

SUBSTANCE  
OF THE  
SPEECH  
OF THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
LORD SHEFFIELD,  
*Monday, April 22, 1799,*  
UPON THE SUBJECT OF  
UNION WITH IRELAND.

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THE Chancellor of the Exchequer moved the order of the day for taking into consideration the Address from the Lords upon the subject of the Union with Ireland ; which being read, he moved that the said Address be now taken into consideration.



The Address was then read twice, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer moved, That this House do concur with the said Address.

LORD SHEFFIELD spoke as follows :

Mr. Speaker,

Sir, I wish it to be understood, that I support the resolutions and address, in confidence that the assurance given by a noble Lord in an official situation in Ireland will be strictly observed, namely, that Ministers will *look to the sense of Parliament and of the Country*, before the measure of Union shall again be brought forward there; and that assurance being given, I am not sensible of any sufficient argument that should prevent the British Parliament from giving some general explanation of the arrangement it is disposed to make, more especially



as I observe that scarcely any man in this country objects to the principle of the measure; nor can I suppose, that a nation so well informed and so much accustomed to political considerations as the Irish, should for a long time persevere in refusing to receive or examine what may be proposed from the British Parliament; and for these reasons I wish to trouble the House with a few observations.

We cannot be much surprized at the alarm which has taken place in Ireland. The word Union was suffered to be banded about there for many months without the slightest attempt on the part of the Ministers to explain the terms of it. The aid of designing men, and of those prejudiced from partial and local considerations, was scarcely necessary to take advantage of this circumstance: the apprehensions of Ireland



had always been, that an equal and favourable Union would not be granted : and no small part of that people were made to believe, that their liberty, their independence, their dignity, and almost the existence of the nation, would be done away by their becoming one and the same with the most independent and most respectable nation in the world.

But, in truth, the measure of Union was ill-prepared for Ireland, and Ireland was ill-prepared for Union. It is not without competent information that I am convinced, if the outline of the liberal proposition for Union, which is now offered, had been at first properly communicated and with all the plainness and candour which suit the Irish character, it would have been very differently received ; and it is not my opinion alone, but the opinion also of those



who are not friendly to the measure, that it might have been accepted, at least it would have prevented all that misrepresentation and misapprehension which might well be expected, without some previous attention. I can hardly imagine a case, in respect to which, until understood, more jealousy was likely to be entertained than this of a legislative Union, otherwise the measure being really so necessary and so advantageous to Ireland, the strange abuse of the words "Dignity and Independence," which have been so entirely mistaken there would have made little impression. I can suppose it will be unpleasing at first to acknowledge, that the premature opposition was the result of an ill-founded jealousy. Yet that acknowledgment, and the consequent departure from an *hasty* opposition to the measure, is no more than may be fairly expected from the candid openness of the Irish character.



It is not now the question whether the measure has been brought forward and conducted as it should have been, but whether the British Parliament should do what depends on it to obviate the mischief which must arise from independent and separate Legislatures existing within the same empire, whether we should relinquish a measure which seems necessary to the general security and welfare, or take the present opportunity of stating the outline of it.

I shall not trouble the House with a repetition of historical inquiry into the causes of the present state of Ireland, nor with many references to the reports of the Lords and Commons of that kingdom. The causes and the proofs are but too plain. The notoriety of numberless melancholy facts, which demonstrate the wretched and dangerous condition of that country, with reason alarms



every thinking man : it is an unanimous opinion in this country, that something is necessary to be done to preserve Ireland ; and there seems to be almost a general conviction, that it can be done only by a legislative Union.

For my part, I cannot see the measure in any other light than that of being absolutely necessary. It has long been my opinion, and every thing which has happened *in* Ireland, and in respect to Ireland during the last twenty years, particularly that which took place in 1782, and was whimsically enough called “ Final Adjustment,” have convinced me of that necessity.

When it was found proper to take off the shackles from the Irish Parliament, and highly proper it was, a Union should have been proposed, and by the same measure



only should all the commercial and other advantages have been communicated, which were so indiscriminately conceded without terms since 1778. It would have been still better, if an Union had taken place in the beginning of the century, and that the Constitution and Commerce of Great Britain, which had been so long and so invidiously withheld, had been then communicated to Ireland. But in 1782, the administration of that day, without supplying any means of keeping these kingdoms together, rashly gave away the dependance of the two islands on each other; and now there is no certainty in the connexion of Great Britain and Ireland. Independence of Legislature seems to have suggested notions of separation, which appeared, in some degree, as early as 1784. However, even those who attempt to justify what was done in 1782, must acknowledge, that



there were points of essential consequence left unsettled, and that it should not have been postponed to the hour of difficulty and distress to arrange and ascertain the relative exertions and political connexions of the two countries.

