

CONSIDERATIONS

ON THE

DISMISSAL

OF

MAJ. GEN. SIR R. WILSON,

FROM

His Majesty's Service.

BY

J. W. WEDDERBURN, Esq.

Quibus indiciis, quo teste, probavit?
Nil horum: verbosa et grandis Epistola venit.

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OF
SIR ROBERT WILSON, M.P.
CONSIDERED,

&c. &c.

IF it were necessary to convince His Majesty's Ministers, that under the British Constitution, it is not only impolitic, but impossible to treat public opinion with indifference, and that in proportion as popular clamour is daily seen bearing away in its factious tide an unusual proportion of both victims and disciples, it becomes alike the duty and the interest of the rulers of a free and intelligent people, to guard against unpopular and erroneous convictions:—*then*, indeed, some apology might be pertinent, if not expected, for the following observations; but "*opinionum commenta delet dies, naturæ judicia confirmat.*" The triumph of party and the ebullitions

of passion are but short-lived and ineffectual; and although the appeal of truth and sound policy may be *tardy*, yet the effect is *sure*, and, like that of conscience, *will* be heard and acknowledged at last. Could I entertain a doubt that the necessity and justification of the question at issue did not stand upon the broadest—were not defensible on the soundest constitutional principles of policy, I should assuredly have left its examination, and the few remarks I purpose offering on the subject to abler hands. But I adopt it with confidence and without hesitation: with *confidence*, that there never was an act (assuming what I by no means admit, the *sole responsibility of Ministers*;) in which they less stood in need of an advocate; and without *hesitation*, in the certain conviction, that there is, perhaps, no act of the present administration, certainly none affecting the protection of property and the rights of individuals, on which there exists a more universal prejudice, and that among a class of society generally well-disposed to the Government, and whose rank and property entitle their opinions to every consideration.

It would be worse than idle to make a la-

boured or formal disavowal of being actuated by feelings it is morally impossible to entertain towards an individual, with whom I have not the honour of being acquainted, viz. those of a personal nature. I shall, therefore, neither insult Sir R. Wilson, or degrade myself, by common place and generally insincere professions on a subject, in which, unlike some writers and speakers of the present day, I should scorn to avail myself of the indemnity which an anonymous title would offer; and still less of those low and disgraceful fastnesses of retreat, which personal considerations or official pleas often afford.

If we could expect to find any thing *consistent* in the conduct of the modern Whigs, *except* their systematic opposition to the Government, it would have been impossible to believe, that after all we have seen and heard from them on the martyrdom of Sir Robert Wilson, they would have left that unfortunate gentleman to the necessary disparagement of pleading his own cause—to the difficult and, what must have been to *him*, painful ordeal and invidious task of sustaining both the attack and defence in his own person. After having banquetted to satiety on the “atro-

cious conduct of Ministers," at every county club and civic meeting which have graced and disgraced the country and the capital since his dismissal from the army—after having revelled in the exuberance of their patriotism, until these champions of injured rights and "unsunned snow" grew quite wanton in the rapacious pursuit of the spirit of Radicalism, (embodied under the alluring and propitious form of the gallant gentleman's wrongs), it was not to be expected that he would have been left to enter the field alone. Surely some "eminent little Statesman," some "Galba of our day," some "wise man of the east," might have spared the feelings and eloquence of the honourable gentleman, by volunteering that part *in* the house, which had been seized on with a desolating activity by his adherents upon every prior occasion, *out* of it. But captivating a mobocracy at the London Tavern is one thing, and convincing gentlemen in the House of Commons is another. "Some men (as Locke says) are of one, some of two syllogisms, and no more; and others that can advance but one step further. These cannot discern that side on which the strongest proofs lie." Under which head are to be

classed the advocates of Sir R. Wilson's case, the debates in the House of Commons on the 14th inst. pretty clearly evince. Those Gentlemen however, who seem to act on similar occasions under the annual retainers of their party, did not fail to give the House a rehearsal of the interminable oration of the Hon. Member, which, in point of fact and argument, left them nothing to advance and less to defend.

