

AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
INDEPENDENT MEMBERS
OF THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS OF IRELAND,
ON THE
QUESTION
OF
ESTABLISHING A REGENCY
IN THIS KINGDOM.

DUBLIN:

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MDCCLXXXIX.

Houses of the Oireachtas

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A D D R E S S, &c.

IF there was ever a question of real importance, for your consideration, it is the present subject of establishing a Regency for Ireland; it summons to trial, not only your wisdom and prudence, but appeals to your integrity and affections, and puts to the test the principles and wishes of the nation.

Your compassion for a beloved Sovereign in calamity; your fidelity to the real interests of the Heir apparent; your deportment under the pressure of party machinations; your opinion with respect to the connection of Ireland with Great-Britain; your desire and endeavour for its permanence or dissolution, must come forward into view——In a moment so trying to the heart, so critical to the judgment,

ment, can you stand the search, and bear the probe with firmness?

The subject naturally divides itself into four divisions.

1. The general question of right.
2. The general question of expediency.
3. The general principles of attachment to the Sovereign on one hand, and the Prince of Wales on the other.
4. The considerations of party.

Upon the first question, short indeed is the discussion required after the debates and decision in England, where a precipitate assertion, followed by an injudicious menace, produced a disavowal of claim from the Prince of Wales, and a dereliction of his right by the very person who broached it. For to assert a principle, without daring to maintain it in terms, to deprecate its discussion, to fly from its decision, by the shabby subterfuge of a previous question, is a tacit acknowledgment of defeat, and at least the proof of a mistaken, if not of a retracted, opinion. No man will again in England, nor any man at all in Ireland, hazard the position that, on the

the temporary incapacity of the monarch, a prince of Wales, though of full age, has a right to assume the government, with all the powers and prerogatives of the Sovereign. It was the error of a day, which vanished and died away on the lips that advanced it; its opponents can never dread its revival—its supporters pray in vain for oblivion.

If the right of the Prince to assume the government be untenable, and there be no law existing, the right of the two Houses of Parliament to appoint a Regency exists of course; it cannot be questioned, and need not be proved.—All argument on this subject, to persons who understand the constitution, is superfluous and impertinent.

With regard therefore to the point of right, neither doubt nor difficulty remains; for whatever is proved, in this case, as applicable to England, is equally demonstrated as attaching upon Ireland.—The situations of the sister kingdoms, as to the executive power, being in this respect precisely the same, and as any defect of the royal authority in one kingdom is equally a defect in the other, so likewise the powers of remedy and supply are similar in both; each Parliament has the same rights, and in neither of them can they be renounced or surrendered to any authoritative claim, or unproved assertion, without

out the forfeiture of public duty and treachery to the people.

If little has been necessary on the question of right, you may probably believe that the subject of expediency may be dismissed in still fewer words. Since the unity of the executive power forms the center of connection between the sister kingdoms, and since it is our chief concern and constant wish to maintain that connection solid and indissoluble, what can be so natural, so obvious, so unobjectionable and safe, as to follow the measures of Great-Britain, on the present exigency, as far as our relative situation will allow? The propriety of such a conduct presents itself to the understanding, not only as reasonable, but self-evident. It strikes us at once without enquiry or search, and satisfies the mind without deduction or proof. Whereas to imagine a different line of conduct adviseable, we must assume not only a contrary, but the most objectionable principle: we must argue the necessity of differing from England, when we can avoid it; and contend for positions, which, so far from tending to the connection, are pointed to the separation and dismemberment of the empire.

It is nevertheless rumoured, that a proposal will be produced for dissenting from, and reprobating the

the steps of the British Parliament. I will therefore endeavour to discuss the grounds by which it may be possibly presented and enforced. Some may urge motives of national pride, or national interest;—others may ground their sentiment on the presumption of *real necessity*. These may resort to the *principles of the constitution*: a few may be led by *prejudice or caprice*. Shall I say that any can be governed by *a wish of separating from England*?