Much has been said on the words "Final Adjustment:" but that which is so called, only referred to the then asserted independence of Parliament, and by no means precluded Union: on the contrary, it was the opinion at the time, that *farther* measures were necessary to establish a connexion on a solid and permanent basis: and so far as I understand what was intended, I consider *that* adjustment as putting the Irish Parliament on the footing of independence and free deliberation, and in that situation alone which could satisfy the people of Ireland, that the acts of their Par-



liament would be thenceforward free and uncontrouled ; but at any rate it is trifling to suppose, that nothing more was to be attempted, if that which had been done had not the effect of preserving the connexion and attachment of the two countries. It is true that Union became more necessary, as well as more difficult, in consequence of what was done in 1782, and also in 1793, when the principle of our navigation and colonial laws were, without terms or occasion, sacrificed by the act which permits goods and commodities of the growth, production, or manufacture, of Asia, Africa, or America, to be imported from Ireland into Great Britain. All these benefits should have been reserved as the means of Union, but being then unconditionally granted, they have rendered that measure much less sought for by Ireland ; and I confess that the strongest objection I



felt to the propositions that were brought forward in the British Parliament in 1785, (which by no means would have done what it is necessary to do,) arose from the apprehension, that if carried, they might prevent an Union. It was obvious, that if all the reserved advantages of Great Britain were to be given up, there would be no means of future negotiation remaining.

Previously to that period, Ireland would have petitioned for an Union, and I think she might well do so now as the greatest possible acquisition she could make; but neither the adjustment in question, nor all the commercial concessions, nor other means employed to tranquilize that country, have had the least effect. The bad state of Ireland yearly became worse. It appears the parties are not to be satisfied; that no melioration of the condition of Ireland has



taken place; that a great proportion of the people is now as ill disposed to Government, as bigoted, as ignorant, and as uncivilized as they were at the time of the massacre in 1641. At present the permanency of the connexion of Great Britain with Ireland depends on the parties which exist, and ever must exist, in a nation of Protestants and Roman Catholics so peculiarly interested against, and politically hostile to, each other. These divisions are the bane of the country, never to be annihilated but by a legislative Union. The whole present system is bad. The change of Government, at least every four years, and the concessions so regularly made under the vain notion of satisfying the people, create and promote schemes and suggestions inconsistent with the tranquillity of the country, and encourage agitators, whose



uniform object it is, to disturb the public mind.

I have observed, that independence of Parliament suggested the idea of separation. Irrational notions of independence, leading to dissolution of Government, must end in civil war and the introduction of the French. Manufactures and agriculture would then cease much more suddenly than they could possibly revive; and whatever might be the event, Ireland would be completely ruined, and England greatly distressed. But supposing the crisis in question should not immediately come on, Ireland would continue in its present disturbed state, and England would ever find Ireland the back door to conspiracy, rebellion, and invasion. And so miserably distracted is Ireland at present, that among three millions of Roman Catholics, and



half a million of Dissenters, there is scarcely a man capable of a political idea, who does not wish for something different from that which is; namely, a Change of the Church Establishment, the Abolition of Tithes, a Parliamentary Reform, or a Republic: nor are the members of the established Church entirely free from the same unhappy temper of mind. The common Enemies of mankind will not fail to take advantage of this state of things: they have raised it into a dangerous and formidable conspiracy, and it seems the only means through which they can hope of succeeding in their favourite plan of destroying the British empire.

Nothing can be more dangerous than a notion, that a coalition of Churchmen, Dissenters, and Catholics, for the purpose of separation, cannot take place.



The reports of the Lords and Commons of Ireland, and what has happened lately, completely prove, that such a coalition is not merely possible, but that it actually exists, and that the foundations of it are laid, and deeply laid, already.

This subject has been so fully and so ably discussed, that it is not necessary to state how general, how great, and how irremediable by common means, are the mischief and danger: the unexampled perilous state of Ireland is well known: it was therefore evidently the duty of His Majesty's Ministers to bring forward some measure to prevent even the possibility of so great a calamity as the separation of the two countries; and however I may differ in opinion with His Majesty's Ministers in respect to the conduct of this business, I acknowledge great merit in



their undertaking such an arduous task at a time they were so fully engaged in the most momentous concerns, and in their not shrinking from the difficulties which obviously might present themselves, and which too often induce Ministers to adopt some temporary expedient (just to serve their turn) which never effectually succeeds, but in the end produces greater difficulty and much mischief. It seems also highly incumbent on the British Parliament to take early the most effectual steps to promote the proper remedy : and every thing has been tried, except that which is now obviously the best and only means, an Union, and which, in consequence of the wild opinions that are abroad, and the disturbed state of the world, has become still more necessary. Every concession has been made, many colonial and commercial advantages, which Ireland could not on



any reasonable ground claim without an Union, have been communicated to her: in short, every thing has been granted so far, that we are now told by the enemies of Union, Ireland cannot acquire more by that measure, and that she does not desire greater freedom and extension of trade, than she at present possesses, preferring her independence and dignity as a nation. They surely have odd notions of independence and dignity who prefer holding almost the whole of their trade, almost their existence at the discretion of another country, rather than by *right* as a part of that country. .

