

SUBSTANCE
OF THE
S P E E C H
OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
HENRY ADDINGTON,

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS,

ON THE 12TH FEBRUARY, 1799,

IN
THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE,

TO WHOM

His Majesty's most gracious Message of the 22d January,
relative to an UNION between GREAT BRITAIN
and IRELAND, was referred.

THIRD EDITION.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR J. WRIGHT, OPPOSITE OLD BOND-STREET,
PICCADILLY.

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Mr. DOUGLAS in the Chair.

THE Motion was—"That, in order to promote
" and secure the essential interests of Great
" Britain and Ireland, and to consolidate the
" strength, power, and resources of the Bri-
" tish Empire, it will be advisable to concur
" in such measures as may best tend to unite
" the two Kingdoms of Great Britain and
" Ireland into one Kingdom, in such manner,
" and on such terms and conditions, as may
" be established by Acts of the respective
" Parliaments of his Majesty's said Kingdoms."

The SPEAKER said,

THE occasions were few on which he was disposed to take any other part in the debates and proceedings of the House, than that which was called for by his official duty ; on the present important question, however, he thought it incumbent upon him to express his opinion by his vote ; and exhausted as the subject had been, he hoped for the indulgence of the Committee, whilst he stated the grounds upon which that vote would be given.

His view of the subject was, indeed, very different from that of his Honourable Friend (Mr. Bankes), who had declared it to be his opinion, that the situation of Ireland was such, as to render it not only inexpedient, but unsafe, to coalesce with her. Now it was upon the situation of that country at the present moment, that he founded his conviction, not merely of the expediency (for of that he had long been satisfied), but of the urgent and pressing necessity of the measure in question ; which, though considered by

by his Honourable Friend as in no degree tending to remedy those evils, which were universally acknowledged, he was convinced would, in the first instance, palliate, and ultimately eradicate them ; would at once have the effect of allaying irritation and animosity, and ere long, he trusted, of extinguishing them for ever.

His Honourable Friend was also disposed to think, that the Legislature of Ireland was fully adequate to the redress of those grievances which require parliamentary interposition, and to the restoration of internal tranquillity. This supposition unfortunately was not warranted by experience : to the redress of some of the grievances complained of, and to the removal of some of the causes of irritation, the Speaker said, its adequacy could not be doubted ; but there were radical and inherent evils, closely interwoven with the state and condition of Ireland, and with the temper, the feelings, and the prejudices of the great body of the people, which, though they were not occasioned by the separation of the two Legislatures, he was convinced an incorporation

of those Legislatures could alone effectually remove.

It was a melancholy, but, he feared, an incontrovertible truth, that the state of Ireland had, at no period of its history, been such as to afford satisfaction to any mind, that could justly appreciate the blessings of a well-ordered, a flourishing, and a happy condition of civil society. The bounty of Providence had, indeed, been displayed in that country by a fertile soil, and by abundant means of internal improvement and prosperity; its inhabitants had not been less distinguished than those of Great Britain, in corresponding stations of life, for eloquence, for literary and scientific acquirements, and for those talents and exertions, which have established the naval and military renown of the British empire. Their form of government was the same as our own; but it wanted its true characteristics; it did not, like ours, bestow and receive general confidence and protection: for it was not connected by ties, which he trusted were here indissoluble,

soluble, with the obvious interests, the feelings, and the sentiments of the great body of the people.

The truth was, that, in contemplating the state of Ireland, even at a period of apparent tranquillity, it was impossible not to discover those seeds of animosity, which have unhappily been matured by circumstances into insurrection and rebellion. To account, in a great degree, for this animosity, it might, perhaps, be sufficient to state, that a large majority of the people were Catholics, and that four-fifths at least of the property was in the hands of Protestants, who are alone legally competent to hold the high offices of state, and to perform the functions of legislation. Hereditary feelings and resentments had, besides, contributed to keep these elements of internal discord in almost constant agitation. The extensive confiscations which took place at the commencement of the last century, when, after the suppression of the rebellion by Lord Mountjoy, nearly the whole province of Ulster became forfeited to the Crown; the creation of numerous boroughs by James the First; which in effect

effect transferred the legislative authority from the Catholics to the Protestants; the Act of Settlement, and explanation; the severities exercised by Cromwell; the event of the battle of the Boyne, and the surrender of Limerick (though the articles of capitulation in the latter instance prove, what was indeed manifested by the whole tenour of his conduct, that a spirit of intolerance and persecution made no part of the character of King William); the code of Popery Laws, which, however necessary for the security of persons of one persuasion, must be admitted to have operated with great severity on those of the other: all these circumstances could not fail to recur forcibly to the minds of the Catholics, to keep alive the sensations which they successively excited, and to make them look with irritation at power, when they see it lodged in the hands of those whom they consider as their oppressors; whose religious opinions they conceive to be heretical, and who are in possession of that property which, as they imagine, was unjustly wrested from their ancestors.

