



After carefully weighing the whole of the information derived from these sources, and from our immediate examination of many persons competent to afford the best information concerning these two great branches of the Irish revenue, we are constrained to declare, with respect to the Customs, that, notwithstanding the improvements recently made in that department, it is still managed with much less economy and efficiency than the same revenue in England; and with respect to the Excise, that it is so defective a state of management, organization, and discipline, as to render hopeless any attempt at permanent improvement, except through the medium of a general change.

1. Unnecessary Expense of Establishment; and
2. Imperfect Collection of the Revenue; and
3. Delays and Difficulties imposed upon Trade.

Instances under all these heads, both in the Customs and in the Excise, might be adduced in great numbers from the information which we had ourselves an opportunity of collecting. But such examples, however striking, would be far less conclusive than the general testimony of Public Officers holding high situations in the Revenue departments of England, who assisted the Government of Ireland in 1819 in the prosecution of the inquiry to which we have alluded, and which was undertaken with a view to extensive measures of reduction and improvement.

Persons better qualified in all respects for such a service could not have been selected; and it is so important an advantage to us in the performance of the duty which we have now to discharge, that in forming our more general views on the subject of the Irish Revenue, we are enabled to avail ourselves of the minute inquiries into its details which those Gentlemen, from their practical knowledge, were so peculiarly competent to pursue.

Their proceedings were conducted under the immediate direction of the late Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, and their Reports upon the two Departments, now under our consideration, together with the documents by which they are supported, exhibit the zeal and industry with which their researches were carried on, and contain abundant matter to warrant the opinions which they have so strongly expressed respecting the state of Irish establishments.

There could hardly, indeed, be a more striking and convincing proof of the imperfect condition of these establishments, than the very result and termination of this inquiry. After all the information which it produced, and all the suggestions it gave rise to, for the improvement of the Revenue Departments in Ireland, the Government found so much remaining to be done, that greater changes appeared to be necessary, and a further investigation was deemed indispensable.

The prosecution of that investigation has been committed to us, and we should ill discharge the duty thereby imposed upon us, if we hesitated to state our own clear and conscientious conviction of the necessity of those more extensive changes, particularly in the two great branches of the Irish Revenue now under our consideration, the constitution and composition of which must undergo complete alterations, before the management of those departments can be placed upon such a footing as the interests of the Revenue and the accommodation of the Public imperatively require.

Under the head of expense, the wide difference between the rates of management in similar departments of Great Britain and Ireland, affords a strong presumption at least of improvidence in the management of the latter. Upon a comparison of the revenues received, and the expenses of managing them in England, Scotland, and Ireland respectively, in the last four years, the result is as follows:—

| Year | CUSTOMS    |            |            |            | EXCISE     |            |            |            |
|------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|      | England    | Scotland   | Ireland    | Ireland    | England    | Scotland   | Ireland    | Ireland    |
| 1815 | £1,850,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,850,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 |
| 1816 | £1,850,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,850,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 |
| 1817 | £1,850,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,850,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 |
| 1818 | £1,850,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,850,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 | £1,100,000 |

It must, however, be admitted, that the inference which naturally might be drawn from this comparison is by no means conclusive. A portion of the higher rate of management in Ireland is fairly to be justified by the expense which a separate establishment for managing a small part only of the general Revenue of the Kingdom unavoidably creates, and a portion also by local peculiarities, which under any management would render the comparative cost of collection greater in Ireland than in England. But, after making ample allowance for these circumstances, which cannot satisfactorily be accounted for, the comparison with Scotland is also unfavourable to Ireland; although the revenue of the Customs in Scotland is much smaller, the ports of that country more numerous, and the facility of contraband traffic greater, the rate of management is nearly the same; while in the Excise, the gross receipts of which in the two countries are nearly equal, the rate of management in Ireland is strikingly higher.

The manner in which these differences, indicative of unnecessary expenditure, have arisen, is in a great measure explained by the Reports upon those branches of the revenue which were produced by the inquiry we have alluded to. In that of Mr. Richmond upon the Customs, reductions were suggested, upon grounds more satisfactorily explained, to the extent of £77,000 in the yearly charge of that department; while Colonel Doyle and Mr. Carr proposed diminutions amounting to £42,540 in the annual expenditure of that of the Excise.