But I should not do justice if I did not acknowledge this way of thinking is by no means general, and that the two largest counties, Cork and Galway, and the city of Cork, county of Clare, and other districts of Ireland, had expressed the con-



trary, and so well, that I wish to make use of their own words. Speaking of Union, the county of Cork says :

*County of Cork.* { We are firmly persuaded it would add to the welfare, the credit, and the immediate prosperity of Ireland, and that by the uniting our strength in the closest manner with the most free, and most happy people on earth, we should exert the best possible means in our power for preserving the safety, the honour, and the security of our dearest rights. Determined, therefore, as we are to stand or fall with Great Britain, we look forward with the greatest anxiety to this connexion, as the most effectual means of putting an end to all our factions and religious animosities, and of reconciling the people of Ireland to each other, by doing away all ill-founded jealousies between fellow-subjects.

We consider it as most obviously and indispensably necessary to the prosperity of this kingdom in general, and to the restoration of that tranquillity and industry, which alone can render the inhabitant prosperous and happy, and most likely in its consequences to reclaim the deluded people from those habits of violence and outrage to a sense of their duty to the laws of their country, and the best of Kings.

*City of Cork.* { To become a constituent part of that empire, to whose protection we owe our political existence, and whose Constitution is the admiration of the civilized world : to participate in those resources, which are inexhaustible : to become joint



proprietors of that navy, which is irresistible, and to share in that commerce which knows no bounds, are objects beyond which our most sanguine wishes for the prosperity of Ireland cannot possibly extend: while the prospect, which they hold forth of terminating the jarring interests of party, and reconciling the jealous distinctions of religion, promises, a restoration of that tranquillity to which this country has been too long a stranger.

*County of Galway.* { We are persuaded, that a legislative Union with Great Britain, established on terms of perfect equality, would invigorate the resources, increase the wealth, and add materially to the security of both countries, enabling them to oppose their common enemy with increased strength and power, and most effectually to defeat their object of dividing the empire for the purpose of subduing it. To consider this measure as it affects either country separately, we conceive to be a narrow view of its object: but even in that confined sense of it, we are firmly convinced it would add to the welfare, the credit, and the immediate prosperity of Ireland: and we are of opinion, that uniting our strength in the closest manner with the wisest, the freest, and the happiest people upon earth, with whom we must necessarily stand or fall, is so far from a sacrifice of the honour and independence of Ireland, that it is the best means left to us for preserving both.

These addresses are most respectably signed; and a third address from the



county of Cork, nearly in the same words, has the signature of 373 of the principal Nobility, Bishops, Magistrates, Clergy, and persons of property, both Protestants and Catholics : and there is reason to believe, that the sentiments therein expressed are much more general in the several counties which have not addressed than has been supposed.

Although Ireland has acquired much which should only have been conceded by Union, it is not true that she cannot obtain farther commercial advantages by that measure. The best market, that of Great Britain, for all Irish manufactures, is still reserved, except linens, and her linens are become one of the greatest manufactures in the world, entirely in consequence of having that market, and could never have been carried on to its present great extent,



unless aided by the prompt payment of Great Britain, which in a great degree acts as a supply of capital \*.

Six parts in seven of the whole exports of linen from Ireland are imported into Great Britain, and of the seventh part the

\* The bounties on the export of Irish linens from hence at the same time that they give to Great Britain about an eighth of the trade in those articles, encourage the manufacture in Ireland. The average of bounties on the export of linens for the last four years is nearly 34,700*l*. Irish linens exported from Great Britain

on an average of the last four years,	Yards
entitled to bounty - - - - -	4,866,015
Ditto not entitled to bounty - - - - -	964,507

Total of Irish linens exported from Great Britain - - - - -	5,830,522
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The duties laid on the import of foreign linens for the purpose of protecting the British linen manufacture are about 25 per cent. of their real value, and give almost the monopoly of the British market to many articles of the Irish linen manufacture. The duties paid on foreign linen used in this country, on the same average, amount to 115,000*l*. If the same rate of duties had been laid on Irish linens imported and used in this island under the usual policy of protecting the British manufacture, as is done in all like cases, it would raise a revenue of about 650,000*l*.



greatest proportion goes to America, including the West Indies. On an average of four years, ending the 25th of March 1798, were exported from Ireland <sup>Yards</sup> 39,885,776 of which to Great Britain - 33,695,659 To the British Colonies in America and Islands in the West Indies \* - - - 1,285,998 To the States of America - - 4,012,519 To foreign parts of Europe and to Africa - - - 891,530, being about a 44th part of the whole export of linens from Ireland.