So much for the conduct of Sir Robert Wilson's friends in bringing the matter before Parliament; and it is not because he has been left to do so himself, or because the merits or demerits of his allegations rest upon his personal statements and remonstrance, that the question is to be considered the less tangible, or to be approached with more delicacy or restraint.

It is indeed precisely and *literally* upon that Gentleman's *own* shewing—upon his own line of argument in submitting his case to Parliament—that we are fully justified in distinguishing its examination from all personal and peculiar interests, which might have otherwise been applicable to him individually, or which could have involved do-

mestic considerations, tending to annul its *public character*, in which capacity alone, and as involving a specific and palpable charge against the Ministers of the Crown, it becomes a fair and legitimate, if not a necessary object of inquiry.

To obtain a correct judgment, it is necessary to divide the subject under distinct heads, and to examine each with that impartiality and detail which the limits of this design will permit. First, then—whether the abrupt dismissal of Sir Robert Wilson from his rank in the army is to be considered an act of the Crown, or one of the Ministers; or as a combination of both, in the amalgamation of reciprocal interests and duties;—and, secondly, whether, in any event, the act itself was either justifiable or necessary.

If Ministers had shrunk from any responsibility, which party purposes could not fail on such a question to attach to them, the first proposition, as affecting the prerogative of the Crown, would have presented itself for argument; but, as they have disdained to avail themselves of this strong hold, it would be quite superfluous to embarrass the more immediate and prominent features of the case

by an unnecessary defence of that which cannot be disputed—the *undoubted and universal right of the Crown, to command or dispense, at pleasure, with the services of its subjects.*

That the dismissal of Sir Robert Wilson was however, virtually an act of the Ministers, though legally and in point of fact, evidently an acknowledged exercise of the King's prerogative, admits of no doubt. Regarding it therefore, as a measure upon which Ministers choose to stand upon the high ground of their own responsibility, it only remains to examine, whether there was sufficient *cause* for those suggestions which it became their duty to prefer in the highest quarter; and whether the *result* of those suggestions and representations is supported by the nature and facts of the information they contained.

To limit the review of that conduct which has justified the dismissal of Sir R. Wilson, to the transactions in which he *may* or *may not* have been involved, on the 14th of August last, is perhaps assuming an unwarranted inference—that *his* share in those scenes of turbulence and faction was the *sole cause* for the dispensation of his future services.

May it not be very possible that this act of

the executive may have had also reference to *former* and *other* proceedings in the conduct of that officer's life? Is there *no* event on record of European notoriety, in which the clemency of Government was eminently exercised towards him? Without alluding, however, more immediately to circumstances, on which it would be impossible to comment but in terms of the severest animadversion; it is sufficient for the present purpose to refer to the period alluded to, in the very gentlemanly and moderate language of Lord Londonderry in the debate of Thursday—"That if the Government
 "had been as anxious to look for occasions
 "on which to exercise personal hostilities—if
 "they could ever have felt any towards the
 "Honourable Gentleman, *instances were not*
 "*wanting, before the present,* of conduct on
 "that Honourable Gentleman's part, which
 "was marked, to say the *least* of it, with *great*
 "*indiscretion.* But THAT HAD BEEN OVER-
 "LOOKED, and it was not until the conduct
 "which had brought on the present crisis,
 "that they had conceived it their duty to
 "advise their Sovereign not to retain him in
 "the service."

If, indeed, the moderation and forbearance

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of Government, and the well-known benevolent and forgiving disposition of the illustrious individual at the head of the nation, were ever manifested in a singular degree, it was surely on the occasion in question. But it must be lamented, that the *effect* of that indulgence would seem but to illustrate the well-known truism of all moralists—that nothing leaves so little impression on the mind, as dangers which we have wholly surmounted, and which bear no warning voice in the delusive security which their retrospection affords.