That retrenchments to such an extent, embracing in the first department more than one-fifth of the annual expense of management, and in the latter more than one-seventh (according to the charge of the latest year then under consideration), should have appeared almost upon the very first view to be practicable, consistently with the due discharge of the public service, is itself decisive evidence of some great defect, either in the system under which the excessive expenditure had arisen, or in the administration of it.

We are inclined principally to ascribe it to the system, and to that tendency to extravagance and ostentation which is always to be found in independent local establishments, in a degree very disproportionate to their real importance.

In the Customs in Ireland, the Board itself and the office of the Secretary connected with it, were found to be on a scale too nearly approaching, in the number of the persons borne upon the establishment, to the same offices in London. There were seven Commissioners, (two of whom were Chairmen), two Secretaries, and 21 Clerks; in Dublin; while in London, for a revenue of sixfold the extent, and for a weight of business which bears no comparison with that of Ireland, there are nine Commissioners, one Secretary, and 26 Clerks.

In the contingent expenses, also, such charges were discovered as indicated habits of great extravagance and of a very loose control. Several instances are afforded in Mr. Richmond's observations under that head; amongst others, he states "that for the house of the Surveyor at Malahide, an out station within the port of Dublin, where there is no boat establishment, and where the officer's duty is confined to the discharge of a few vessels laden with coals, salt, and potatoes, the charges incurred for repairs in the last year amounted to £333 19s. including £17 17s. 6d. for a chimney piece;" upon which he very justly remarks, "Under such a system no limit can be assigned to the amount of contingent expenses."

In the same paper he repeatedly points out the circumstance, that in the out-posts "the salaries of the officers in Ireland are generally higher than the salaries of the officers of the same class in England;" and, in another place, he intimates, "that they are one-third higher to officers who receive above £100 per annum, and between one-fourth and one-sixth higher to officers whose salaries are less than £100."

In his evidence before us, he adverts to other examples of excessive expense.

In the Excise the same profusion was manifest, and formed a subject of observation in the Report of Colonel Doyle and Mr. Carr. They have also adverted strongly to it in their evidence before us, remarking upon the striking disproportion between the offices of collection in Dublin and London. In the former place, there are twelve collectors at £1200 a year each, where the out-let collection amounts to about £700,000 annually; while in the latter there is but one collector, whose salary is £600 a year, and who receives duties which amounted in the year 1820 to £7,240,907. It is true that the Receiver General in London performs certain duties which are not discharged by that officer in Dublin, and which fall upon the collectors there; but that circumstance is by no means sufficient to justify the difference. It is to be observed also, that there is no collector of Excise in England who is paid at a higher rate than £600 a year, and only one out of London whose salary is of that amount, the collector of Liverpool, who receives and accounts for duties exceeding in net produce the whole of the Excise revenues of Ireland.

We have adverted in this manner and upon these authorities to the comparative expense of management in Ireland and England; as it was found upon the inquiry in 1819, that it exhibits that which we conceive can only be corrected by a change in the constitution of the departments. Particular instances of extravagance may indeed be remedied, and general directions may be issued to forbid their recurrence (as upon these

Reports has already in fact been done), but such remedies have been applied before, and such orders for future regulation have too frequently been issued in vain. These departments have, in the several parts of their establishments, been frequently revised by successive Administrations in Ireland, and subsequently to the Union. They have also since that period undergone a minute inquiry by a Parliament Commission, and have been subject to many reforms in consequence of its proceedings. But all these have not availed to subvert a steady adherence to a scale of expenditure justly proportioned to the services which they have to perform. The needless and profuse charges which, after all these inquiries and reformations, were found existing in both of them, appear to us a convincing proof that, as they are at present constituted, a full security for economical management is unattainable.

A circumstance, strongly corroborative of this view of the subject, occurs in the accounts of the Excise Department relating to the year immediately following a period when the endeavours of your Lordships and the local Government to effect retrenchments were very recent. A Commissioner of that Board was in attendance upon your Lordships in England, in the year 1820, upon the business of his office, during 80 days, and the allowance which he claimed for that service, and which was awarded to him by his Board, was at the rate of eight guineas per diem, in addition to his regular salary. The charge on similar occasions, in former instances, had been five guineas per diem, and it does not appear that any authority or precedent existed for the increase. No payments made either to English or Scotch Commissioners, detached on public duty from their usual place of residence, could have been found to justify such an allowance, or a rate of charge even nearly approaching to it, as will be seen by a statement in our Appendix. And when this case of extravagant expenditure is considered, with reference to all the circumstances detailed in the evidence of one of the members of the Board, and in his letter connected with it, the recent inquiries and proceedings of the Irish Government had produced any substantial reformation or disposition to economy in the Board of Excise in Ireland.