Linens are the only Irish manufacture, properly so called, which has the advantage of the British market, and it has flourished accordingly. No manufacture, no trade of Ireland, except such as are duty

\* In this are not included Irish linens exported from Great Britain to the British Colonies and to the American States, but only the quantities sent directly from Ireland to the places mentioned.



free, or have particular advantages in the British market, have succeeded. Linens, corn, and the produce of cattle, which alone have those advantages, amount on an average of the last three years to 5,410,825 when the total value of all Irish imports into Great Britain were 5,612,689 of which there were articles not the manufacture and produce of Ireland to the amount of - - - - - 101,864

So that the articles of Irish growth or manufacture, which are not duty free, or have no particular exemption or advantage in British ports, amount only to - - - - - 100,781 and form a small proportion, indeed, of the great importation from Ireland into Great Britain alone amounting to 5,612,689, which, stated in the manner most favourable to Ireland, is, at least, six parts in seven



of the whole export trade of Ireland to all parts.

We cannot be surprized, that woollen and other manufactures have decreased in Ireland during the late turbulent state of that country. We may rather wonder, that they have not been more affected: but such articles as have the peculiar advantage of the British market, have even lately increased. The manufactures and commerce of Ireland are now, and have always been, greatly inferior to what they may be ; it is reasonable therefore to suppose, that when the present prohibitory duties which were laid on manufactures coming from all parts to protect those of England, are, in respect to Irish manufactures, equalized, as intended by the articles of Union, and they shall have the advantage of the British market the same as linens ; the produce of cattle and corn, they may also flourish.



No country is better circumstanced for manufactures than Ireland. She has plenty of water and fuel \*, the first requisites in

\* Most parts of Ireland, where, through want of skill and wealth, they have not yet been able to supply themselves with coal, particularly the manufacturing districts, are accessible by water and near the coasts of England and Wales, which abound in coals. Ireland may have that article cheaper from the West and North-west of England and from Wales, than it can go coastwise to many places in Great Britain where great manufactories are carried on which consume large quantities of that article. Coals from Great Britain to Ireland pay only an export duty of 14d. per chaldron, when the same article carried coastwise to London pays a duty of 9s. 3d. per chaldron, and to any other part of England 5s. 9d. If Ireland does not think it necessary to protect her own collieries by any import duty, she may cheapen the price of coals to her manufacturers by taking off the duty of 1s. 9½d. per ton on the import of that article into Dublin, and of 9½d. into all other parts of Ireland. The passage from the English collieries is short, and the freight is moderate. And it may be observed, that inferior sorts of coal answer the purpose of manufacture, and that the bogs of Ireland furnish plenty of excellent peat or turf.



manufactures. The encouragement to her industry will be great, especially as it will be impossible to countervail the difference of price of labour and of excises in the two countries \*, and commercial men will acknowledge the superior advantage of a near market, and a quick return, so absolutely necessary to a country wanting capital.

If Union should take place, there will be no jealousy, no warfare of bounties and drawbacks, no invidious wish to check the prosperity of Ireland, or any manufacture there, and the great commercial advantages of Ireland will no longer be held at the pleasure of another country.

\* Import duties in the two countries may be equalized, or the difference of those duties on raw materials may be paid on import of the article or manufacture, of which it is made.



The prosperity of Ireland, such as it is, in no degree arose from the independency of the Irish Parliament, but from commercial advantages derived from Great Britain. I hesitated when I first heard that a contrary assertion came from a man as able, as respectable, and, at least, as well informed, as any in the two islands; but the assertion that the prosperity of Ireland arose from the independence of her Parliament, appears to me so entirely unsupported by fact, that I scarcely know how to reason about it, except by asking, whether the increase of the linen manufacture; whether the prosperity of the beef, pork, and butter-trade; whether the growth of a grain of corn, or of a blade of grass; whether the opening of the ports of Great Britain to Irish corn at a lower price than from other countries, have been effected by the independence of the Irish Parliament: in short, which article



of growth or export has increased in consequence of it? Have the laws been better executed? Has the country been more tranquil? Are life and property more safe? In truth, I can trace little to that event but the present disturbed state of Ireland. I repeat, that the prosperity of Ireland entirely depends on the connexion with and advantages derived from Great Britain, without which her trade would be almost nothing; and this appears so perfectly evident, that I consider it not to be necessary to add a syllable more to prove it.

When Ireland has acquired the British Constitution a due execution of laws and tranquillity, and that life and property are secure there, English capitals will undoubtedly be employed in Ireland, and then her prosperity will be real and permanent. At pre-



sent no prudent man will lend one shilling to that country in any shape, far less will a commercial or manufacturing man risk his capital in any speculation, where a spirit of unfriendly independence, of separation and of rebellion so strongly prevails; but surely it is not commercial advantage and wealth only that are wanting to Ireland. She is deficient in the most essential of all things, good order and well-executed laws. Life and property are not more secure there, than among the most disturbed people upon earth. A residence there is as much to be avoided as in countries subject to the most hideous tyranny or savage banditti.

It is curious, especially at this time, that apprehensions are expressed that the number of absentees will be greatly increased by an Union. There are now infinitely a greater number of Irish emigrants, for the



fake of personal safety, than will be occasioned if Union should be adopted. If that measure should take place, few families will follow those who are called to Parliament: if they make the experiment, the difference of expence will soon check the evil: and those that occasionally become absentees, will be so by choice, not by compulsion.