It fortunately happens for my present argument that any address to the *pride* of Ireland is anticipated and rendered impossible. For the independence of the legislature will be fully acknowledged, and its dignity completely consulted, by the very fact of stating to Parliament the incapacity of the Sovereign, and resorting to its wisdom for supplying the defect of the royal authority. No man will insult your understanding, by asserting, that an act of disagreement from England is the only test of Irish independence, or that measures of variance and hostility can alone support the dignity of the nation. The folly of such reasoning defies either ridicule or contempt. It is advising us to establish a principle of perpetual discord in our transactions with a sister kingdom, and to cement our harmony and friendship

ship with the British Parliament by continual acts of separation and reproach.

With regard to any effect which may result to the real interests of Ireland, the line of conduct to be pursued is not sufficiently clear.

As there is no royal household in this kingdom, the only restrictions which can be here imposed upon the Regent extend to peerages, reversions and grants for life or a term of years. If then you decline to impose these restrictions on the Regent, consider, for a moment, the dilemma to which you are reduced.

Is it your object to assist the Prince of Wales in his embarrassment, by opening to his disposal the whole patronage of Ireland, from a sincere and generous intention that he shall convert it to the reward of his British friends and partizans? Are you prepared to behold the Irish House of Lords besieged and crowded with a troop of strangers? Will you be contented in viewing all the lucrative sinecures of the Crown bestowed for life on Mr. Fox's needy retainers? and our enormous pension list encreased by a numerous addition of beggarly absentees? If this
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be your real intention, you sacrifice the establishments of Ireland, you provoke and sanctify an injurious and prodigal disposition of patronage; you deprive yourselves of the power of prevention and complaint; and you abandon the real interests of your constituents and your country.

Is it, on the other hand, your design to confer on his Royal Highness the whole patronage of the kingdom, under a secret confidence and promise, that he will be satisfied with the trust but forbear to use it? In this alternative you taunt and tantalize the Prince with an unmeaning and distressing compliment, you expose him to continual solicitation and importunity, where he can neither resist without offence nor comply with honour; whilst, without advantage to yourselves or benefit to the Regent, you implicitly reprobate the British legislature.

But it is the interest of the nation to purchase and secure the affections of the Heir Apparent, and bind him to the welfare of Ireland by the fetters of gratitude. On this principle, I shall have occasion to expatiate hereafter, and will only here remark, that it is the most unworthy for Parliament to adopt, and the most dangerous for the Prince to admit.

I proceed to the plea of *necessity*, which could it possibly be proved, would at once refute all other considerations. But where can be the necessity of appointing a Regent for Ireland without limitation, or by what arguments can such a necessity be maintained? Will a prohibition of making peers, or giving grants for life, during a limited, and perhaps a short period, render the government of Ireland impracticable in the hands of a Regent? What appearance is there of an household phalanx among the Lords? What pretence of a confederated party in the Commons? The suspension of these powers in England may possibly cramp and embarrass the Prince of Wales: in Ireland, they cannot obstruct him at all. He can only want these prerogatives for two purposes, either the establishing of a party in this country which does not exist at present, and which every friend to Ireland must deprecate; or, with a view, which was before stated and exploded, of governing England by Irish patronage.

It will be said, that admitting the propriety of following Great Britain in general, there is a superior consideration in the present case, our attachment to the *constitution* of Ireland. It was a bold exclamation of an eloquent man, Perish the empire—live the constitution! and hence it is argued