That neither Sir Robert or his friends, in their gorgeous and ample display of his past life and services, should have ventured to approach “that evil hour,” on which it is impossible even he or they can dwell with satisfaction, is not therefore at all surprising; but that is no proof of the well-founded presumption, that the recollection and nature of the circumstances of that period did not weigh powerfully, if not wholly determine, His Majesty’s advisers on the painful but necessary alternative, which, on the late occasion, has led to the dismissal of this officer from that service, in which the impunity and

toleration of similar proceedings would subvert all discipline; and not only annihilate the utility of its existence, but convert it into a monstrous and incongruous engine of peril to the State.

Upon any view of the question nothing can be more illiberal or absurd than to confine the necessity or justification of a measure, so erroneously and intemperately considered, to the events of the day of the Queen's funeral: Since, if other reasons or stronger grounds were wanting, it would by no means be irrelevant to inquire, what conduct Sir R. Wilson considered it fitting the rank and duty of a general officer in the King's service to pursue, during the whole course of that misguided and unfortunate personage's factious progress when living.

It is impossible to refer, without pain and reluctance, to any thing at all connected with the period of her late Majesty's residence and conduct in this country; and had I not been induced in the absence of—and by the disgraceful apathy, of other and more able advocates, to take a strong though reluctant part against her, and to obtrude my humble, though conscientious and independent senti-

ments upon the public, during the Parliamentary proceedings of that time; nothing should certainly now provoke a recurrence to that disgusting conflict of human passions and frailties, for which the grave claims SILENCE, if it cannot demand *respect—but the necessity of doing common justice to the object of this tract.*

Is it necessary then to recal the incessant and avowed amalgamation of all the official influence which a general officer's Parliamentary and military capacity afforded, with every act of her late Majesty's life, which tended the most to insult the King and revile his Government?

Her cause had become the very watch-word of the faction—the text of a ruffian band of innovating Levellers, who aimed at nothing short of an extinction of all rank and temporal rights, and a division of all property. And is it to be endured, that the responsible advisers of the Crown could possibly behold such conduct in one of its servants with indifference?

Could the sovereign himself be insensible—nay, could the army (of which the individual in question was, I am ready to admit, a dis-

tinguished member) see with indifference its highest—perhaps well-earned, rank and decorations coupled, in “brief authority,” with that party, and identified with that cause, which insulted the dignity of the one, and disparaged the character of the other?

The particular incidents for selection during a long and lamentable perversion of civil order, are unhappily neither wanting or necessary. It is enough that the identification admit of neither contradiction or palliation. As I prophesied, however, on a former occasion, “the triumph and brute roar of His Majesty’s enemies” have been short-lived and ineffectual, and the wretched attempt to revive those factious discussions, by the notice given of the motion in the House of Commons, for the 5th of March, on the closing scene of that drama, cannot fail to cover those with odium and defeat, who instigate and abet a system, which experience might now teach them is wholly unavailing.

But there are men, who, like a description of vultures, still hover round the body, after their rapacity and indiscretion have left nothing either to feed on, or contend for; like that wretched creature, who by some means

crawled into a seat in the House of Commons ; and with the matured venom of his reptile capacity, brought charges against the illustrious and amiable individual at the head of the army, which ended in his own annihilation, and in the disgust and regret of every man of common feeling and integrity in the country. *Such* will be the condition and fate of the persons in question. For there is a depravity of heart and a base alloy of mind, generally, thank God ! cursed with a restless and vain pursuit of ignoble ends, that serve but to establish an insignificance which is the certain herald of their political extinction.

But to return to the purpose, and to meet the opponents of Ministers on their own ground and allegation—that the dismissal of Sir Robert Wilson is an arbitrary act of power, and unjustly exercised in regard to what passed on the 14th of August ; it only now remains to see what the occurrences of that indelible day were, and whether the part he took in them did or did not justify the object of complaint. The least objectionable, and to the present view of the subject, by far the most satisfactory means of arriving at this