It will not be improper in this place to state, with the view of removing wrong impressions, that the number and property of absentees have been always greatly exaggerated, and also the bad effects of the consequent drain of money.

Those who are most capable of examining the question agree, that the remittance to regular absentees is below 600,000l., I believe considerably, which is not more than one fifth of the value of the exports of



linens alone to this country, amounting to, at least, three millions. According to the common valuation, it may not always appear so much, because they are rated, at most, at 1s. 6d. per yard, even now that their quality is much improved; but if valued at only 19d., linen and linen yarn will, on an average of the last three years, amount to a larger sum than I have mentioned, and more than balance all the imports of Great Britain; including raw materials, as well as remittances to absentees. The imports of the products and manufacture of Ireland into Great Britain on an average of the last three years,

being - - - - - 5,510,825

and all imports of the produce  
or manufacture of Great Bri-  
tain into Ireland - - - -

2,087,672

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3,425,153



So that there is a balance of upwards of 2,800,000 in favour of Ireland, allowing an actual remittance of 600,000 l. to absentees.

The above is the statement of the interchange of produce and manufacture. Besides which, Ireland imports from Great Britain at present, in consequence of her being obliged to avail herself of British capital, and of her limited commerce, except with Great Britain,

Of colonial articles - - - 970,000

Of foreign merchandize - - 498,173

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1,468,173

And England receives from

Ireland of colonial and fo-

reign merchandize - - - 101,874

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which gives a balance to Eng-

land on foreign and colonial

importation of - - - 1,366,309

and if deducted from the above balance of



2,800,000, will still on the whole, stating the trade and remittances in the most favourable manner for Ireland, leave a balance of 1,433,691*l.* in favour of the latter country.

It should be observed, that while the imports of the produce and manufacture of Ireland into Great Britain are in a progressive state of certain increase, on the other hand, the imports of foreign and colonial articles from Great Britain into Ireland are in a course of decrease; but I proceed to considerations of more consequence to both countries.

I am little disposed to argue in favour of non-residence, but I must observe, that those parts of Ireland, as well as of England, where manufactures flourish, are remarkable for the non-residence of land-proprietors. Yet, in other parts of the



country, I consider their absence as the greatest misfortune, and I conceive one of the most essential advantages of England over Ireland arises from the residence of that class of men, and from their great attention to the people, and to all the details of the country round them. But we cannot be surprized, that men of fortune in Ireland should now reside in villas near the metropolis, or absent themselves, when we recollect the uncivilized state of the country. At present it cannot be expected from them, nor is it safe, and unless some great change should happen, which will induce and enable men of fortune to live there, and to instruct, protect, and encourage the people, civilization will go on very slowly.

All the same objections which are urged in Ireland against an Union, were made by



Scotland at the time of her Union with England, and every mischief was predicted, but they all proved unfounded. Arguments, which came from some of the ablest men of those times, and which then appeared almost conclusive, are completely refuted by experience. It was said, that Edinburgh would be deserted and ruined: the same is now said of Dublin: but since Union, the size of Edinburgh, and the number of her inhabitants, have been more than doubled, and the city beautified in a high degree. All Scotland is greatly improved, her population increased, she is ten times more rich since that period: her people are civilized, the laws are now executed, life and property are secure; the Legislatures of the two Kingdoms no longer at variance as heretofore, and at the risk of rupture each counteracting the other. Few families of property are now constantly



absentees, and almost without exception, those Scotchmen, who go from home and acquire a fortune, in the end carry it to Scotland. Before the Union, Scotland had scarcely any thing worthy the name of a manufacture: all her efforts to obtain a foreign or colonial trade had failed, but now her manufactures and trade are as great in proportion as those of England. And all these advantages are greatly beyond the progressive improvement which would have taken place without an Union, and without which many of them never could have taken place.

The alarm in the city of Dublin on the subject of Union is said to be greater and more just than elsewhere, but I am perfectly satisfied that her apprehensions are unfounded. The absence of 80 Commoners and 30 Lords, even supposing them constantly



resident before, certainly cannot ruin Dublin. The Lord Lieutenant, the principal officers of every kind, the Courts of Justice will still remain. She will still continue the Winter residence of the principal people of fortune, as Edinburgh does. She will be the seat of education, of amusement, and of the arts. Her trade will increase greatly. The complete intercourse and exchange of commodities which will be established by an Union, will raise her commerce beyond what the most sanguine man has ever yet imagined. Cork, Waterford, and Limerick, will have a great proportion of the provision and other trade; but Dublin will be the great mart for the import and export, particularly of manufactures. Dublin will have the great trade to the most thriving port, perhaps, in the world; I mean Liverpool. The trade of Ireland with England will be carried on with most security, especially in