argued, that every limitation on the Prince of Wales being unconstitutional, we cannot follow Great Britain without surrendering a principle of the first importance to one of secondary consequence. If the premises of this argument were true, it would certainly merit discussion. But who ever conceived so strange and unfounded a position, that it was unconstitutional to limit a Regent. Not only every precedent on the records of British history, but the very nature and essence of the thing demonstrate the reverse. It would be tedious and disgusting to enumerate and explain all the regencies and regency bills which have taken place in England from the conquest to the present hour; and the fact is notorious and unquestioned, that in no case has a Regent been appointed with the full prerogatives of the King, but each has been limited and restricted under various forms and in different degrees. A doctrine flowing from an uniform line of precedents during a course of seven hundred years, cannot surely to any reasonable man be deemed unconstitutional. But if the series of precedents were discordant, instead of being uniform, the nature and essence of the thing remains the same, and cannot vary. Now, the very idea of a Regency exists in a supposition that the King is alive, that the Throne is full, that his title to allegiance is perfect,

that his legal and political capacities are entire, but that his natural capacity is defective. The office therefore of a Regent is applicable to the natural defect alone, and in no case can extend beyond it. By his constitution a Regent is essentially distinct from a King, his powers are by creation, not by descent; by appointment, not by right, they are not original, but substitute—not for life, but temporary. He is a deputy, not a principal—he has no right of his own, nor can exercise any for himself—he is instituted to exercise the rights of his Sovereign, and for his Sovereign's interests. The negative definition of a Regent is, that he is not a King; and the chief object in ascertaining his power is to make him sensible of his subordinate situation, and to prevent his aspiring to the Crown during the life of the Monarch. But this end can only be effected by limiting his dignity and confining his prerogatives; and hence the imposition of restrictions is necessary to the very character of a Regent, and if necessary cannot be unconstitutional.

The doctrine which has been advanced, that what is true of a Regent in general is inapplicable to the case of an Heir Apparent of full age, may be entirely disregarded. This distinction can never be supported till there can be something proved as to the nature
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of a son, which *physically* prevents his attempting to seize the Crown during his father's life-time, or employing the royal prerogatives to obstruct his return to power.

In detailing the possible motives of conduct, I was obliged to insert those of *prejudice* and *caprice*, not that I think it possible they can ever actuate the Parliament of Ireland. Yet, let me say with confidence, that contemptible as such motives may appear, they are wise and solid principles to act upon, when compared to the last reason I enumerated—a *desire of separating from Great Britain*. I will not suppose any man so blind and insensible to the situation and interests of his country, as to nourish for a moment so fatal a principle: but I feel that in all *unnecessary* difference from Great Britain such a principle will be unavoidably imputed. Weighing the peculiar circumstances and religious divisions of Ireland, we can only hope for security and tranquillity in our attachment to Great Britain. It becomes us therefore in wisdom, not only to manifest this principle by our conduct, but to declare it as our wish. If therefore on the present occasion, our agreement or disagreement with the British Parliament were in point of interest immaterial, as a test of our inclinations it is of the utmost importance; but happily
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for my argument, it behoves us to adhere to Great Britain in this instance on the ground of advantage, even did our wishes persuade us to the contrary: if then we evince an eagerness to separate from Great Britain, in matters of no importance to ourselves, or in cases where a separate line of conduct may be injurious to Ireland, what must be inferred of our probable deportment, whenever the weight of interest and advantage shall be added to our inclinations and principles?

Recollect that this is the first instance in which you have been called to exercise your legislative independence in modelling the executive power. Keep steadily in view the sole principle which unites the sister kingdoms, which is the unity of that power. Let it not be imputed that in the first moment you could display a principle of connexion, you disclosed a spirit of disunion. Or that as you dared not directly attack the acts of Parliament, which recognize the King of England as King of Ireland, and declare the rights of the Hanover Succession; you wished by a side-wind, to repeal the purport of those statutes, and abjure their fundamental and pervading principle, that the executive power in both kingdoms should be the same.

You

You are now to create a precedent—your conduct is to be the rule of posterity. If you dissent from Great Britain, how must your posterity argue upon any occasion similar and analogous? “Let us advert,” they may say, “to the sense and determination of our ancestors, in 1789. At a time when reason, interest, and duty conspired, in exhorting them to follow the steps of England, they renounced such weak and subordinate considerations for the principle of separation. This was the bold policy on which they dared to act. Let not us degenerate from their independent spirit.”