Our view of the unnecessary expense of these departments in Ireland is confirmed even by the plans of reduction which the Boards themselves, both of Customs and Excise, laid before the Lord Lieutenant, when their attention was directed to the subject by the inquiries which were instituted in 1819. In each department the results of it, when called upon, found great retrenchments to be practicable. Those which were proposed by the Commissioners of Customs will be found in our Appendix, with the observations of Mr. Richmond upon them.

The Board of Excise, on their part, suggested the immediate retrenchment of no less than 19 Surveyors, 129 Gaugers, and 27 Supernumeraries, and subsequently proposed further reductions, making in the whole 27 Surveyors, 150 Gaugers, 27 Supernumeraries, whereby a diminution was to be effected of £17,920 in the yearly expense of management. That amount of saving, considerable as it is, falls much short of what was submitted by Colonel Doyle and Mr. Carr; and the proposition (and the argument for it) was accompanied by little argument or explanation, to shew in what manner practically these specific reductions could be effected consistently with the due execution of the service, and why they could not be carried farther. It also contains no satisfactory reason why the expenditures, thus admitted to be unnecessary, had not been curtailed before.

The proposal here, indeed, more the appearance of a hasty attempt to anticipate the result of the inquiry than the result of a spontaneous and well-considered plan of reformation. The Lord Lieutenant declined, upon such a representation, to adopt the general reductions in that department, at a time when a more mature scheme of retrenchment and improvement was under consideration.

It will not escape the attention of your Lordships, that the large diminutions of establishment, contemplated in all these plans, were deemed practicable consistently with a continuance of the separate management by which the collection of the Irish revenue has hitherto been controlled. By the substitution of a system under which the whole management of this revenue shall be incorporated with that of Great Britain, we are satisfied that a much more extensive and far-reaching plan will be presented itself. The saving which may ultimately be effected depends so much upon the degree in which our propositions relate both to the commercial intercourse and the Revenue system of the two countries may be adopted, that it would be premature at present to enter into details with a view of attempting, even by an estimate, to exhibit an approximation to it. But when we state that, according to the opinions of the persons most competent to form a judgment upon the subject, the proportion of the Customs Establishment employed on account of the Union and Counter-vailing Duties, which we shall propose to abolish or to simplify, is not less than one-half of the entire department now maintained in Ireland, it may be allowed us to anticipate from these alterations, in conjunction with the union of the Boards, a reduction of expense bearing a very great proportion to the whole of the existing charges of management.

This disproportionate scale of expense, although it could not be wholly justified, would be in some

degrees compensated for, if it appeared that the establishments so constructed had the practical effect of producing a Revenue collected to its full extent, or to which it gives rise. Consequences of a very injurious nature must also be produced, from the obstacles thereby created to a free intercourse in the spirit trade between the two countries, which cannot, while the revenue is so imperfectly collected in Ireland, be carried on without serious injustice to the English and Scotch distillers.

It will be our duty to address a distinct communication to your Lordships in consequence of the reference which you have been pleased to make to us of the whole of this extensive and complicated subject. We shall here, therefore, only state what appears to be necessary to illustrate our last observation, leaving entirely out of our consideration the particular subjects of difference between the distillers of the two countries which are now in a course of litigation with a view to a legal decision upon them. The Irish distiller has the privilege of warehousing the spirits which he manufactures, and of transferring such part of them as he thinks proper at any time to England, where he pays the British duty on importing them for consumption.

Thus far, therefore, he meets the British manufacturer on equal terms; for we may suppose that the expenses of freight, &c. to which he is liable, are compensated by the privilege enjoyed by him, and not by the English Manufacturer, of re-warehousing the spirits without the payment of the duty, until they pass into the hands of the consumer. But from the facilities which are allowed to him, as we have described in the appendix of a certain proportion of the spirits which he can produce without the payment of any duty in Ireland, it is evident he possesses an advantage which no man can give him a decided and preponderating superiority over his English rival, and such an advantage, if it be allowed to continue for any length of time, prove as injurious to the distiller in England, as it is to the Revenue in Ireland.