On the other hand, the horrible excesses to
which

which the vindictive fury and bigotry of the Catholics were carried in 1641; the dreadful use they made of the power, which they acquired upon the usurpation of James the Second (for the government of James the Second in Ireland was an usurpation, after he had abdicated the throne of England); the forfeitures, the sequestrations, and the attainders, which then took place, had necessarily engendered in the Protestants of that country, those sentiments of apprehension and distrust, which occasioned, and appeared to justify, the code of penalties and disabilities enacted at the commencement of the present century, and which more recent occurrences had not tended to eradicate.

The Speaker then stated, that about the year 1778, a material change of system took place: the extinction of the hopes of the House of Stuart, and the peaceable demeanour of the Roman Catholics, led to a repeal of the penal code, which bore upon them with peculiar hardship; and they obtained from the justice of the Irish Parliament full security to their property, complete personal liberty, and a perfect toleration of their religion.

A wise and liberal policy induced the Legislature of this country to relax, at the same period, the strictness of the Act of Navigation, and of our colonial system: and an unqualified participation of the foreign trade of Great Britain was accordingly given to his Majesty's subjects in Ireland.

Further concessions, of a political nature, were made in the year 1782. The control of the Privy Council, under what was called Poyning's Law, was abolished; and the Act of the sixth of George the First, affirming the power and authority of the King, by and with the consent of the Lords and Commons of Great Britain, to make laws and statutes to bind the kingdom and people of Ireland, was repealed. The independence of the Parliament of Ireland was thus fully and completely established: and, in the subsequent year, the appellant jurisdiction of the British House of Peers from the Courts of Law in that country was done away. Without calling in question the wisdom or expediency of the measures last described, it would not, he trusted, be thought disrespectful or improper to observe (for the ob-

servation

servation was warranted by a Resolution of that House), that, however sufficient they might be for the removal of the grievances of which Ireland then complained, they were defective, and incomplete for the purpose of adjusting the relation in which the two countries were thenceforward to stand, as branches of the same empire; that they loosened the ancient ties of connexion, and that they substituted no others in their place.

Such a state of things might possibly have subsisted for a time, during a period of tranquillity; but it was ill suited to bear the agitation of that tempest, which soon convulsed a considerable part of the Continent of Europe, and extended its malignant and desolating principles to Ireland. For its influence and its ravages it there unfortunately found an ample field: there were wanting in that country (as he had before stated), those links by which the body of the people should be connected with the Government: there were not, in the degree at least that could be wished, those ties between the higher and the great mass of the lower orders of the community,

which are, perhaps, the best security for internal peace and tranquillity. In many parts of the country the non-residence of proprietors, and the intervention of other persons and other interests, obstructed that communication and intercourse between landlord and tenant which were equally advantageous to both, and to the community at large. The predominance of numbers, as had been already mentioned, was on the part of the Catholics, that of property on the part of the Protestants. The philosophy of the day had taught the dreadful lesson that was to be derived from such a disproportion: religious bigotry, for the first time, came in aid of principles always formidable, and aggravated the danger arising from the physical strength of numbers, and the new doctrines of the Rights of Man.

With the particulars of the convulsion that had recently taken place, all were too well acquainted. He would not now enter into them, but confine himself to a consideration of the various plans which had been proposed for restoring tranquillity to Ireland, and for perpetuating
her

her connexion with Great Britain. Of these, Catholic Emancipation, as it is called ; the re-enactment of the Popery laws, in the whole, or in part ; and an incorporation of the Legislature of the two countries, had each its separate advocates.

The objections to Catholic Emancipation, coupled as it was, according to the general opinions and views of its advocates, with Parliamentary Reform, were, in the language of Mr. Foster (whose name he could not mention but with sentiments of respect), “ that it had the tendency to
 “ give the influence to numbers and to take it
 “ from property, and to overwhelm the rights
 “ of the Protestants of Ireland.”

