MR. EDITOR, - Sir, you would oblige me much by giving a place in your respectable journal to the following communication, on a subject of great importance and to which I would earnestly call the attention of the public in general, and the Members of the House of Assembly in particular.

If there is any thing which is [...] than another calculated to destroy the peace and harmony of a community, it is the introduction of Orange and Ribbon societies.

Now, it is notorious that Orange associations have already been formed in this City, and are spreading with fearful rapidity through all parts of the Province; and as association naturally begets counter association, there is much reason to apprehend that unless measures be speedily taken to smother this monster at once, and so [effectually] that it shall never again resuscitate, Ribbon societies will be called into existence, in order, as will be alleged, to protect their members from Orange aggression.

As the natives of this country know but little of the malignant spirit that [characterises] these antagonist confederacies, it may be useful to make them acquainted with its ruinous tendency, and the pernicious consequences that have resulted from its operations in Ireland, where the fatal system was first established. About the year 1795, a number of persons of superior rank and order, in the north of Ireland, having determined to exterminate the Catholics from the Province of Ulster, formed themselves into a society of “Orangemen.” Their design they first put in force in the County of Armagh, out of which they banished more than seven hundred Catholic families, destroyed their properties, pulled down or burned their houses, and murdered some of them who refused to abandon their homes and quit the Province. This, then, was the first great act which the Orangemen felt called upon to perform, after having sworn loyalty to the crown and strict obedience to the laws!

If I were to state, upon my own bare testimony, that the only offence of the parties upon whom this outrage was committed was their professing the Catholic faith, it might, perhaps, be doubted by Protestants who are not aware of the fact. I will therefore give corroborative evidence, which will not for a moment be questioned.
Lord Gosford, a Protestant nobleman, who entertained strong anti-Catholic feeling, and who was then Governor of the County of Armagh, having witnessed this merciless persecution, convened a meeting of the magistrates of the county, on the 28th of December, 1795, for the purpose of forming some plan to check the ferocious cruelties of this “lawless banditti.” In his address on opening the business he says “Neither age, nor even acknowledged innocence as to the late disturbances, is sufficient to excite mercy, much less afford protection. The only crime which the wretched objects of this merciless persecution are charged with, is a crime of easy proof; it is simply a profession of the Roman Catholic faith.”

After pointing out in strong language the manner in which the Catholic inhabitants were driven from their homes in the midst of an inclement winter, and robbed of the fruits of their industry, he continues – “This is no exaggerated picture of the horrid scenes now acting in this county, yet surely it is sufficient to awaken sentiments of indignation and compassion in the coldest breast. Those horrors are now acting, and acting with [...]. The spirit of impartial justice (without which law is nothing better than tyranny) has for a time disappeared from this County; and the [supineness] of the magistracy of this County is a topic of conversation in every corner of the kingdom. * * I have the honour to hold a situation in this County which calls upon me to deliver my sentiments, and I do so without fear or disguise. I am as true a Protestant as any man in this room, or in this kingdom. I inherit a property which my family derived under a Protestant title; and, with the blessing of God, I will maintain that title to the utmost of my power. * * * * Conscious of my sincerity in this public declaration, which I do not make unadvisedly, but as the result of mature deliberation, I defy the paltry insinuations that malice or a party spirit may suggest. I know my own heart and should despise myself if, under any intimidation, I could close my eyes against the complaints of a persecuted people.

When Mr. Grattan was in Parliament, at this same period, he painted the origin of Orangeism and in detailing the first persecution of the Catholics by the Orangemen, he said, “These insurgents call themselves Orangemen, or Protestant Boys; that is, a
banditti of murderers, committing massacre in the name of God.” I will only trouble you, Mr. Editor, with one other extract on this painful subject, which I take from Judge Fletcher’s address to the Armagh jury, on a subsequent occasion. “From personal inspection I know nothing of your county, this being the first time I have borne his Majesty’s commission in it; but I cannot be supposed ignorant of the unhappy state of society which it presented at a period not remote. You, gentlemen, must know, much better than I possibly can, the extent of the mischief locally. You must have witnessed the misery inflicted upon thousands of the King’s unoffending subjects, by the ruthless persecution which drove a large portion of the population of this county from all the dear (however humble, still dear) delights, sympathies and associations of home, to wander where they could, or in the language of the ruffian faction, to wander to hell or Connaught! But, gentlemen, if you have had better opportunities of viewing the deserted or destroyed habitation – the melancholy and desponding family bereft of its little all, and flying with hasty and disordered steps from the spoiler; you have not had better opportunities than I have had, of tracing the fearful consequences of this persecution. The emigrants from this county carried into every district in the island, a fearful tale of the cruel [inflictions] of your Orangemen or Break-of-day-men!” From such unquestionable evidence there can be no doubt as regard the spirit of Orange institutions from their beginning.

In the year 1899, the Orange societies became more violent than ever; and as they had not been restrained or [panished] by the law, the Catholics imagined they had been sanctioned by the Government. The Catholics had long been exposed to danger and outrage, and, as was natural, at length formed themselves into counter associations, under the denomination of “Ribbonmen,” for the purpose of defense against the attacks of the Orangemen. The scenes of tumults, riots and bloodshed which had taken place between these antagonist societies, from that time until they had been finally put down by the Government, were innumerable, and productive of the most disastrous consequences to the country.
I think I have now stated enough, and from the very best authority, to convince the well-disposed portion of this community that it is the duty as well as the interest of all good men, no matter of what creed or country, to use their best efforts in order to suppress a system which experience has shown to be productive of incalculable evil without any good whatever.

Many young men, natives of New-Brunswick, have become connected with Orange societies. – This is wrong; but yet they are not so much to blame as others; they have been deceived – grossly deceived – by those Irishmen who have introduced the demon of discord into the country, - Irishmen, whose fathers had been prominent actors in the horrid and bloody tragedies I have been describing. They are the guilty parties who, instead of trying to bury the recollection of the crimes of their fathers in oblivion, would desire to take a part in similar atrocities themselves. Let the young men of New Brunswick be aware of such dangerous men, who, while they profess loyalty to the crown, are encouraging a faction, which from its evil tendency had to be suppressed by the Government in Ireland and Great Britain. – Let them also keep aloof from those hypocrites, who are in the practice of attending Orange meetings, and offering insult to the Deity by singing psalms and making long prayers in such unholy places, - such men have neither regard for religion, nor Christian charity.

Our judges have had occasion more than once to touch upon this unpleasant subject, and condemned all such associations in the strongest language. Has this diminished the numbers of Orangemen? No – quite the contrary – they themselves boast of a flourishing increase. His Worship the Mayor would gladly put them down, but he has not the power. In fact, they will not be overawed by any other authority than the strong arm of the law. This is the only remedy; and now is the time to apply for it, while the Provincial Legislature is sitting. Let, then, a number of our influential citizens, both Protestant and Catholic, get up a petition, numerously signed, praying for the immediate suppression of all secret societies, and let their example be followed in all the other towns throughout the Province; and, by thus calling the attention of our legislators to the subject, in time, the evil may now be easily removed. But if, through negligence or
otherwise, this be overlooked, it would be painful to calculate upon the fearful consequences.

I am your obedient servant, 

ARGUS.