If upon every thousand gallons of spirits produced by the Irish distiller he is charged with a duty on 750 gallons only (which, according to the majority of the opinions which we have recited upon the subject, appears to be the fact), leaving him at liberty to dispose clandestinely of the remaining 250 gallons free of duty, there will be a benefit to him upon the rate of that quantity beyond the fair and ordinary profits of his manufacture, corresponding in some degree with the amount of the duty which he has been permitted to evade. We say in some degree corresponding, because we are aware that in such transactions the dealer does not usually gain the whole of the duty which is lost to the Revenue, being obliged to divide it according to circumstances with the consumer. But, whatever the actual profit upon each transaction may be, it affords on the whole a positive advantage to the Irish distiller, and enables him, *pro tanto*, to undersell the English manufacturer in his own market in the district of the 750 gallons which are charged with duty.

It therefore becomes the interest of the Irish distiller to transfer to England all the spirits upon which he is compelled to pay duty, and to reserve for Ireland that portion which he can make duty free; a proceeding which, as we have observed before, must operate at the same time to effect the ruin of the English distiller, and the decrease of the Irish revenue.

With respect to the Scotch distiller, it will be sufficient to observe, that in his case the duty on spirits is charged and levied in a manner differing considerably from the method pursued either in England or in Ireland, and that the manufacturer is situated, (so; if the free intercourse in spirits were allowed between Scotland and Ireland, he would probably not be able, supposing the Revenue could be collected as at present, to endure the competition; while, on the other hand, if his claim to be put upon the same footing with Ireland in respect to the intercourse with England were conceded to him, he also might (if the best opinion which we have yet received on the subject be correct) have advantages over the English distiller too great to allow the rivalry to be of long continuance.

We can ourselves conceive no permanent or effectual method of preserving the United Kingdom from grievances of this nature, without the establishment of one uniform and regular system of revenue collection, under one management and authority. It appears to us, that it is not by an alteration of the law, or of the regulations for collecting the spirit duty in any of the three countries, that a remedy for such evils could with certainty be provided. For even supposing the law to be made uniform (which local circumstances may perhaps not admit of), and the regulations prescribed for collecting the duties to be literally the same, the injurious effects to which we have adverted might still exist in their full extent, if the different Boards were at liberty to enforce that law, and execute those regulations, with as much diversity in practice as they are at present in the habit of doing. On the other hand, notwithstanding the continued existence of differences in the laws and regulations for collecting those duties, the intercourse between the three countries might be conducted with fairness and facility to all parties, under a well-arranged system of counter-vailing duties, provided those laws and regulations were administered by the same authority, and enforced with equal strictness throughout the United Kingdom.

These arguments apply in a greater or less degree to every commodity liable to the duty of

Excise in both countries, according to the circumstances of the case. And in any instance in which the duty collected differs in either country from that which is nominally imposed, it must prove injurious to the trader in one country and to the revenue in the other.

That the lately which we have alluded to as prevailing in the collection of the duty on spirits, prevails also with regard to the collection of Excise in Ireland, sufficient proof may be collected from the examinations and Reports of the Commissioners and practical Officers sent from England. In the evidence of the latter there is a general concurrence in declaring, that not one of the duties which came under their examination, in the course of the extensive inspection which they were charged, appeared to be duly collected in Ireland. This opinion is confirmed and corroborated in a considerable degree by the testimony also referred to, of one of the Commissioners of the Irish Board of Excise, who has lately returned from an inspection of the north-western districts of that country. This Gentleman expressly, in the strongest terms, his belief of a very general state of corruption in the several classes of the Excise department below the Inspector, and he speaks very doubtfully even of those above. One man only, however, and inquires decidedly in favour of the same conclusion; and we are fully convinced that all these duties, the collection of which depends upon the vigilance and integrity of the officers employed, are most imperfectly brought to account.

The causes of this defective administration are in great measure pointed out in the Report submitted by Colonel Doyle and Mr. Carr to the Lord Lieutenant, and in their evidence before us. In both of these, a want of systematic arrangement and discipline in the Irish Excise department is described as prevailing to such a degree, as most probably all possibility of a faithful and efficient collection of that revenue.