The Speaker acknowledged, that he was anxious for the removal of the most obnoxious grounds of complaint against what was termed the Protestant Ascendancy ; but he fought for the attainment of this desirable object, by no other means than those of a legislative Union ; and not at the hazard of those formidable consequences, which Catholic Emancipation, with all that belonged to it, was, in his opinion, cal-

culated to produce. Indeed, if the Catholics were true to their conscience and their creed, the Protestant establishment must be exposed by such a change to immediate, and, perhaps, inevitable danger; and the state of the Protestants under such circumstances, be rendered worse than that of the Catholics during any period of the present and preceding century. If actuated by interest and passion (by which he did not imagine that they were likely to be more or less influenced than others), they could not be supposed to possess, without exercising it, the power of recovering that property of which they conceived their ancestors to have been wrongfully deprived: and if, under the present circumstances, the inconveniences arising from the discordant proceedings of distinct Legislatures have been regarded with anxiety and apprehension, such sensations could not but be excited, in a far stronger degree, if political power was possessed by those, between whom, and the Parliament of Great Britain, a greater variety of differences from various causes, might be expected to arise, and on points less capable of reconciliation and adjustment.

His

His Honourable Friend who spoke last, he observed, thought that it would be expedient for the Parliament of Ireland to tread back some of the steps that had been taken, and to re-enact the whole code of the Popery laws (the repeal of which had been the subject of such general encomium and satisfaction) against the Catholics, who did not produce certificates of their peaceable and loyal conduct during the late rebellion: and to provide that those by whom such certificates were produced, should be admitted to all the rights and privileges enjoyed by Protestants; but he had also intimated such an opinion of the Catholics, as to discourage the hope that many of them would be entitled to the benefit of such a distinction.

That disaffection had spread widely amongst that body, must, he feared, be admitted: that it had been so nearly universal, as some persons had imagined, he thought there were solid grounds to deny. Many individuals of the yeomanry and other volunteer corps, and most of those of whom the militia regiments consisted, were of that persuasion; and yet they had in general manifested the utmost degree of ardour
and

and alacrity in resisting the internal, as well as the foreign enemies of their country. On the part of a large proportion of the Catholics, strong prejudices against this country must also be confessed to exist; but he was convinced that they arose, in a great degree, from the persuasion that the Protestant ascendancy was principally maintained by British connexion, and British power.

He said that the proceeding which had been recommended by his Honourable Friend, would, if his advice was followed, appear to imply that the rebellion had been carried on by Catholics only; a supposition which the accounts received from the seat of it, and the characters and confessions of many of the United Irishmen, would effectually disprove. The proposed discrimination would, he was persuaded, if adopted, add fuel to the flame, and create new sources of dissension and hostility. It should besides be observed, that many who, from motives of hypocrisy, or of regard to their personal safety, had not given way to the malignant suggestions of their own minds, by taking up arms against the Government, would thereby be countenanced; whereas,

whereas, in other parts, that had been the scenes of insurrection and rebellion, the Catholic, who had yielded to a momentary, though an unjustifiable impulse, would, by one rash step, be excluded for ever. This surely was not a mode of healing the divisions, and of establishing the tranquillity of Ireland: it could neither have the effect of allaying the irritation of the Catholics, or of conveying to the Protestants a greater degree of confidence and security.

The Speaker then adverted to the measure of 1793, by which the competency to enjoy and exercise the elective franchise, and to hold certain offices, was afforded to the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and to the opinion which had been stated concerning it, from an authority to which he had before referred *. “ For that measure,” Mr. Foster had said, “ that he could not thank the Irish Minister, though he did for many others; for that from his soul he considered it as the prelude and certain fore-

* Vide the Speech of Mr. Foster in a Committee of the House of Commons in Ireland, in February 1793.—Printed for J. WRIGHT, Piccadilly.

“ runner of the overthrow of the Protestant
 “ establishment in Ireland”—“ that it hazarded
 “ the Hanover succession and the connexion with
 “ Great Britain.”

From these opinions he was far from dissenting; he had quoted them, not only to mark the danger which was apprehended from the proceedings of 1793, by a Gentleman known to be friendly to the Protestant establishment, and to the connexion with Great Britain, but for the purpose of founding upon them an argument in favour of the measure in question. If the predictions of Mr. Foster were well founded, and he confessed that they accorded in a great degree with his own sentiments and apprehensions, he saw no means by which their accomplishment could possibly be averted, but by a legislative Union, or by a renewal of the restrictions and disabilities which were done away by the Act of 1793. Of the former measure Mr. Foster had very recently disapproved, and it could not therefore but be supposed, that it was by the latter only, that he could hope to prevent those calamities, which, he was convinced, were deprecated

precated by no one more anxiously and sincerely, than by that Honourable Gentleman himself.