If it be objected that all this argument is erected on false principles, because the whole of the British measure does not apply to Ireland; that total identity of conduct being impossible, all reasoning founded on the necessity of such identity is groundless: Permit me to suggest the following answer! It is a strange assertion, that because we cannot completely agree with England, we ought not to agree with her as far as may be possible. If we cannot perfectly accord, are we therefore to act in diametrical opposition? Or does the impossibility of sameness include the necessity of contrast? The absurdity of this mode of reasoning, may be easily illustrated by shewing its consequences; for if such arguments be admitted, the non-residence of the Monarch is a
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good ground for abjuring his allegiance, and we are bound to separate from England, because the Sovereign of the empire cannot be in two places at once, and sit upon two thrones at the same moment.

Since this conclusion is absurd, it is evident that the objection will afford a contrary inference. For if the preservation of the empire be a concern of moment, it must be our endeavour to approximate to Great Britain, by all possible similarity of principles, inclinations, and measures. Every occasion of agreement, every opening for the proof of attachment, we should embrace with avidity and satisfaction. Any necessity of difference we should not only lament, but endeavour if possible to diminish its extent, and conceal its appearance.

I am now advanced to the third division of my subject, and am to consider how far you are to be guided by personal principles of attachment to the Sovereign on the one hand, and the Prince of Wales on the other.

I shall not probably revolt your feelings, by conceiving you sincerely grieved at the deplorable situation of our beloved Monarch, stricken and afflicted

as he lies by the forest of calamities that can visit the human frame. I will not believe it an insult to suppose, that your loyalty is not extinguished by his depression; that your sense of duty is not perished in his infirmity, that his misfortune has not destroyed your gratitude; you will not, as some appear to conceive, and you cannot imagine that attachment to your Sovereign in distress, is an affront to the filial affection of his son; that to protect his interest, to pray for his recovery, to provide for his return to power, are acts of disloyalty to the Heir Apparent; and that it is treason to the Prince of Wales, not to abandon and reject his father. What, if I am also persuaded, that you will not vent yourselves in empty professions of sorrow and compassion, whilst you are proving their falsehood and hypocrisy, by every possible expression of neglect and disaffection?

I know your sentiments and virtuous feelings; you will not court the Prince on the outset of his government, with proofs of unsteadiness and levity, but, on the contrary, you will give him the firmest pledge that you are never likely to abandon the son, by disdaining to desert the father in calamity. It is not the influence of power but of principle, not the hope of reward but the consciousness

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of deserving it, which will animate your actions; nor will you be content to sacrifice by servile flattery and insidious compliment, the true sources of his princely fame and the real interests of his empire.

But let me suppose you dead to these generous sentiments, that you consider your Monarch as irrecoverable, that you have already abandoned him to his infirmity, and transferred your loyalty to his son, and under these imagined circumstances, I will address you as friends and counsellors of the Prince of Wales.

In the first moment of his ascent to power, will you advise him as his sincere and attached subjects, to express a disgust and enmity to his British Parliament? Will you encourage him to institute a dangerous race of loyalty in his two kingdoms, and an odious competition for personal favour? Will you exhort him to set his legislations at variance, and for the paltry consideration of a little temporary patronage, to sacrifice or risque the chief principle, which cements his empire, the uniformity of the executive power?—Consider for an instant, the present situation of his Royal Highness. The party to whom he destines the management of affairs, is inferior in the House of Lords—inferior

ferior in the House of Commons of Great Britain, and by no means possessing the confidence of that nation. In such a case, it must be the wish of his Royal Highness to increase, if possible, by all conciliatory expedients, the deficient popularity of his friends, that the sentiment of the nation being gradually changed, may operate by degrees upon the Parliament, and produce an efficient and encreasing support of his measures. Would it then become his Royal Highness with a view to conciliation, thus to address his British Parliament. “ You have placed the most galling restrictions on my power, and discovered unwarrantable suspicions of my designs. I resent your conduct. I renounce your affections and esteem. —I have another Parliament in another kingdom, more affectionate and more attached—to them will I fly—to them will I appeal. Their liberal behaviour shall brand the injustice of your jealousy—their unbounded confidence shall stigmatize your injurious suspicions.”