time of war, between those ports. Every article of foreign and British manufacture and produce which Ireland does not furnish or import immediately from the place of growth or of manufacture, she may have from thence. Almost all the widely-extended inland navigation of England points to Liverpool, and may supply what is wanted to advantage. As Ireland imports but a small proportion of her consumption of West-India articles directly from the place of growth, Dublin is well situated for supplies of those articles from Bristol and Liverpool in return for her exports to those places. The corn trade will become a prodigious article, if the produce of the two islands should by an Union be put on the same footing as between two counties in England. The great inland navigations of Ireland will convey corn at a cheaper rate to Dublin, even from Limerick and Con-



naught, much cheaper than by a circuitous and precarious voyage by sea. The canal tolls on corn and flour should, in favour of Dublin, be purchased at the public expence, or greatly reduced; and the same should be done in respect to the docks in the port of Dublin. This would facilitate the intercourse between the two countries, and be a mutual advantage to them both; and would ultimately benefit Dublin much more than the residence of those who would be sent to the united Parliament. Dublin would become the warehouse of the corn of that kingdom for the steady and certain corn markets of the North-west of Great Britain and the North of Ireland, where a very small part of the consumption of the inhabitants can possibly be grown. The English farmer may at first be alarmed, when he hears, that Ireland will be considered as a part of



England in respect to the corn-trade ; but the advantages will be reciprocal, and the effect, which some may apprehend from an influx of corn more than sufficient, cannot take place. Unfortunately we constantly import as much oats as Ireland can spare at any time, at present double the quantity, and that evil is increasing rather than decreasing. She is well situated to furnish that part of Great Britain, which will always require a supply of that kind of corn, and the quantity of wheat she is ever likely to spare will not be sufficient to overload the British markets. It will be much less mischievous to the growers of wheat in England to have the ports regularly and constantly open to the limited quantity that can come from Ireland, than to have them open to a glut of corn from all parts of the world for three months certain ; the moment the smallest



proportion of the consumption of this country is wanting, the moment its price becomes what is by no means extravagant, but on the contrary, while it is moderate, considering the increased expence of tillage. The opening of our ports for three months certain to all the world, when we only want a moderate quantity, may reduce the price of wheat ruinously low; but the comparatively small quantity that could come from Ireland, would have no farther effect than supplying what may be actually wanted. When Ireland has a constantly open market in Great Britain for corn, it will prove the greatest encouragement to her farmers to change their slovenly management. At present their corn is exported in so bad a state, that it must meet the corn of other countries at market to great disadvantage. When they have a steady market, they will soon find the ne-



cessity of preparing and dressing their corn in a manner that will enable it to bear a competition with the corn of England.

It has been suggested, that the manufactures of Ireland, and particularly the linen trade, would suffer through the want of a resident Parliament. The principal manufactures and commerce of Scotland are situated at a greater distance from London than those of Ireland, and they became what they are since the Union of the Parliaments; yet there has never been the slightest complaint in respect to necessary protection and assistance from the British Parliament: and perhaps it may not improperly be observed in this place, that no disadvantage whatever has arisen to the affairs of Scotland in consequence of her having only forty-five Members in the British Parliament, but they have been as well attended to



and as well managed as those of England by upwards of five hundred Members, and the government of Scotland has been administered since Union as vigilantly and more impartially than before, and the same, in all probability, will be the case in respect to Ireland.

The objection to Union on the part of the Protestants of Ireland is unaccountable : they can hardly be said to constitute a nation : they are an English colony governing upwards of three millions of Roman Catholics, or, at least, six times their own number in a country acquired and maintained by English arms and treasure, which colony never could have supported itself ; and even the last Summer would have been overwhelmed, unless protected by the same means by English power. They cannot disdain that description ; many of them, I



am sure, are sensible, that such is their situation, and that their consequence and security depend on the connexion with the Mother Country. In respect to the Roman Catholics, Union alone can make it safe to satisfy their claims. By Union, all that enmity, jealousy, and contrariety of interest, which naturally arise between those two unequal bodies, must soon cease. The Protestants will lose nothing; I am satisfied their object was not monopoly, but safety: they will be safe, and relieved from all apprehensions, and may have a better tenantry, and more attached to their interest. The Roman Catholics may acquire all they can desire; and I hope we shall never again hear of Protestant ascendancy or Catholic emancipation, words which have been very insidiously employed to the worst purposes. On cool reflexion it will appear, that Ireland will not incur any



disadvantage, but the advantages to be gained by her are the greatest that can be conceived, and, in the first place, security and tranquillity, as it is reasonable to suppose, that an identity of Constitution and a due execution of the Laws, will produce the same effects in Ireland as they have done in Great Britain, and particularly in Scotland within this century. Till Union takes place, and not till then, will the theoretical independence of Ireland become practical. Ireland, in truth, is now actually dependent on England through her divisions, through her trade, and through her Constitution. Either the Protestants or the Catholics will depend on English support. It has been shewn, that the trade of Ireland is absolutely dependent on that of England; and the King of Great Britain being subject to British laws, in obeying him, and under the



