

At a time when the want of recent and expeditious arrivals from Europe prevents us from furnishing our readers with any thing very new from the eastern hemisphere, we trust little apology will be necessary for our occupying so many columns with the full and faithful history of the late of Irish politics;—and the more so, as the affairs of that kingdom seem now just approaching to an awful crisis, which threatens the most serious consequences, not only to the inhabitants of that ill-fated country, but even to the British empire at large.

AFFAIRS OF IRELAND.

The following is earl Fitzwilliam's statement of his correspondence with the British cabinet, on the subject of the catholic claims.

IN A LETTER TO EARL CARLISLE.

"As early as the 8th of January last I wrote to the secretary of state on the subject; I told him that I trembled about the catholics;—that I had great fears about keeping them quiet for the session, that I found the question was already in agitation, that a committee was appointed to bring forward a petition to parliament, praying for a repeal of all remaining disqualifications; I mentioned my intention of immediately using what efforts I could, to stop the progress of it, and to bring the Catholics back to a confidence in government; I stated the substance of some conversation I had on the subject with some of the principal persons of the country; it was the opinion of one of those, that if the postponing of the question could be negotiated on grounds of expediency, it ought not to be resisted by government; that it should be put off for some time, was a desirable thing, but the principle of concession was, at the same time, strongly insisted on, and forcibly inculcated, as a matter not wise, but necessary to the public tranquillity.

"From the day of the date of this letter, I unremittingly applied myself to the collection of further information; I had heard that the committee had prepared an address to me; before I should receive it, I wished to know the opinion of those whom the committee called the seceders, the nobles, and principal landed gentlemen of that persuasion.

"In a letter of the 13th January I acquainted the secretary of state with the result of these conferences, and of the progress of the business. In the absence of the nobleman who was considered as the head of the seceders, I had sent for a person of the most acknowledged moderation among them, and of the first consequence and property. I found by him, (which the nobleman above alluded to afterwards confirmed) that he, and every person of his description, were in perfect unison with the committee; that they all decidedly looked to the same object; that they were determined never to lose sight of it; that, provided it should be obtained, they had no objection that Mr. Byrne, or the other members of the committee, should have the honour to take the lead in it. I mentioned my having, after this conversation received the address;—that in my answer which I transmitted, I have endeavoured to keep clear of all specific engagements whatever, though at the same time, avoiding every thing that could be construed into a rejection of what they were all looking to; the repeal of the remaining restrictions, and (what comes immediately to the point) I concluded by declaring, that I should not do my duty, if I did not distinctly state it as my opinion, that not to grant cheerfully, on the part of government, all the catholics wished for, would not only be exceedingly impolitic, but perhaps dangerous; that in doing this no time was to be lost; that the business would be presently at hand, and the first step I took would be of infinite importance; that, if I received no very peremptory instructions to the contrary, I should acquiesce. I meant, as well in the time, as in the mode of proceeding, and the extent of the demands; for as a measure considered generally, I could conceive no necessity of waiting for any new instructions, on which to decide; of this I reminded the secretary of state, "convinced, I said, as we all were, of the necessity, as well as fitness of the measure taking place at no distant period; I was decidedly of opinion, that it ought no longer to be

deferred." The state of the country required this: and the disposition of the catholics, among whom hesitation on the part of the government might produce mischief to a degree beyond calculation. You will not forget that all this passed within the first fortnight after my arrival, and before the meeting of parliament.—Thus early were ministers in possession of the opinion and determination which, in the exercise of my discretionary powers, I had formed on the subject; they knew that the question was in agitation, that a petition to parliament had been determined on, and was to be immediately presented; they were acquainted with the catholic demands; they knew that they could not be kept back; that no time was to be lost, and that it I did not receive their instructions to the contrary, I should in the spirit of the system that had been agreed on, immediately acquiesce to the full extent of the catholic expectations.

"This then was the time for his majesty's ministers to come forward with their fears and alarms, if they had so suddenly changed their minds on the subject, and if they had at length discovered that this, which was to be both with their knowledge and consent, a leading measure of my administration, led to consequences, that could not be contemplated without horror and dismay;—this was the time for them to inform me of this change; they knew that it was my opinion that not a moment was to be lost; and consequently that, if I did not receive peremptory instructions to the contrary, I was prepared to consent, without an appearance of hesitation, that the measure should go forward: Did they state to me, as they afterwards did, that it was the unanimous opinion of the cabinet that I should stop short; that I should abstain from all engagements, or even encouraging language, in that quarter, until I should receive their further instruction?