He would, indeed, acknowledge, that if he were obliged to make an option between a recurrence to so much of the system of the Popery laws as was repealed at that time, or to Catholic Emancipation, coupled with Parliamentary Reform, he should conceive that he best consulted the tranquillity of Ireland, and the interests of the empire at large, in giving the preference to the former: but it was, in a great measure, because his objections to both were radical and insuperable, that he was compelled to give his cordial and entire support to the measure of a legislative Union.

He said, it was a satisfaction to him to know that the opinion which he entertained on this subject was sanctioned by great and respectable authorities. It could not be unimportant to the weight and credit of such a measure, to state that it had been countenanced by distinguished and enlightened men in the last century; that it had the approbation of Sir Matthew Decker, Sir

William Petty, and Sir Josiah Child; that Molineux, the friend of Locke, who had incurred, as the Journals could testify, the displeasure of that House, for his bold assertion of the independent authority of the Parliament of his native country, anxiously wished for its adoption. After having referred in his publication on this subject, to many ancient documents, for the purpose of proving that at an early period of our history, delegates from Ireland had been sent to the Parliament of Great Britain, Mr. Molineux adds—

“ If from these records it be concluded that the
 “ Parliament of England may bind Ireland, it
 “ must also be allowed that the people of Ire-
 “ land ought to have their representatives in the
 “ Parliament of England; and this I believe
 “ we should be willing enough to embrace, but
 “ it is an happiness we can hardly hope for.”

It was also material to state, that in the second year of the reign of Queen Anne, when, as it had been said, it had become difficult for the Protestants to keep their ground in Ireland, a Committee of the House of Lords of that kingdom was appointed to take into consideration

the state of the nation : and the Committee reported, “ That upon due consideration of the
 “ present constitution of this kingdom, such
 “ an humble representation be made to the
 “ Queen of the state and condition thereof, as
 “ may best incline her Majesty, by such proper
 “ means as to her Majesty shall seem fit, to
 “ promote such an Union with England as may
 “ best qualify the states of this kingdom to be
 “ represented there.” The proposition was not
 listened to by the Queen’s Ministers, and, as has
 been stated by the present Chancellor of Ireland,
 “ it was not till this attempt to unite the Parlia-
 “ ments of both countries had proved abortive,
 “ that the great code of the Popery laws of
 “ Ireland was enacted : a code,” he admitted,
 “ of great severity, but evidently forced upon
 “ the Parliament by necessity.”

To these authorities, and many others might
 be cited in support of them, he had the utmost
 satisfaction in adding those of Lord Clare, Lord
 Carlton, Lord Kilwarden, and particularly of
 Lord Yelverton, who had been called the
 “ Father of the Independence of the Irish

“Parliament,” but whose sentiments at this time were by no means inconsistent with his conduct in 1782; as the previous establishment of that independence was necessary to render a legislative Union the result of compact between the two countries. Without it that measure could only be an act of power on the part of Great Britain.

To the opinions of these great and enlightened men, who have proved themselves to be the true friends of Great Britain and Ireland, by their constant endeavours to encourage and promote a close and intimate connexion between the two countries, he desired to add those entertained by Dr. M'Nevin, and others, of that, which (with reference to their own views and projects) they justly denominated *a fatal* measure. It would be recollected, that these persons have declared, that, on their parts, Catholic Emancipation was a mere pretence, and that separation was the real and invariable object of all their hopes and all their efforts. On the 9th of April 1795, *The Committee of Nine*, of which

which Dr. M'Nevin, Lewins, Ryan, and others of the same description, were members, assembled at the chapel in Francis Street, Dublin, and came to the following amongst other resolutions :

“ Resolved unanimously, That we are sincerely and unalterably attached to the rights, liberties, and independence of our native country ; and we pledge ourselves collectively and individually, to resist, even our own emancipation, if proposed to be conceded on the ignominious terms of acquiescence in the fatal measure of an Union with the sister kingdom.

“ Resolved unanimously, That the thanks of this meeting be respectfully presented to our agent, Theobald Wolfe Tone, Esq. for the readiness with which he accompanied our deputies to England, and the many other important services he has rendered to the Catholic body, in pursuit of emancipation—services, which no gratitude can over-rate, and no remuneration can over-pay.”