A further evil consequence, and one of a very pernicious character, attributable to this state of management, arises from the inequality of the pressure thereby produced on the honest and dishonest trader, which is so much felt, that many who might not be tempted by the spirit of gain, are too frequently driven by the apprehension of ruin, to adopt those fraudulent practices which can alone place them on a level with their competitors. Thus the collection of the Public Revenue becomes a fertile source of corruption, creating and maintaining a fraudulent connexion between trader and officer, prejudicial alike to the interests of a fair spirit of industry, and to the due collection of the just Revenue of the State.

In the department of the Assessed Taxes in Ireland, the establishments for the management of which we were led to examine more minutely, on account of a subject of special inquiry referred to us by the Lord Lieutenant, we have not found the proofs of a more successful system of administration. A considerable change in the constitution and regulations of this department took place under the direction of your Lordships and the Irish Government, in 1817. Some principal improvements were then introduced into a system, which, as it before existed, was various in principle and corrupt in practice, to a very high degree. We shall abstain from offering such observations and suggestions as have occurred to us upon these alterations, and also upon what remains to be done in order to place this department upon a proper footing, until the measures now in progress through Parliament, for relieving Ireland from a large portion of the Assessed Taxes, shall have been completed. We shall then be enabled to submit an opinion as to the most economical mode of collecting such part of those taxes as may still remain unaltered, or perhaps to suggest the expediency of commencing for some increase of indirect taxation a branch of revenue in Ireland, which will then yield us an inconsiderable produce in proportion to the extent of the establishment which must be maintained for managing it: in the mean time, we avail ourselves of this opportunity to state, that in offering any advice upon that subject, we shall be chiefly guided by a principle which we deem of great importance, and never to be lost sight of in the present relative situation of Ireland and Great Britain, that any inequality between the two countries in the general weight of the public burdens, arising out of the different rates of taxation, so long as any such matter remains, and we are far from thinking that the pressure upon Ireland should be increased at this time by an attempt to equalize them, ought to be confined as much as possible to subjects of commercial exchange, and not apply to subjects of general revenue. If the exemption to be given to Ireland, in proportioning her share of the common burdens, could be confined to such revenues, it would not only relieve the inconvenience and embarrassment which now perplexes the intercourse between Great Britain and Ireland, under a system of counter-vailing duties; but would also have a beneficial tendency, by operating as an inducement to residence on the part of the affluent proprietors, more direct and forcible than that which is afforded by a difference in the taxation upon articles of consumption only.

As the remarks which we have thus left it our duty to submit upon the present state of the several Revenue departments in Ireland, may possibly be considered as intended to imply censure upon the individuals composing the Boards which preside over them, we are anxious to guard against such an inference, and distinctly to disclaim any such intention. Our observations on this subject are directed, not to the conduct of individuals filling the superior offices of these departments, but

to the system, and to practices of long standing, the evils of which are in a great measure to be attributed to causes which cannot fairly be considered as within their control. We are also bound to state, in justice towards them, that in many of the recent proceedings on the Boards in Ireland, there is an evident tendency to improvement. But with our greater candour than they have power to accomplish, such improvements can only be partial and temporary. The leading cause of the evils stated to exist in the existing mode of appointment and promotion of officers in the different departments of the Revenue.

Under a system which has long prevailed in Ireland, these appointments appear to have been made with too little of that consideration for the immediate interests of the Revenue, which would require that individuals should be selected to fill the higher situations on the ground of their superior abilities. These situations have, for the most part, been occupied by persons selected by experience by their previous habits, or by the nature of their education. In discharge of the duties for which they have received their employment, and the general inefficiency of the appointments, productive of so much evil, has been the unavoidable consequence.

The power of appointing the executive officers, acting under the authority of the several Boards of Revenue in Ireland, is ostensibly vested in the Commissioners, either by law or by the patents whereby they are constituted. The instruments of appointment accordingly proceed from them; but the selection of the persons to be appointed has been exclusively made by the Government, whose directions, in that respect, the Commissioners are accustomed to obey. This proceeding applies equally to officers of the highest and the lowest classes, and is not in practice limited with respect to the former, by any strict rules of promotion. There exists, indeed, a regulation, which shows, by the manner and date of its origin, how much and how long ago the want of such a restriction was felt, and which also proves, in its total inefficacy with respect to the higher offices, how deeply rooted was the evil which it was intended to correct. The Irish House of Commons, in a Resolution passed the 7th of April, 1781, declared—

"That it would tend to encourage a faithful discharge of duty in the offices of the Revenue, if certain offices should be filled up by persons only who have gone through certain inferior departments of the Service out of the Surveyors of the Customs or Excise, or Collectors out of diversifying Officers, who have been selected there, according to the usual course of the Revenue."