"Not a word of the kind; my regular correspondence went on; I received frequent letters from the secretary of state, and not even a hint was thrown out on the subject.

"In a letter of the 7th of January, I proposed the removal of Mr. Wolfe, on certain terms of accommodation, in order to make room for Mr. George Ponsonby to act as my attorney general; this letter went by the same mail with my letter of the 8th, to which I have alluded above; on the 13th of January the secretary of state, writes me an answer to this very letter: He informs that the king had consented to Mr. Wolfe's passage, which was one of the terms I had there proposed; and touches lightly upon an objection against another, (that of holding on to Mr. Wolfe—the promise of succeeding to a chief justice's place) on the supposition that he was to quit his practice at the bar; a supposition by the way, that never had the smallest foundation. But not a word on the catholic question—not a single observation on what I stated so strongly, respecting my fears of not being able to keep it quiet during the session.

"The 2d of February came, and of that date I find a second letter from the secretary of state on the subject of Mr. Wolfe; but here again he confined himself to that subject alone; and my letter of the 13th January, which must have been so many days in his hands, was not even noticed. That letter, to which I earnestly required, and which in itself called for an explicit, an immediate peremptory answer—that letter, from which they knew, that if not timely checked, the catholic question would presently receive from me a cheerful acquiescence; yet in the interval from the receipt of it till the 2d of February, although he wrote twice on other subjects, he says not a word of the precipitancy with which I was plunged into a matter so big with danger to the empire; not even a hint that I should proceed with more caution or circumspection in a measure that was to subvert the constitution and establishment of this kingdom: the fact was, that neither he nor the cabinet entertained at that time any such fears—they then apprehended no such danger. It was another business that opened their eyes to all the mischiefs of my councils; a business that soon rung such an alarm as brought down upon me that tempest of fears, and terrors, and remonstrances, under which I have sunk.

"At the close of the letter of the 15th of January, alluded to above, I had mentioned the dismissal of Mr. Beresford. This intelligence does not seem to have caused the smallest degree of alarm in the breast of the secretary of state.

"In his letter of the 2d of February, when it appears that he must have received the information for several days, he takes not the least notice of it; and it further appears from a letter of Mr. Windham to Lord Malton, that his grace was equally unacquainted with the alarm which the intelligence of the transaction conveyed directly to Mr. Pitt by Mr. Beresford himself, had caused in that quarter. However this may have been, the attack upon me was in the mean time mediating, although perhaps unknown to his grace.

"This letter of Mr. Windham was the first intimation I received of the least discontent among my colleagues in England, at my conduct since my arrival. The duke of Portland had, indeed, in one letter, stated some objections about the terms of Mr. Wolfe's removal; and in another about Mr. George Ponsonby's appointment; but nothing that could indicate discontent; but Mr. Windham's letter was soon followed by one from Mr. P—, on the 9th of February; that gentleman wrote to me to expostulate on the dismissal of Mr. Beresford, and on the negotiations with Mr. Wolfe and Mr. T—r. This formed the whole matter of his letter, and to this alone he confined his remonstrances; yet he had a fair opportunity of touching on the measures of my government, but he concluded his letter by making an apology "for interrupting my attention from the many important considerations of a different nature, to which all our minds ought to be directed."