But

But it was not upon authority only, much as he was inclined to respect it, nor upon the repugnance of United Irishmen to this measure, that he was disposed to support and recommend it. He thought that it was calculated to avert much probable evil from both countries, and to produce positive and substantial advantages to both.

One of the leading considerations in its favour was, that it would in future preclude the inconvenience and danger, of which recent experience warrants the apprehension, arising from the discordant determinations of separate and independent Legislatures. He reminded the Committee of the proceedings of the Irish Parliament, upon the subject of the Commercial Propositions in 1785, and the question of the appointment of a Regent, which occurred in 1789. In the former, the sensitive jealousy of the Parliament of Ireland deprived that country of the obvious and undisputed advantages which were held out to it by the offer of a free access to the home market of Great Britain; in the latter it would be recollected that the diversity of opinion, which

which occurred in the two Parliaments, led not only to a difference as to the extent of the power and authority, but as to the identity of the person, by whom, during the illness of his Majesty, the functions of executive government were to be exercised. The same illustrious Personage was indeed nominated by both, but by one as a matter of choice; in virtue of a supposed right by the other: in one with more limited powers; in the other with the same powers and prerogatives as the monarch himself. It was therefore obvious that the discordant principles, which operated at that juncture, and which actually occasioned the delegation of different degrees of authority, might also have led to the nomination of different individuals: and this at the hazard of the tranquillity and safety of the empire, and in direct violation of the spirit of the unrepealed statute of Henry VIII. which enacts that “ the kingdom of Ireland is inseparably annexed to, and dependent upon, the Crown of Great Britain, and that whoever is King of England, is thereby *ipso facto* King of Ireland.”

Upon

Upon every thinking mind a deep impression was made by these transactions; and a very respectable gentleman, who now holds a high office in Ireland, is reported to have said, in a debate at that period, “ If these sentiments are
 “ to prevail, what shall prevent us to-mor-
 “ row from adopting a different Mutiny-bill,
 “ or disclaiming an uniformity in religion?
 “ The unity of the executive magistrate has
 “ been well called the solitary bond of union;
 “ but can it exist for a moment if a possibility
 “ remains of the two Legislatures being dis-
 “ cordant on this subject? Unless one is suf-
 “ fered to take the lead, the alternative is ob-
 “ vious: with two Legislatures so liable to pull
 “ different ways, no authority can govern.”

* His Honourable Friend, who preceded him, appeared, however, to be under little apprehension upon the subject of a possible diversity of sentiments and conduct, in the two Legislatures. He thought that as the King of Great Britain was the supreme executive magistrate, and therefore vested with the same prerogatives in both countries, it was not to be supposed

supposed that those embarrassments and dangers would arise, which must unavoidably result from a declared difference of opinion on the subject of treaties, or on the great questions of peace or war. The Speaker said he knew and respected the prerogatives of the Crown, but he likewise knew and respected the privileges of the people. Of these the power of the purse was the most important; it was the instrument of support and control; the check upon the abuse of power on the part of the advisers of the Crown, and the safeguard and guardian of the interests and liberties of the people. It would not be contended that this great privilege was to be borne down by prerogative; and if not, it might, at a period of public emergency, be differently exercised in both countries. In one, supplies might be liberally granted; in the other, absolutely withheld: and the co-operation of the two leading branches of the empire could never be ensured, even on occasions in which its security and independence were deeply and essentially involved. The Speaker declared, that his hopes and expectations went farther; he thought, that if the present measure was car-

ried into effect, it would not only preclude such a discordance as he had described, but that it would lead to a coincidence of views and sentiments in the great body of the people of both kingdoms ; that they would all look the same way ; and that their feelings and opinions would invariably recognise the same interests, the same allies, and the same enemies.

But no consideration, he said, so forcibly impelled him to wish for the adoption of this measure, as his conviction of the beneficial consequences with which it would be attended to the internal situation of Ireland : his hope and belief were, that it would lead to the removal of a principal ground of animosity, by precluding that species of contest, which had hitherto subsisted for obtaining political authority and power.—Amongst the lower orders of society, he was convinced that its salutary effects would be found in that change of manners, the result of habitual industry, which would necessarily be produced by the transfer of a part of the capital of Great Britain to that country. Could it be supposed, he would ask, that persons
of

of opulence here would be so much inclined to embark any part of their property in the trade and commerce of Ireland, if the Parliament of that country were still to remain distinct from, instead of being incorporated with that of Great Britain? Of the consequences which must be produced by such an application of part of the wealth of this country, no doubt could be entertained: it would operate on every class of the community, and diffuse itself throughout every part of that kingdom: and notwithstanding what had been said of the aggravation that would be occasioned by a legislative Union to the evil arising from the non-residence of the opulent proprietors of land in that country, he was convinced, that whatever had a tendency to give security to property and improvement to manners would prove the fallacy of such a supposition; and that even those wastes and fastnesses, which now afford retreat to the marauder, the assassin, and the rebel, would be the scenes of cheerful labour and protected industry, of mutual confidence and social intercourse, under the superintendence and guardianship of well-administered and beneficent laws.