What effect might have been produced by this resolution immediately after it was passed, with respect to the office of Collector, we do not know; but we find that the mode of creating it now in use is of long standing, probably very nearly as old as the resolution itself. This consists in the appointment of the individual intended for the superior situation to an inferior office *pro forma*, and by way of qualification only. A person, for instance, who is destined to be a Collector of Excise, and who is generally selected from any class of life rather than the Excise Department, is usually made a Clerk in the Strong Water Permit Office, which makes him a Collector. The latest instance of an appointment of this kind exhibits, precisely that process. And it is a curious fact, that there are instances in the practice of these departments, with respect to the collection of taxes, no other vestige of the resolution of the Irish House of Commons than the method of creating it. For appointments to the other offices mentioned in the resolution, it has been so much the practice to create qualifications in a manner similar; and when officers who have really served in the departments are promoted from lower to higher stations, we do not find that the selections have been generally made upon the recommendation of the persons qualified to judge of the merits of the parties, or their professions on the ground of service. Where there is no strict rule or definite mode prescribed for confining the promotion to that principle, it naturally and almost unavoidably becomes the subject of interests and considerations foreign to those of the Revenue Service; and the higher rank may be as inefficiently filled by selections so made, as by the introduction of persons entirely new to the department.

That the offices of the Revenue should, under such a system, be generally occupied by persons well qualified to discharge their duties, is certainly not to be hoped for, nor would it be more reasonable to expect that, without being so qualified, the service for which they are established could be satisfactorily and economically performed. The persons employed in the two branches of the Revenue now under our consideration are necessarily a numerous body, and much dispersed, extending to great numbers of parishes, and so much out of the reach of the immediate superintendance of the highest authorities over them, that a well-regulated system of subordination, complete and conducted in all its parts, can alone insure the activity and integrity of each individual. The chief requisite in such a system is, that the superior officers should have a thorough knowledge, derived from practical experience, of the duties of those under their control; without which they must either depend upon their inferiors for assistance, than be enabled to superintend and check their conduct. But this competency in the superior officers, without a strict exclusion of persons who are strangers to the department from the higher appointments under the Board, and without a well regulated scheme of promotion in all the others, is obviously unattainable.

It is, however, our duty here to state, that many officers, who have become valuable acquisitions to the respective departments, have been appointed to the higher situations in the Customs and Excise in Ireland, although their appointments have taken place in the manner we have already described. But even if the fullest security could be obtained for the constant exercise of such a discrimination on the part of the Government, and if all the officers appointed could be equally well chosen, the objections to the practice would still, in our judgment, be insurmountable.

The want of a clear system of promotion (having reference only to experience or merit) in such departments, operates very injuriously in two ways. In the first place, by filling the higher situations with persons whose qualifications to execute their own duties, and to superintend those of the officers under them, and in the next, by taking from those who occupy the lower, the strongest and most effective inducement to activity and good conduct—the prospect of future advancement. Under such circumstances, the inferior officers can neither be encouraged by the hope of reward, nor compelled by vigilant superintendance, to perform their duty to the utmost of their ability. The natural consequence is, in Ireland, what it would be everywhere, a state of things such as we have described.

In the English Excise department, the regulations for the promotion of officers are eminently calculated to ensure a succession of active and faithful servants; and these regulations being strictly acted upon, the most beneficial results are exhibited, in the superior efficiency and more economical management of that department.

It is also to be observed, while there exists a power of introducing persons into the higher offices of a Revenue establishment, who have not acquired experience in its lower stations, there will be a difficulty in resisting the effect of influence in the appointments, and a tendency to render these offices more suited, in point of emolument, to persons of superior education and habits of life; habits often ill adapted to the laborious attention required in the performance of the duties annexed to these situations. It will accordingly be found, as we have before remarked, that the principal Officers of the Excise in England are paid, in proportion to the duty and responsibility of their offices, at rates considerably lower than officers of a similar rank and description in the Revenue departments of Ireland; and it seems to be illustrative of the principle to which we are alluding, that a similar distinction exists between the higher officers of the Excise and those of the Customs in England, in which last-mentioned Department, precisely to the recent revision of it by the Commissioners especially appointed for that purpose, the selection of persons to fill the higher offices under the Board was not so restricted as to be made exclusively from those who had acquired experience in the lower, and been recommended to them by their official services.