end, is to advert to the *facts* which stand uncontradicted in the debate of the 14th. We there see Sir R. Wilson *himself admitting*, that he appeared in a sort of double amphibious character of an officer and civilian, and that he *did* take a part in the procession, which *he* contends was a *correct one*. Now, if that procession had been one of the flower of patriotism—in short, one of “the dustmen, skippers, and bargemen, and their ladies,” which were a little before so common, it would be a matter of indifference. But what was its character and object? The funeral of the Queen of these realms, and necessarily a ceremony in every point of view, under the immediate direction, controul, and protection of His Majesty’s Government. The King’s troops, as on all similar occasions were present, as an integral part of the common state and observance necessary to the object and the occasion; and all obstruction to the orders of Government, in conducting the proceedings was decidedly most illegal, to use no harsher term. There may, however, be a species of self-constructive allegiance, by which a man can reconcile such conduct to his duty and his feelings. But

it is wholly impossible to offer any sort of defence, for what cannot be designated but as most flagitious in a servant of the Crown.

With Sir Robert Wilson's *motives* for attending the Queen's funeral, we have nothing to do, but he tells us, it was to shew "his *respect* for her Majesty's memory."

There are certainly various means of attaining the same ends. But if that respect was to be found in a continuation of those tumultuous and disgraceful scenes, of which, when living, she was the author and the victim; those who attended, and did not prevent their recurrence by every endeavour, are most assuredly entitled to arrogate that distinction,

That Sir R. Wilson possessed an influence with the mob assembled on that day, and that he wished to assume one over the military, we have his own admission.; but, *did* he exercise either the one or the other to *obstruct* or *facilitate* the orders of Government?—Or were his appeals to either party calculated or directed to allay, or to *promote* riot, and insubordination? We find him at Cumberland-Gate where he "saw the troops in disorder;" a disorder created

by the necessary defence of their own lives, against an infuriated and lawless multitude; and occasioned by a *forbearance* to which the misguided people on that, and *other* occasions are much indebted to them. Yet it was under *such* circumstances, that this individual,—a General Officer in the King's service, with a decoration placed on his breast, by that sovereign's indulgence, told these men who had fought and bled at Waterloo, that therefore—“*They disgraced themselves to continue firing!*”—I should hope it would be difficult to find a Cornet, of six months standing in the army, who does not know that there cannot be a grosser violation of military discipline and insubordination, than for any Officer *not on duty*, to interfere with, or address troops who *are*, and who are also under the command of another Officer.—If this applies in a military point of view, how much stronger is the case, in an individual who presumes to address troops in a civil capacity?

If such a system was once tolerated, every dépôt in the country would have its special orator—its Hunt or its Waddington—and the soldiery would become a delibera-

tive and political body, which they never can be, without losing those peculiar qualifications which render an army a serviceable—instead of a dangerous part of the population of this free country—in fact no man of common sense or spirit would accept the command of a regiment under such restrictions and innovations. Had Sir Robert Wilson used the same language to the *mob*, that he considered it becoming his rank and situation to use to the *King's troops*—then, indeed, he might have claimed *approbation* instead of *censure*; for the rabble congregated on that day did indeed “disgrace themselves,”—and it would require some sophistry to prove that those did not also, who were identified with their proceedings; for on such occasions it is not enough to be a tame spectator, or silent observer; and it is surely a most *equivocal* way of preserving the peace, to harangue those who *are observing it* at the expense of their blood, and to disregard the only party who are *violating the laws*—and on which side the violation and forbearance were exercised is pretty clear, from the fact of there having been upwards of forty men wounded, and in the hospital

the following day, out of sixty or seventy on duty.

To go into a more minute detail of the transaction, and to enter upon a laboured revision of all the contradictions and averments wound up in Sir Robert Wilson's defence, would be interminable and could serve no purpose. The fact of his mediation, in an acknowledged character, between the soldiery and the people, is the *fons et origo mali*—and the various points so inflammatorily touched upon by his supporters, are merely subaltern, and unworthy of consideration.