It had been said, that amongst the consequences of such a measure, it could not be contended that it would be possible to mention any immediate advantage to the Roman Catholics of Ireland. To this assertion he could by no means accede. The elective franchise itself, bestowed by the Parliament of Ireland in 1793, could hardly be considered as a boon to the Roman Catholics, whom it was hoped and intended to gratify: the right, with the limitation annexed to it, could not be exercised in most instances, without some degree of violence to their opinions and their feelings: it could only be made use of for the purpose of contributing to form a House of Commons, the whole body of which they too generally conceived to be adverse to their interests, and to those of the individuals, to whom, from a coincidence in religious opinions and from other causes, they had been accustomed to look up with the utmost respect. Whereas the same franchise, if employed in contributing to form the representation in an united Parliament, might be accompanied with the satisfactory reflection, that the individual in whose behalf it was exercised, would be mixed with those, a majority

majority of whom were uninfluenced by the prejudices which they have imputed, whether on sufficient ground or otherwise is not now to be considered, to the Parliament and to the great body of the Protestants in Ireland.

With respect to the expediency of extending to the Roman Catholics of Great Britain and Ireland, in the event of such a measure as was now in contemplation, a more ample participation of the rights and privileges of Protestant subjects, he would not now offer an opinion; he would however quote the sentiments of a person (Dr. Duigenan) whose good sense he admired, and who would not be accused of a strong bias towards the Roman Catholics of Ireland: “ It has
 “ been the opinion of very great and able states-
 “ men, that an union with England, on just
 “ and equitable terms, would be very advan-
 “ tageous to Ireland, would contribute greatly
 “ to increase her trade and her opulence, and
 “ conduce to the strength of the empire at large:
 “ and in any event, it could not be more preju-
 “ dicial to the Romanists of Ireland, than to any
 “ other class of his Majesty’s subjects here, but
 “ much

“ much less (if it could be at all prejudicial,
 “ which I cannot admit), in as much, if we were
 “ one people with the British nation, the pre-
 “ ponderance of the Protestant body of the whole
 “ empire would be so great, that all rivalship
 “ and jealousies between Protestants and Ro-
 “ manists would cease for ever, and it would not
 “ be necessary, for the safety of the empire at
 “ large, to curb Romanists by any exclusive
 “ law whatsoever.”

The Speaker said, he was not inclined to take
 up the time of the Committee by a reference to
 the particulars of the Union with Scotland, to
 the consequences which followed that measure,
 or to the arguments which they suggested on
 the present occasion. These topics had been
 already discussed, in a manner which could
 not fail to make a forcible impression on the
 House. He would only remark, that the ani-
 mosity between the two nations, immediately
 previous to the Union, was such, as to have led
 them to the verge of hostilities; and that the
 grounds of distrust, and complaint, were thereby
 entirely done away. He also observed, that there
 were

were circumstances tending to facilitate an intimate connexion between this country and Ireland, and to incorporate the people of those kingdoms, which did not belong to the relation in which England and Scotland stood to each other. It would be recollected, amongst other illustrations of this observation, that here, and in Ireland, there was the same code of civil and criminal law; the same forms for the administration of justice, and for the purposes of legislation; the same succession to the crown; and the same established religion.

Having stated a few of the many considerations which, in his opinion, recommended this measure, he thought it incumbent upon him to notice some of the objections that had been made to it. Of these there were two, either of which, if valid, was fundamental and insuperable. The first was to the competency of the Parliament of Ireland to accede to this measure: the second relied on the final adjustment, as it had been termed, of the year 1782. The one called in question the nature and extent of the authority of the Parliament
of

of Ireland; the other solemnly appealed to the good faith of the Parliament of Great Britain. In viewing the question of competency, he said, it appeared to him that the new doctrines of the present day were on one side, and the sound principles, the theory and the practice of the British constitution on the other. The highest legal authorities affirmed the extent and the supremacy of the power of Parliament. It was sufficient to refer to the names of Sir Edward Coke, Sir Matthew Hale, Sir William Blackstone, and many others, who, to say the least, have never been charged with a bias against the constitution and liberties of their country.