In suggesting a remedy for that defect in the English Customs, by the introduction of a well-regulated system of promotion, the Commissioners of Inquiry appear to concur with us in our opinion of the essential importance of such a system to the effective and economical management of the Revenue; while the readiness with which those suggestions have been adopted by your Lordships, and with which you have transferred from yourselves the unrestricted power of selecting officers for the superior situations in the Customs, affords a conclusive confirmation of the soundness of that opinion.

The effect of the incorporation of the Boards would be to extend those wholesome regulations to Ireland, together with all the rules and provisions by which both the Customs and Excise are now governed in England.

Before, however, a measure involving so extensively a change is determined upon, it may naturally be an object of inquiry, whether the improvements in point of economy, efficiency, and uniformity, intended to be produced by this reformation, may not be attainable by merely increasing the number of the Commissioners in the Irish & Scotch Boards, by diminishing the scale of the Establishments in Ireland, and by subjecting them strictly to one common code of regulations, framed under the sanction of the Treasury, and maintained by its constantly superintending authority. We have fully considered this alternative; and we are satisfied, that while it would scarcely, if at all, be less difficult of execution, its advantages would fall very far short of those which a complete incorporation is calculated to produce. We conceive that your Lordships' Board is rather constituted to administer a general authority over the Revenue service, than calculated to superintend the details of it in their execution; and, therefore, that if you were to continue to govern the Boards in Ireland and Scotland as distinct establishments, by your own immediate directions, you would be under the necessity of placing so much reliance upon them, and of leaving so much to their discretion in matters relating to the practical management of their departments, that there would be no security for continued uniformity between them, and not a little danger (upon the grounds which we have already stated) of a gradual relaxation, however carefully framed, and strictly governed, are liable, in the hands of separate authorities, to be administered with differences of construction and application, which, although inavoidable at first, inevitably lead to important variations. We feel confident, therefore, that the uniformity contemplated by Parlia-

ment, and to practices of long standing, the evils of which are in a great measure to be attributed to causes which cannot fairly be considered as within their control. We are also bound to state, in justice towards them, that in many of the recent proceedings on the Boards in Ireland, there is an evident tendency to improvement. But with our greater candour than they have power to accomplish, such improvements can only be partial and temporary. The leading cause of the evils stated to exist in the existing mode of appointment and promotion of officers in the different departments of the Revenue.

Under a system which has long prevailed in Ireland, these appointments appear to have been made with too little of that consideration for the immediate interests of the Revenue, which would require that individuals should be selected to fill the higher situations on the ground of their superior abilities. These situations have, for the most part, been occupied by persons selected by experience by their previous habits, or by the nature of their education. In discharge of the duties for which they have received their employment, and the general inefficiency of the appointments, productive of so much evil, has been the unavoidable consequence.

The power of appointing the executive officers, acting under the authority of the several Boards of Revenue in Ireland, is ostensibly vested in the Commissioners, either by law or by the patents whereby they are constituted. The instruments of appointment accordingly proceed from them; but the selection of the persons to be appointed has been exclusively made by the Government, whose directions, in that respect, the Commissioners are accustomed to obey. This proceeding applies equally to officers of the highest and the lowest classes, and is not in practice limited with respect to the former, by any strict rules of promotion. There exists, indeed, a regulation, which shows, by the manner and date of its origin, how much and how long ago the want of such a restriction was felt, and which also proves, in its total inefficacy with respect to the higher offices, how deeply rooted was the evil which it was intended to correct. The Irish House of Commons, in a Resolution passed the 7th of April, 1781, declared—

"That it would tend to encourage a faithful discharge of duty in the offices of the Revenue, if certain offices should be filled up by persons only who have gone through certain inferior departments of the Service out of the Surveyors of the Customs or Excise, or Collectors out of diversifying Officers, who have been selected there, according to the usual course of the Revenue."