Let me now ask you seriously, whether such a conduct in the Prince of Wales, is calculated to conciliate or to revolt his English subjects—will it insure or turn aside from him the current of popular favour?

If therefore advising the Heir Apparent, to demand an unlimited grant of power from Ireland, would be detrimental to his interests as Regent of England, let us further examine how it would affect his character as Regent of Ireland.

The most plausible motive which can induce you, by varying from Great Britain, to flatter the Prince of Wales, is the expectation of peculiar favour from his regency and reign. But what is this peculiar favour, which we are thus to cultivate at the expence of every solid maxim and wise reason? Is it that you expect he will encrease your patronage of Ireland, to load his supporters with offices, with pensions, and with honours? that he will drench you as Irish patriots, with the Champaign and Burgundy of Carleton-House? Or that on all imperial questions, he will shew a decided preference, and marked partiality to Ireland?

The two first suppositions are merely produced as contemptible and ridiculous—the latter makes me shudder with horror.

Is this evincing our attachment to the Prince of Wales, to commit him against the interests of Great Britain? To destroy his power of impartial

tial administration whenever the common interests of the sister kingdoms are in debate, and to place him in the formidable dilemma of being perpetually unjust, or perpetually ungrateful?

Can there be men existing who have advised his Royal Highness to these measures, and who are actuated by such motives, and will they at the same time presume to term themselves his friends? Exert yourselves, if possible, to rescue him from such advisers, who, if they see the fatal issues of their counsel, deserve to be reprobated for their treachery; or if they are blind and insensible to its consequences, should be scouted for their folly.

A letter has recently appeared from a quarter which never before condescended to speak thro' the channel of a newspaper; it is couched in very severe terms of complaint and indignation, whether just or otherwise is irrelevant to my argument: but whatever may be your feelings on this publication, your behaviour respecting it is obvious; it is your part to be the guardians of the Prince's interests, not the abettors of his resentment; is it for you to reproach the British legislature, and force upon our recollection the conduct of James II. by encouraging an appeal from his English subjects?

I will

I will not further detain you on this part of my subject, than by stating it in one additional light. Do you believe that any minister, however daring, would advise a King of England to resort from his English to his Irish Parliament, or to admit a principle of separation in the executive power? If no minister would be found sufficiently adventurous and rash to approve such conduct in a King, I know not the logic or sophistry which could prove it adviseable in a Prince of Wales.

If therefore, any attempt be made to influence your proceedings, by hinting the favour or displeasure of his Royal Highness, repress such unparliamentary artifice with instant indignation; if you allow not the name of your Sovereign or Chief Governor to be introduced in debate; be not intimidated by the mention of the Heir Apparent. If however, you suffer his adherents to expatiate on his amiable qualities, his superior abilities, his private and constitutional virtues, avail yourselves of the panegyric, to sharpen your efforts in defending such excellence from insidious advisers, and rescue him from a predicament which may expose his Highness to the worst insinuations at present, and the foulest imputations hereafter.

The considerations of party influence will not detain me long.

It is reported, and there is strong appearance of truth in the rumour, that measures are taking in Ireland to form a party corresponding with British party, who are to act upon the same principles and views, upon a common system with common interest. This party will propose to confer the Regency upon the Prince of Wales, without any limitation, receiving their instructions from Burlington-house: they are already applying to individuals for support, canvassing the servants of the Crown, and endeavouring to decoy their allegiance by every species of allurements or menace.