That the functions of the Legislature should be exercised on all occasions, and particularly on one so solemn and important as the present, with the utmost circumspection, would be readily and universally allowed. But it must at the same time be admitted, that Parliament possesses the power, and the right, when called for by the obligation of providing for the public security and welfare, to new-model the constitution, and

to alter the succession to the Crown, and the established religion of these kingdoms; and he would then ask those to whose objections he was referring, where, if not in Parliament, the means of carrying into effect such an arrangement as that which is now in contemplation, however necessary, and however approved, could possibly be supposed to reside? Not in the constituent body, for it would hardly be said that they had delegated a trust to their representatives, with a reservation in particular cases: not in the people at large, for such a supposition would imply the dissolution of the Government. It is indeed an established truth, that, whilst the constitution exists, the only legitimate sanction of public opinion, and its only efficient authority, must be derived from the proceedings of Parliament. "This is the place," Sir William Blackstone observes, "where that transcendent
 "and absolute power, which must in all govern-
 "ments reside somewhere, is entrusted by the
 "constitution of these kingdoms."

The attempts to preclude the discussion of the present subject, by the denomination of a Final

Adjustment, which had been bestowed on the proceedings of the year 1782, struck him with more astonishment than even those which he had read and heard against the sufficiency of Parliament itself. If any importance were to be attached to those words, he should have expected to find them solemnly recorded in acts of the respective Legislatures, as the basis of the new relation which then took place between the two countries: but what was the fact? They are introduced in a message from the King, and noticed in the addresses of the British Parliament, and of the House of Lords in Ireland; but in the address of the House of Commons of that country, they are not to be found; and as it had been the practice (and a judicious one it was, where there is a general concurrence of opinion), that the address should accord with the speech or the message from his Majesty, the omission was remarkable.

In truth, all that had been said upon this part of the subject, appeared to him to be a dispute about words; for he was ready to acknowledge, that the British Parliament would justly incur the

the imputation of a gross breach of faith, if they were to aim, either directly or indirectly, at the resumption of the power and supremacy which were then solemnly renounced: that the adjustment, as far as the independency of the Irish Parliament was concerned, was really and absolutely final and conclusive; but if the argument, which was meant to be founded on these words, could be expected to avail, it must not only pass over the measure which took place in the subsequent year, and the resolution of the 17th May 1782, which immediately succeeded the order for leave to bring in a bill to repeal the 6th of George I. but it must contend that the true import of the words was so binding and peremptory, as to bar the possibility of adopting any ulterior arrangement of the nature of that to which they might be supposed to apply, however called for by the obvious interests, and the wishes of the inhabitants of both countries. Such a proposition could not be maintained, and if not, the argument with which it was necessarily connected, must, in his opinion, fall to the ground.

On the surrender of the rights of the Parliament of Ireland, and the sacrifice of its independency, which had been imputed to the measure in question, he was not disposed to dwell; the futility of the arguments on which those objections were founded, was, in his opinion at least, fully developed on a former occasion: he would only say, that if an uniform coincidence should take place between the two Legislatures, the independency of one or the other would be liable to be called in question; and that without such a coincidence the interests of the empire, and eventually the connexion between the two countries, might possibly be endangered.

The Speaker said that some objections had been urged, the force of which he would by no means deny. He was thoroughly convinced that the House of Commons, as at present constituted, was a true and faithful representative of the people of Great Britain; that there their opinions and their wishes (he did not mean the fluctuating and fleeting impressions of the day, but those which were the result of correct information and deliberate reflection) had their due

influence, and were there fully and accurately expressed. He could not, therefore, contemplate a proposal for such an augmentation of its numbers, and the possible effects which might be produced by it, without a considerable degree of anxiety.

But he was not inclined to oppose a conjectural and contingent evil to that which was positive and immediate; or if he did, he must compare one, as cautiously as he could, with the other, and strike the balance. His apprehensions on this subject would be greater, were it not for the experience which has been afforded by the Union with Scotland; but the pressing evils, which it was the duty of the House, if possible, to avert, were uppermost in his mind; and every other remedy which had been suggested, appeared to him to be fraught with consequences far more injurious than any of those which even this circumstance, objectionable as he allowed it to be, was capable of producing.