What effect might have been produced by this resolution immediately after it was passed, with respect to the office of Collector, we do not know; but we find that the mode of creating it now in use is of long standing, probably very nearly as old as the resolution itself. This consists in the appointment of the individual intended for the superior situation to an inferior office *pro forma*, and by way of qualification only. A person, for instance, who is destined to be a Collector of Excise, and who is generally selected from any class of life rather than the Excise Department, is usually made a Clerk in the Strong Water Permit Office, which makes him a Collector. The latest instance of an appointment of this kind exhibits, precisely that process. And it is a curious fact, that there are instances in the practice of these departments, with respect to the collection of taxes, no other vestige of the resolution of the Irish House of Commons than the method of creating it. For appointments to the other offices mentioned in the resolution, it has been so much the practice to create qualifications in a manner similar; and when officers who have really served in the departments are promoted from lower to higher stations, we do not find that the selections have been generally made upon the recommendation of the persons qualified to judge of the merits of the parties, or their professions on the ground of service. Where there is no strict rule or definite mode prescribed for confining the promotion to that principle, it naturally and almost unavoidably becomes the subject of interests and considerations foreign to those of the Revenue Service; and the higher rank may be as inefficiently filled by selections so made, as by the introduction of persons entirely new to the department.

That the offices of the Revenue should, under such a system, be generally occupied by persons well qualified to discharge their duties, is certainly not to be hoped for, nor would it be more reasonable to expect that, without being so qualified, the service for which they are established could be satisfactorily and economically performed. The persons employed in the two branches of the Revenue now under our consideration are necessarily a numerous body, and much dispersed, extending to great numbers of parishes, and so much out of the reach of the immediate superintendance of the highest authorities over them, that a well-regulated system of subordination, complete and conducted in all its parts, can alone insure the activity and integrity of each individual. The chief requisite in such a system is, that the superior officers should have a thorough knowledge, derived from practical experience, of the duties of those under their control; without which they must either depend upon their inferiors for assistance, than be enabled to superintend and check their conduct. But this competency in the superior officers, without a strict exclusion of persons who are strangers to the department from the higher appointments under the Board, and without a well regulated scheme of promotion in all the others, is obviously unattainable.

It is, however, our duty here to state, that many officers, who have become valuable acquisitions to the respective departments, have been appointed to the higher situations in the Customs and Excise in Ireland, although their appointments have taken place in the manner we have already described. But even if the fullest security could be obtained for the constant exercise of such a discrimination on the part of the Government, and if all the officers appointed could be equally well chosen, the objections to the practice would still, in our judgment, be insurmountable.

The want of a clear system of promotion (having reference only to experience or merit) in such departments, operates very injuriously in two ways. In the first place, by filling the higher situations with persons whose qualifications to execute their own duties, and to superintend those of the officers under them, and in the next, by taking from those who occupy the lower, the strongest and most effective inducement to activity and good conduct—the prospect of future advancement. Under such circumstances, the inferior officers can neither be encouraged by the hope of reward, nor compelled by vigilant superintendance, to perform their duty to the utmost of their ability. The natural consequence is, in Ireland, what it would be everywhere, a state of things such as we have described.

In the English Excise department, the regulations for the promotion of officers are eminently calculated to ensure a succession of active and faithful servants; and these regulations being strictly acted upon, the most beneficial results are exhibited, in the superior efficiency and more economical management of that department.

It is also to be observed, while there exists a power of introducing persons into the higher offices of a Revenue establishment, who have not acquired experience in its lower stations, there will be a difficulty in resisting the effect of influence in the appointments, and a tendency to render these offices more suited, in point of emolument, to persons of superior education and habits of life; habits often ill adapted to the laborious attention required in the performance of the duties annexed to these situations. It will accordingly be found, as we have before remarked, that the principal Officers of the Excise in England are paid, in proportion to the duty and responsibility of their offices, at rates considerably lower than officers of a similar rank and description in the Revenue departments of Ireland; and it seems to be illustrative of the principle to which we are alluding, that a similar distinction exists between the higher officers of the Excise and those of the Customs in England, in which last-mentioned Department, precisely to the recent revision of it by the Commissioners especially appointed for that purpose, the selection of persons to fill the higher offices under the Board was not so restricted as to be made exclusively from those who had acquired experience in the lower, and been recommended to them by their official services.

In suggesting a remedy for that defect in the English Customs, by the introduction of a well-regulated system of promotion, the Commissioners of Inquiry appear to concur with us in our opinion of the essential importance of such a system to the effective and economical management of the Revenue; while the readiness with which those suggestions have been adopted by your Lordships, and with which you have transferred from yourselves the unrestricted power of selecting officers for the superior situations in the Customs, affords a conclusive confirmation of the soundness of that opinion.