If the House of Commons had granted the Inquiry demanded, it would have been virtually the conversion of a legislative forum into that of an Old Bailey Court; and could have served but to produce a re-action of those enormities, which it is to be hoped are buried in one common grave, with the malign spirit of the times, and the faction which gave them birth: our ears must have been again filled with the same principles and professions, to which they were then and lately so wearisomely familiar; and our streets must have again exhibited the brutal

triumph of a populace betrayed to the worst purposes ; and the afflicting conflict of passions and interests between different classes of the same people

It would have opened a precedent to which there could have been no limit ; for upon the same principle, and with the same justice, every one of about two hundred officers, whose services have been dispensed with at different times, and for various causes, might come forward and demand trial or investigation. Every officer who enters the King's service does so, with the full knowledge which the many instances in question afford him, that the King has an undoubted right to dismiss his officers, without alleging any reason, beyond that it is his Majesty's pleasure to dispense with their future services. This prerogative, never before called in question, we are now told, though with a 'touching simplicity', is a *freehold property*, and can be no more taken away than a man's estate ; a proposition really too ludicrous to be gravely treated ; but like some of the arithmetical flights of our financial Monboddo, unanswerable from its absurdity. If an officer's commission

had such a property, the King would be no longer a trustee for the liberty of his subjects ; but their lives and property would then be mortgaged upon a bad security, over which there could be no controul. With the recollection of former times, and particularly those about the year 1640, Parliament cannot be too scrupulous of any interference with the privileges and duties of the Army ; and it appears to me, that of all the prerogatives of the Crown, that over its officers should be the least subject to any controul. The principle of such a power is not to be judged by a microscopic view of its possible application—and contingent abuse is no evidence of an inherent evil in either laws or systems: for there can be no preservation of liberty without *some* compromise of right—we must yield the *pars pro toto*—a principle that we may follow in its various ramifications through all the associations and interests of civil society, and one equally applicable to the people, as towards the government under which they live.

It is curious to observe the acrimonious industry with which the opponents of Minister collate every noxious charge, and

adopt the wildest inferences, (however irrelevant to measures under discussion) in order to “*get up*” any thing like a *case* against them ; but like the dramatists of the present day, they exhibit a miserable failure, and the piece generally goes off with obloquy and contempt. Whenever the subject of these considerations, for instance, has been agitated, motives of a vindictive and personal nature have been imputed, instead of those which an imperious sense of public duty manifestly dictated. We are called on to believe that Government held the *Parliamentary* talents and conduct of Sir Robert Wilson in such dread estimation, that his punishment is to be attributed more to his conduct *in* the House, than to any acts *out* of it ; and all this is coupled in solemn verbiage with the “oppressive and iniquitous” dismissal of Earl Fitzwilliam from his Lieutenancy, and Lord Fife from the Household. That Sir R. Wilson himself should possess so erroneous a calculation of his own political importance, and of the motives of Ministers in procuring his dismissal, it is impossible to conceive ; But what some of those Gentlemen who

supported his motion for Inquiry may entertain, it would be difficult to calculate. Of such a man as Lord Fitzwilliam, it is painful to speak, except in terms of approbation; but it was his misfortune to have been led into a dereliction of duty, and to lend his high name in support of proceedings directly opposed to the measures of Government—and that at a period when sedition was stalking every where abroad, and setting all constituted authority in the state at defiance. To suppose that *any* Minister therefore could have been justified in not at once removing that nobleman, is a monstrous proposition—though few men deserve more respect for those many *private virtues*, which might claim some consideration for *public errors*.

The dismissal of Lord Fife from the Household, was a matter of far less moment in any point of view; and though equally defensible upon general principles, still it was founded on a different bearing and application of them. That no man could find himself severed from so enviable and distinguished a situation about the sacred person of our Sovereign, without pain and

regret—is I trust, impossible; and that none can be more warmly attached to that illustrious Personage than the individual in question, I have good reason to know. But immutable principles of state polity are not to be compromised to private feelings; and his Majesty, no doubt, upon that, as on all occasions, acted with indifference to every consideration, but to those of public utility and expedience.

If Ministers cannot calculate on the general support of those attached by office to the Government, there would be an end of all administration, and no Minister could hold his place but at the will of the prevailing party: he *must* have a *majority*, else his political existence is at an end: his presidency falls with the vote:—it would be in vain that he would open his portefeuille, if the capricious opposition of those holding high and important situations under the Crown might be arrayed against him.—In the spirit of *these* times, it is a sufficiently arduous task to carry the best and palpably necessitous measures *with* such support, and though the wholesome application of a zealous and vigorous opposition has unquestion-

ably a most salutary effect in its operation upon the executive of any government under a free constitution like our own; still it must be tempered to the paramount exigency of facilitating, and not obstructing the wheels of the state machine.