You are independent characters, you they cannot draw into their toils, but it is not sufficient that you are not entrapped yourselves, you must prevent any confederation which may be dangerous to your power. Hitherto, since the dissolution of the aristocratical force, the country gentlemen of Ireland have spoken with effect and decision on every great occasion. Guard therefore against the re-establishment of that power which once obscured your importance, and may again destroy your influence; which formerly was injurious to the rise and independence of Ireland, and may hereafter be fatal to its existence.

Perhaps

Perhaps the idea of an Irish party, dependent on the success of a British faction, actuated by principles and measures which often do not apply to Ireland, seems on the first view a complete solicism in politics, and has more the appearance of a phantom than a reality.

But however we may laugh at the absurdity of such an idea, we dare not disregard the danger of its establishment.

Suppose then, which I fear may be the case, that Ireland shall soon be divided by hostile factions, what must be the consequence and event? By the very nature and necessity of things, the party thrown into opposition will continually exert their efforts to distress the party in power, by popular and embarrassing debates. Now the chief questions of difficulty to a Government in Ireland, are those which embrace the relative situation of the two kingdoms, and involve the tranquillity and connection of the empire. A continual competition and struggle will take place between Great Britain and Ireland; the people, who from religious divisions and animosities are ever ripe for contest, will engage on the side of opposition; the country will be harrassed with perpetual strife and debate, with mobs and associations,

tions, and if some violent concussion shall not tear asunder the empire, the gentlemen of the land, fatigued and wearied with perpetual struggles, will be reduced to the choice of the lesser evil, and acquiesce in an union.

It has long been my opinion, that such was the design of a certain description of men in Great Britain, and that their friends in Ireland were the dupes of the scheme. I do not think Mr. Fox would abet the dismemberment of the empire, but I think his daring and comprehensive genius might endeavour to unite the kingdoms on a different system; this could only be effected by making the continuance of our present situation impracticable; and the most natural and effectual engine for his purpose, would be the establishment of party, and revival of aristocratic power.

Resist therefore the slightest attempt at such a project; the appearances of its existence will not easily escape your sagacity, and if you neglect to stifle its infant efforts, you will in vain combat its mature powers.

I have now regularly examined the several grounds which can possibly influence your conduct

on the present question, except the motives of continuing your support to the Marquis of Buckingham; you are probably in the same predicament as myself, have received no favours, made no promises, and have it not in your power to sacrifice at once to the Prince of Wales, on the altar of flattery, your vote and your character. You have not the temptation of treachery for commencing opposition to his Excellency on the moment of his decline, nor can you decorate your desertion with the ornaments of ingratitude. Possibly you are of too stubborn a nature to shift your principles with every varying Government, and do not regulate and adjust your political creed by the report of physicians. You may also think there is some necessity for contrasting your conduct with the deportment of some others on the present trial, and you may probably be apprehensive, that if the independent Commons were to follow the example of some leading Peers, a gentleman would be ashamed to be seen in Ireland.

I will now conclude with recapitulating the grounds on which I have advised your agreement with Great Britain, on the present occasion; you preserve your rights inviolable, and acknowledged, you recognize and declare your principles of attachment to England; you prevent all
injurious

injurious insinuations against your sentiments and wishes; you display the sincerity of your affections to your beloved Monarch; you consult the real interests of the Prince of Wales, and deliver his Highness from the most alarming dilemma; and you mark your disapprobation of introducing British party, or reviving a dangerous aristocracy: what is more, you do justice to your characters as men, and consult the honour of the nation, in scorning to fly from a falling government, which only two months ago, was honoured by almost unanimous support, and has certainly committed no action since that period, which can justify the desertion of individuals, or forfeit the confidence of the kingdom.

F I N I S.

E R R A T U M.

In page 8, line 5, for, not sufficiently clear, read not less sufficiently clear.

Houses of the Oireachtas