necessary controul of his Ministers, Ireland must in some sort be dependent: but supposing two perfectly independent Legislatures within the same empire, they must always be considered as in an uncertain and perilous state, mutually inconvenient to each other, and always cherishing discontent and jealousy. If one Parliament exerts powers in opposition to those of the other, what must be the consequences? They are so obvious, that it would be an abuse of time to state them. We cannot reflect with much satisfaction on the only two instances which have occurred since the independence of the Irish Legislature, wherein the two Parliaments could act oppositely to each other. The rejection of the commercial propositions in 1785, on the part of Ireland, has not obtained the applause, even in that country, of the well-informed, and the conduct which was held on the



occasion of appointing a Regency evinced a disposition to risk the mischiefs which might be expected to arise from the clashing of two independent Parliaments. In short, if the sort of independence which is claimed has any meaning, it leads to separation—Union or separation must take place; for it seems agreed on all sides, that the countries cannot go on as they are.

Soon after the accession of James the First to the Thrones of these kingdoms, that wise Statesman and Counsellor, Sir Francis Bacon, strongly recommended an Union between England and Scotland. He clearly saw how faulty and precarious the fortunate junction of the two countries would be, if only supported by the circumstance of having the same King. He proposed a complete Union. He recommends highly the liberal system of the



Romans, observing, that their naturalizations were, in effect, perpetual mixtures, not only with persons, but with cities and countries ; and adds, that there never were any States that were good commixtures but the Romans. He also observes, that the conduct of other kingdoms has been different, and consequently the addition of farther empire and territory has been rather matter of burden than of strength, and kept alive the seeds of revolt and rebellion for many ages. And he adds, that Arragon was united to Castile by a marriage ; but after an hundred years, a civil war commenced in consequence of the bad policy of not incorporating, but leaving it a separate Government ; and if he had lived as late as these times, he might have stated much stronger cases. Machiavel also attributes the growth of the Roman Empire to the good policy in incorporating



so easily with strangers; and Molyneux, the strenuous assertor of the independence of the Irish Parliament, says, an Union on equal terms would be highly advantageous to Ireland, and the best means of enjoying that independence: and the Irish Parliament, in the beginning of this century, expressed a desire for an entire Union. But the times were not so enlightened as they now are, and a narrow policy prevented the participation of those liberal, fair, and equal terms, which are now offered to Ireland. The present Chief Baron of Ireland, one of the first constitutional authorities of that kingdom, and a successful supporter of Irish independence in 1782, has asserted, that the independence of the Irish Parliament was most valuable, because it would enable Ireland to treat for a Union upon fair terms.



The Union of Wales and Scotland with England, the Union of Bretagne, Dauphiny, and other provinces with France, the Union of the several kingdoms of Spain, all of which, while independent, were greatly prejudicial to each other, proved highly advantageous to the different countries and to the empires, in proportion to the completeness of legislative Union that took place ; and the sensible Americans soon discovered how dangerous their situation would be, if they remained separate independent States.

Every advantage that was expected, and more than was expected, has been derived from the Union of Scotland. No country was ever more disturbed before and at the time. Nothing could tend more directly to separation than the act of security which passed in the Parliament of Scotland just



before that event : a great proportion of the people of all ranks were as ill-disposed towards England as the worst disposed of the Irish. The Clans were as much out of the reach of the law as any part of Ireland can be supposed to be. To carry fire and sword from one district into another, was as much the disposition of the Highlanders, as it has been lately of White-boys and Defenders in Ireland. The taste and fashion of the people were to be in a situation to commit hostilities, and the chief men of the country, instead of endeavouring to excite the industry of their dependants, only valued themselves in proportion to the number of those who were disposed to follow them in arms. Notwithstanding the Crowns of the two kingdoms had been annexed above an hundred years, a connexion with France was still kept up, and the most dangerous intrigues carried on. I shall only add, that



although the causes or motives were not precisely the same, the effects were; and many other instances of the disorders, and of the resemblance of the situation of Scotland at that time to the present state of Ireland might easily be stated, and that all those circumstances which disturbed Scotland, as much as Ireland now is, have been done away by Union.

Nature has given many local advantages to Ireland. Union will give her a Constitution that is deemed the best; will give her tranquillity, wealth, and character; and money will be lent in Ireland, when settled, with as much confidence as in England. Those who are now absentees would find the advantage of residing there. Englishmen would risk their persons and property in that country, which, if not



immediately, will in time, become as civilized as Great Britain.

On the whole, it may be confidently pronounced, Union is most necessary, and will be most beneficial to Ireland. The plan seems formed for her peculiar, although I will not say for her exclusive, advantage, and as a partial friend I could not propose any thing more favourable for her. Yet it by no means follows, that the great advantages of Union to Ireland will be counterbalanced by disadvantages to Great Britain, or that the gain of Ireland will be the loss of Great Britain. In a long course of years, even if the measure of Union should not take place, manufactures and trade will decline in some places when they redouble from various circumstances in others : but possible local disadvantages must not prevent the Legis-



lature from looking to the general good. It must be admitted, the prosperity of Ireland would be the prosperity of Great Britain. The inefficient state of a part is a great loss to the whole. The unsettled state of that country is a general drawback from the prosperity of the empire, every part of which will find the advantage of that high degree of improvement which the assimilation of the two countries would effect. Great additional strength, and security and general prosperity to Great Britain and to the Empire, will be the consequence of Union, and the attention of the Executive Government would not hereafter, amidst the distresses of war, and at the moment of the utmost peril, be distracted by conspiracies and rebellion in Ireland.