The supplementary attack with which, in the debate of the 14th instant, the members for Durham and Aberdeen attempted to bolster up the main charge, is by no means unworthy of notice.

They have condescended to inform us that "the best feelings of the human heart," and "the honour and gratitude of a Gentleman," are best exemplified in countenancing *such* tributes of respect to the memory of a departed Queen, as the events of the 14th of August exhibited. But what the conduct of that immaculate Personage was towards that illustrious Individual, to whom *honour and gratitude*, were *alone substantially due*, we are not told:—But probably, this Corinthian model of polished society is derived from the same source, as the new discovery of "military freeholds," and that a British Officer can decorate his person with foreign orders, and assume foreign titles.

without being at all indebted to his own Sovereign, for such a privilege.

If there had been any thing like a charge against his Majesty's Ministers in this business, one might have pitied, but not condemned the 6th form ingenuity, which could indulge in such speculations.—

But really when Gentlemen are obliged to travel out of the case itself, and to visit the ordinances of the Military College, and by a distortion of them, to impute the removal of Sir Robert Wilson's son from that establishment, to the influence of Government, they are, indeed, entitled to every consideration! Nothing is more notorious than that no subject of this country, civil or military, can derive a legal right to accept and wear the orders or titles of a foreign state, without an express licence from the King, officially announced in the gazette; and when his Majesty has, therefore, the power to *withhold*, or *confirm* such honours, is it tenable to allege that his doing the latter bears no evidence of his favour and approbation of that officer, upon a representation of whose service, the King of course, judges and decides, whether he is a fit object or not of such distinction?

It is well known that continental honors are not *always* purchased at the expence of *blood*, or *peril*, and it is doing both the British service and the Sovereign great injustice, not to regard the privilege of assuming them as the property which *ought* to give them the greatest estimation with the Officers of his Majesty's service. If Sir R. Wilson has *not* received *English* decorations adequate to his own expectations, or to those of his friends, it is to be attributed to no cause, but the same reason by which other Officers in the service *have* received them; viz. Invariable rules that must either be rigidly adhered to in the department, from which their administration proceeds, or at once abandoned to individual pretensions. Perhaps no man was ever called to exercise the arduous and responsible situation of military chief in this country, who has—nay who *could* have acquitted himself with that glory and satisfaction, which the history of our era must accord to the Duke of York,—with *glory*—in having been the undisputed means of sending forth our armies under a system of discipline and construction, that enabled them to return from universal victory, with the imperishable lau-

rels of the *deliverance*, not the *subjugation* of other nations, and which therefore the hand of time shall not wither—and with *satisfaction*, in having ever exercised his high powers with benevolence and clemency—where the will of the individual, not the duties of the office, left a choice of action.—Common justice demands this, if it can be called a digression; but *ingratitude* to public merit is the prevailing vice of the times; and *some* men, it appears, would be ruled with scythes—not sceptres—since they can but exult and batten in the rank and pestiferous abundance of their infidelity and discontent.

To suppose that the institutional rules of a public establishment, like the Military College, were to be re-modelled and fashioned according to the peculiar case of any person whose son might happen to be placed there; and that Ministers condescended to interfere with their application to the case of Sir R. Wilson's son, is both an arrogant and ridiculous allegation: There are necessarily invariable regulations, by which the entry and residence of every class of students at that establishment are governed; and when Sir R. Wilson lost that rank in the army, which entitled his son to be entered under one class, it fol-

lowed by the same rules, that if he remained at the College, he must be placed under another.

With the removal, therefore, of this gentleman's son, government has nothing to do, and if he *is* removed, it would surely rather prove a vindictive spirit on the one side where there may exist, than on the other, where there *cannot* possibly exist such feelings.