"The talk of bringing forward the catholic question, had, it seems, been committed to another. By the same mail; and in a letter dated the 8th, the very day before Mr. Pitt had written to me, came a letter from the secretary of state, touching at length on this important subject, and bringing it, for the first time into play, as a question of any doubt or difficulty with the British cabinet; then, as if the question had been started for the first moment between us, as if it never had been the subject of any former consultation, plan or arrangement whatever, he writes, of enabling the king's ministers to form their judgment, as to the policy, expediency, safety, and necessity of that measure; then, as if he never before heard from me on the subject, he cautions me against committing myself by engagements, or even by encouraging language, (so minute is his grace) to give my countenance to the immediate adoption of this measure. Then, for the first time, it appears to have been discovered, that the deferring it would be not merely expediency; or a thing to be desired for the present, but "the means of doing a greater service to the British empire than it has been capable of receiving since the revolution, or at least since the union." All former opinions, all former discussions, all former agreements, the leading principle of our being all convinced of the necessity, as well as fitness of the measure taking place at no distant period, of which I reminded the ministers in my letter of the 15th of January, all were forgotten; and he tells it his duty, for the first time, in consequence of the discussion of this question in the cabinet the day before, to exhort me to use those efforts which I had expressed an intention of trying; efforts, of the efficacy of which I had expressed the strongest doubt, on the 8th of January, when I first mentioned my intention of trying them; efforts, every hope from which I had relinquished on the 15th, when I warned them of the necessity of immediately giving way, when I earnestly called upon them for peremptory instructions, which if I should not receive, I should acquiesce; efforts, which they knew from the whole series of my correspondence, it was impossible ever to attempt, without evident and certain danger.

"From this period every thing went on rapidly towards my removal. From my knowledge of the person I had to deal with, I was resolved myself to bring the business to the real point at issue between us, and to leave him no refuge. Cruelly as the duke of Portland has treated me, I feel no diffi-

culty to say, that his judgment was deceived before that he abandoned me: on whatever grounds he has suffered himself to be influenced to change his former opinion respecting the politics of this country, and the characters and views of its principal personages, he did change those opinions; and in the consequence of that change alone, he has been driven to consent to the measure of my instant recall. But, I was not to be deceived; I combined all the circumstances which I have detailed to you in this letter: I perceived immediately the scheme that was laid against me; and I resolved on the only means I saw left, to bring the matter to a speedy issue as should preserve my honour, and vindicate my public character. In my answer to Mr. Pitt, a copy of which I send you, and which I wrote the very night I received his letter, I entered fully into the subject of my dismissal. I stated, as you will see, my reasons for having determined on them, as well as for adhering to them when once resolved on; reasons, of which, from your knowledge of this country, you will, I am sure, admit the justice; I then put it to himself to determine for me, and the efficacy of my government; I left him to make his choice between Mr. Beresford: I testified my surprise to him, that, after such an interval of time, and after the various details which I had transmitted to him, advising him of the hourly increasing necessity of bringing forward the catholic question, and the impolicy and danger of resisting, or even hesitating about it, I should now be pressed, for the first time, to deter the question till some future occasion, I refused to be the person to run the risk of such a determination: I refused to be the person to raise a flame in the country, that nothing short of arms could be able to keep down; I then alluded to Mr. Pitt's letter, appealed to his knowledge of the situation of a lord lieutenant; and left him to determine, whether if he was not to be supported he ought not to be removed. These letters I wrote on the 14th of February. Shortly after came two official letters from the duke of Portland, dated the 16th, in which he enters into a long detail of the various points of view in which the cabinet wished to have the question of the catholics considered; with these came a private letter of his own, dated the 18th. In this his grace dwells most particularly on the necessity of having information submitted to them on all these points, and a detailed plan of all the additional advantages intended to be conceded to the catholics; he observes, that if the consideration of this great question could be deferred till the peace was established, he should have no doubt but that it would be attended with advantages which perhaps are not to be hoped for in any other supposable case; but he added, (I beg you will attend to this), "that it was surely going too far, to infer from any thing that he had said, that it was desired to undertake the task of deferring it to that period." If the cabinet were to accede, what they desired was, to be justified in that occasion by a free and impartial investigation of facts, of circumstances, and of opinions; among which, as of reason, mine would have the most decisive weight; and as I had expressed a wish to have the mode considered in England whilst it was still within my reach to have limited or modified, before the bill was introduced, and before the plan was known to the catholics, he wished to have this plan, and the heads of the bill transmitted for consideration.

"If any thing was wanting to confirm me in my opinion that the duke of Portland had suffered himself to be completely duped and deceived in this business, a comparison of this letter with what immediately followed, would be alone sufficient to establish that conviction. At the moment of his writing this letter, there was not "a fact," a circumstance, or "an opinion," that could be transmitted to him of which he was not in possession. He acknowledges himself, and frequently refers to my letter of the 10th of February, in which he had the plan, wherein every thing that regarded the constitution, the ecclesiastical establishment, and the settlement of property was stated. He had the primate's opinion on some ideas that his grace had suggested. In a letter of mine, dated the 20th, he had still more ample de-