Of the danger to the commercial interests of this country, which had been adverted to, but
which

which had not been much insisted upon, he entertained no serious apprehension. It was not true that Great Britain would necessarily lose what Ireland would gain. He knew, besides, the liberality, and the good sense of the merchants and manufacturers of this country: if Ireland should cease to be a separate kingdom, they would not entertain a wish to withhold from her inhabitants a fair and equal participation of the advantages which were enjoyed by themselves; and they were fully aware that whatever contributed to promote industry and to produce tranquillity in Ireland, had a tendency to give additional security and stability to the trading interests of Great Britain.

It had been asked, why, if this measure was brought forward with such obvious advantages, the adoption of it had not been sooner recommended? To which it had been justly and forcibly answered, that the attention of those, who are convinced that a close connexion between the two countries, is essential to the welfare of each, could not fail to be directed with peculiar solicitude to that object, when the dissolution of

all

to alter the succession to the Crown, and the established religion of these kingdoms; and he would then ask those to whose objections he was referring, where, if not in Parliament, the means of carrying into effect such an arrangement as that which is now in contemplation, however necessary, and however approved, could possibly be supposed to reside? Not in the constituent body, for it would hardly be said that they had delegated a trust to their representatives, with a reservation in particular cases: not in the people at large, for such a supposition would imply the dissolution of the Government. It is indeed an established truth, that, whilst the constitution exists, the only legitimate sanction of public opinion, and its only efficient authority, must be derived from the proceedings of Parliament. "This is the place," Sir William Blackstone observes, "where that transcendent
 "and absolute power, which must in all govern-
 "ments reside somewhere, is entrusted by the
 "constitution of these kingdoms."

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satisfaction, and of confidence, to a great majority of the people.

To this want of promptitude to provide against remote and contingent evils, one exception indeed presented itself to his recollection: it was the measure adopted by Parliament in 1791, which provided, that in case of future loans a further sum should be borrowed to be applied as a sinking fund, for the purpose of gradually redeeming the addition thereby occasioned to the funded debt. Too much could not be said in commendation of the provident wisdom and justice of that measure, which is constantly employed in diminishing the pressure upon public credit, which arises from an increasing accumulation of the debt contracted since the commencement of the war; and in effecting an entire relief from its burdens perhaps to ourselves, but certainly, and at no distant period, to our descendants.

Some Gentlemen had entertained an opinion which, he acknowledged, was entitled to serious attention and consideration; that, as the proposed measure had been discountenanced by the

the House of Commons in Ireland, to persist in the discussion of it here, would be to add to the irritation which unhappily prevails in that country. Such an effect he should sincerely lament, and should be sorry to have any share in producing. There were other consequences, however, which it was of the utmost importance to avert. If the Parliament of this country were to abstain from declaring the conditions upon which it would be disposed to incorporate itself with the Parliament of Ireland, it was impossible not to be aware of the opportunity and scope which would be afforded for misconception, suspicion, and misrepresentation.

He trusted that we should adopt such resolutions as would rather tend to appease, than to inflame; such as would be a pledge of our liberality, and our justice: that we should manifest the earnestness and sincerity of our wishes to communicate to Ireland a full participation of all the advantages we enjoy; that we should prove ourselves desirous of considering the inhabitants of the two countries as one people, connected together by the closest ties under the same

Constitution, the same Parliament, and the same King.

He had understood that, if the Resolutions which had been opened should be agreed to, it would be proposed that they should be carried to the foot of the Throne, accompanied by an Address to his Majesty. In that Address he hoped, and was persuaded, that no sentiments or expressions would be introduced which jealousy might misinterpret, or malice pervert; that there would be no indication of a wish on our part to press the consideration of the question upon the Legislature of Ireland; and that no impulse would be given to it, but what it might derive from the free and unbiassed opinions, and dispassionate judgment of the Parliament and People of that kingdom.

The subject, he was convinced, would make its way. To Ireland he was satisfied that greater advantages were now held out, than had ever been afforded by any single measure to any country; that it would greatly augment the resources, and place upon a rock that would be

impregnable, as far as that term could be applied to any human establishment, the strength and security of the British empire. His own ideas and hopes, however, extended still farther, as he was thoroughly persuaded, that whatever had a tendency to consolidate and maintain the power and the independence of these kingdoms, was of the deepest importance to the best and most valuable interests of mankind.—From these considerations he gave the Resolution his most cordial support.

THE END.

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