It is an old and a trite adage, 'that a bad advocate makes a bad cause,' and if Sir R. Wilson's case had been left to stand upon the merits of his own statement, it would have been exempt from those odious features of a party question with which the desultory and irrelevant arguments of his friends have stamp'd it: It is foreign to the limits of this design, to track these gentlemen through *all* the misrepresentations in question. But enough has been already said to elicit the fact. What, indeed, could be expected from the uncompromising dogmas of men who would have the British parliament for ever engaged in pursuing the shadow of a guinea, to be caught one hundred years hence?—from those, who could quote Blackstone's definition of the prerogative of the Crown, in the very passage to prove its *abuse* (in the case under

discussion), which is that precisely on which its *exercise* may be fully *justified*?—"Prerogative (said that great commentator) is a discretionary power of acting for the public good, where the positive laws were silent."—*Here* the laws were silent—*here* the laws were disregarded and violated—and *here*, therefore, the prerogative of the crown was wisely and salutarily put in force.

But an extreme of principles, and a disparity of talents, are inseparable from the necessary construction of all representative assemblies; and as D'Alembert well observes, "The highest offices in church and state resemble a pyramid; whose top is only accessible to two sorts of animals—eagles, and reptiles."

The subtilty of the latter, however, does not always avail—and had he who

" Never advanced,
From the place he was stanced,
'Till nae mair was to do there at a' man,"

been heeded on the day of the Queen's funeral; it is probable that the friends of Sir R. Wilson would not have now to lament an indiscretion and impetuosity, which disdained controul—and we should have been

spared the painful task of justifying a necessary act of the executive, which it is impossible to doubt, emanated with most reluctant feelings, from that high quarter, where the distinguishing attributes are mercy and justice.

Accustomed as Englishmen have been, to attach the highest sense of honour and discretion to our officers; and being ignorant of oppression and injustice in our government, except from the infectious suggestions of what are vulgarly called, popular-writers; (but who, like the fabled hero of old, must *make* his monsters before he kills them;) it is not surprising that on a *prima facie* view of Sir R. Wilson's case, an appearance of hardship might be assumed in his dismissal, and of injustice in denying the trial or inquiry demanded.

But, *jacta est alea*,—the die is cast—and on a dispassionate consideration of all the circumstances connected with that officer's public course, on a view of the period and the occasion, in which his conduct became the particular and immediate object of reprehension, and partly on a view of the importance which the preservation of that military discipline bears, to the conservation of all that is

great and glorious, and can be valuable in this country—*surely* there are few men, into whatever excesses the warmth of private friendship, or the prejudices of party feeling might betray them upon *other* questions, that can seriously deny the sound discretion and imperious duty, which influenced his Majesty's advisers, in suggesting the removal of Sir R. Wilson from his rank in the army. That the arm of power so raised, has not fallen upon an insignificant, or worthless member of that noble profession, is matter of congratulation; since it must become one of strong example, and cannot fail to have a good effect. It will teach men not to abuse the King's clemency, who forget their own duty; and, that *no* series of *service*, however *honourable*, and *no* *claims*, however *substantial*, can evade or suspend the operation of those laws and institutions, without which we should soon cease to hold our distinguished place among nations.

That *such* an example should have been necessary in the person of an officer of long and meritorious services, and of high rank in the army, cannot but be viewed with those sentiments of regret, the expression of which is by no means inconsistent with a con-

viction of the justice of his sentence ; and since this summary examination of the different points which bear upon that subject, will afford sufficient commentary ; it only remains to conclude with a text from an authority, which cannot fail on any question to be unobjectionable—if not acceptable, to the opponents of these considerations.—That of Lord Erskine, when at the bar in 1801, on a case of some officers who had been then dismissed without trial—“ I am bound to add that the parties are wholly without remedy, the King is the acting party here ; He is at the head of the Army, and the grounds of his decision cannot be *questioned* in any court of law ; and *whenever* his Majesty dismisses an officer, *whether* of the *highest* or *lowest rank*, he loses all benefit belonging to his situation, ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLES OF WAR, and this every soldier must know when he enters the army.”

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FINIS.