Perhaps no circumstance in the character



of the commercial and manufacturing interests, and of the people in general in Great Britain, gives a greater proof of their liberality and good sense, than their acquiescence on this occasion in some possible sacrifice of manufactures, of commerce, and of constitution, for the sake of unity and tranquillity of empire: The energies of commerce surpass, and sometimes contradict, the most plausible calculations: and even in a commercial light England might be benefited by a great increase of manufactures and commerce in Ireland, inasmuch as Ireland will be better enabled to pay for the many articles she will continue to take from England. We all know that much commercial advantage cannot be obtained by trading with a nation which is not rich, especially when the produce of the two countries is the same. The interchange of



commodities will animate trade ; and no intelligent man will say, that the manufactures of England have decreased in consequence of the great increase of manufactures in Scotland. But those who will give themselves the trouble of examining the question will find, that the two countries are mutually benefited by the prosperous state of their respective manufactures and commerce, and that competition encourages skill and industry, and promotes and enforces good regulations, and consequent cheapness of manufacture. In respect to revenue, the empire will be highly benefited ; for with the increase of wealth, there will be as great increase in the excise and customs ; and when we enumerate the commercial and other advantages that would be derived from an Union, we should not forget the mischiefs that would be avoided, and that



the final termination of the antient alliances, the connexion, and the intrigues of France with Scotland, and all projects of separation, were at last effected by the Union of Great Britain.

In respect to the incompetence of Parliament, it is difficult to believe that that objection is at this time seriously urged : if it is, it only convinces me there is great want of argument against the measure of Union. The argument would throw us back to first principles ; that is, the dissolution of Government, and to that jargon which has nearly ruined Europe. This doctrine was ably refuted at the time of the Union with Scotland ; if it had not, it would ill suit the pretensions of Ireland to establish it.

If I should be asked, whether I am satis-



fied that Union will produce order and steady prosperity in Ireland, I should answer, that I am. The same violence and machinations which exist at present to effect separation might possibly be attempted at first; but when Ireland is irrevocably become a part of Great Britain, there would gradually and soon be an end of speculations and conspiracies. France would no longer speculate on distinct governments and interests. The enemies of order would not be tempted by any prospect of success: they would recollect, that it is not Ireland alone, but the three kingdoms, that must be induced to sacrifice or yield their Constitution: and, as was the case in Scotland, when the people of that country, who had been so averse to Union, had tasted the sweets of that measure, they became the most strenuous supporters of it; inasmuch, that when it was the object to raise



a rebellion there, it was found that a declaration against Union would be unpopular and hurt the cause.

It may appear extraordinary, that so much should be said in this House to prove the advantage of Union to Ireland; but the arguments are not so misapplied as they may seem to be, they are, in truth, arguments to recommend the laying a proposition before the Irish nation so beneficial, that I cannot doubt but a people of great abilities and capable of discernment, will, when the heat of their alarm has subsided, no longer refuse to take into consideration a plan which may be highly advantageous to every part of the empire; and unless the measure had been ill understood, the unreasonable refusal to listen to any proposition, could not have taken place.



In voting for the resolutions, I do not mean to approve more than the *principle* of Union, to which no adequate objection has been stated. If we should hereafter proceed to details, it will be then necessary to give all our attention, and exert our best powers in examining the articles; and above all, in preventing harm to the Constitution, taking care that we do not, with a levity and submission that seem to belong to the times, do any thing that may be unnecessary for one country, and should be highly dreaded by the other.

There has now been an opportunity of some experience, which it is to be hoped will promote the utmost liberality and candour in proposing the measure, whenever the people of Ireland are found to be disposed to accept it. Every man will agree with me in deprecating all idea of force or



threats, or the use of any means that are not perfectly fair and honourable.

To render Union satisfactory and permanent, it will not be sufficient that it be merely acceded to by Parliament. The people at large must be reconciled to it; and that they may, is the wish nearest my heart. It is for Ireland that I am most interested on this occasion. Her deplorable condition demands it; for I am most seriously convinced the measure is *absolutely necessary for her tranquillity, security, and welfare*. The bad effects of two separate Parliaments within one empire, and the baneful idea of separation, can be done away only by an Union; and until that event takes place, Ireland will never be settled, will always be disturbed by the most mischievous speculations and in-



trigues, the sport of parties, and of the enemies of England; she will be a weakness as she is at present, instead of a strength to the empire.

THE END.



Houses of the Oireachtas



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