party, connived at, if not directly encouraged, by some of their leaders. This is manifest from a careful examination of all the accounts that have been published by both sides. We shall not go into the evidence, for the whole must be investigated by the Assembly, in order to determine the contested returns, seven of which have been protested against in consequence of violence, and in three other cases outrages resulting in death took place, besides many minor offences. It is probable also, that effectual measures will be taken to prevent the recurrence of such scenes, which are equally disgraceful to the country and to the party that countenances them, as well as destructive of all freedom of action and independence of thought.

And besides this criminal resort to violence, the most ridiculous falsehoods were plentifully employed. For instance: it was published that the friends of one candidate had made a rush into the polling room in order to destroy the poll book, the said candidate being at the time far in advance of the others, of which fact the poll book was, of course, the only evidence: so that his friends were represented as combining to destroy the only evidence of his being at the head of the poll! It would be just as probable that a man would destroy the title deeds of his estate, as that a candidate who was far in advance would wish to destroy the