

THE
PRESENT
STATE OF IRELAND,
AND
THE ONLY MEANS OF PRESERVING HER
TO
THE EMPIRE,
CONSIDERED.

IN A
Letter to the Marquis Cornwallis.

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Concordiâ res parvæ crescunt.

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Houses of the Oireachtas

T H E
P R E S E N T S T A T E,
&c.

M Y L O R D,

PULCHRUM est bene facere reipublicæ, etiam bene dicere haud absurdum est, is the observation of the eloquent historian, who has transmitted to us the details of that flagitious conspiracy which once menaced the Roman name, and which the vigilance and patriotism of the chief magistrate detected and defeated.

Your Excellency may perceive with what application the opinion and authority of the illustrious Roman can be urged in this address. The arduous situation in which you have been placed by your appointment to the government of Ireland, may bear some likeness to that of the distinguished consul, whom the Roman writer has recorded as the father of his country. In an hour of extraordinary danger and consternation, armed like him with supreme authority, *ne quid detrimenti respublica capiat*, you have effected the public safety; but without violation of the law, or departure from the duties of humanity. In this your Excellency, without vanity, might claim, and Truth herself must recognise your
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superiority to the Roman magistrate. The late conspiracy in Ireland, for extent, system, and preparation, has no parallel in the confederacy of Catiline. They may resemble in boldness of design, and flagitiousness of means ; but their difference is incalculable, when we compare the two æras which are stained with their enormities, and contrast the darkness of paganism with the light of christianity. The face of human society is considerably varied since the days of Cicero ; the arts of life have been since perfected ; navigation and commerce have connected and civilized the nations of the earth ; a complete interchange of wisdom has every where educated the minds, and softened the manners of men ; the principles of government are brought to a just theory ; whose great end is the happiness of the people ; and a wise and extended policy has arisen in Europe, whose end is the security and independence of separate states, by an equalization of power, which, like the pressure on the parts of a fluid when equal and general, sustains the whole in tranquillity.

The system of morals introduced by christianity, and interwoven in the frame of civilized states, has diffused the purest and most exalted notions of morality. Considering these, and the many important discoveries, and improvements of modern times, the late transactions in Ireland fill us with astonishment, and lead the philosophic observer to deep and serious reflection. From your conduct, my Lord, at all times in the service of your sovereign, and the zeal and promptitude with which you obeyed his late commands in assuming the government of a considerable part of his dominions, in a season the most difficult and trying, when the powers of ordinary men are found inadequate to the great emergencies which arise ; and when your Lordship's refusal would have stood justified by your long and important services, and the claims of that period of life, to which you have happily arrived : from these, my Lord, and the experience of superior wisdom in your government,

ment, the Public are induced to hope, that, under your Lordship's auspices, the victory which has been acquired, may be secured ; that the enemy may not recover from his defeat ; and that the King's faithful subjects in Ireland may not feel a return of calamity. Humbly to suggest to your Excellency the measure essential to produce this good, to trace the real object of the rebellion, and ascertain the real motives of its leaders, is the design of this address.

From the relation of the two countries, and the incorporation of their commercial and political interests, the transactions of one cannot be indifferent to the other ; nor can the head of the empire view, without the deepest concern, the dissensions which continually agitate, and the mischiefs which occasionally desolate a country, which, under an enlightened policy, were capable of the highest prosperity.

The first and great duty of government which is truly parental, is, so to form and discipline the public mind by regulation and institution, that it shall not have opportunity to err, or temptation to be vicious ; to exclude the occasion of crimes, rather than punish their commission ; that the subordination of the state may proceed more from virtue than necessity. Every principle of duty which actuates a government, inculcates this particular obligation, which, as it may apply to Ireland, exclusive of its moral claim, is irresistibly enjoined by the politics of England ; those politics which have united her at home, and made her formidable abroad. To rivet the parts of the empire in unity of will and law ; to consolidate their strength and interests ; to multiply the energy, and augment the resources of Great Britain, must be the wish of every Englishman ; and can Ireland hesitate to share her freedom and her glory, her talents and her industry, her wealth and tranquillity ? In England, the prejudices of the few must give way to the policy of the whole ; and, in Ireland, the sad experience of misfortune must counteract the suggestions of pride ; and inducing the people there

to contemplate with seriousness the condition of their country, must inspire them to embrace with eagerness, and tolerate with equanimity, such constitutional changes as reason may demonstrate to be indispensable for continuing to them the blessings of tranquillity.

That your Excellency is well disposed to promote this great measure, is not a matter of doubt. The public estimate of your character is not more flattering than just. A few whom faction depraves, or bigotry deludes, may deny you the praise which is due, and load you with invective; but the great majority of the people are satisfied of the rectitude of your intentions, and the wisdom of your measures. The present occasion is not above your talents; you have been long habituated to the duties and difficulties of government, and will not, I am persuaded, reject without consideration, or from want of confidence abandon an opportunity for confirming all the good you have done, and rendering the empire essential and permanent service. Seldom, to be sure, has Ireland a Viceroy, whose measures of government look beyond the term of his administration: to secure a majority in Parliament, and transact the King's business, as it is called, without clamour or opposition, is the whole of their efforts; but it is well known, that your Excellency went to Ireland induced neither by ambition nor emolument—a more comprehensive and liberal policy therefore has marked, and must continue to characterize, your administration.

If ever the general circumstances of the empire, or the particular state of Ireland, required that her government should be committed to extraordinary talents, and more than human firmness, it has been during the present season. An active and perfidious foe has availed himself of every opportunity for assailing the power and undermining the government of Great Britain, and civil dissensions have raged in Ireland, which threatened her with more danger than
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the wiles of the common enemy ; at this juncture was your Excellency called to her government, in which your conduct has manifested the great qualities required for the situation. Many of your predecessors in this high office have had their share of sense and understanding ; many men of good intentions have filled the illustrious roll ; but in general their love of ease and luxury incapacitated them for the labours of government, and enslaved them to the views and artifices of a party, whom they came to command. This has uniformly impeded all scrutiny of injustice, and all reformation of abuse. The administration of the Marquis of Buckingham, however, must be admitted as an honourable exception. This has proved the bane of Ireland. The state chariot, amidst all the changes of its possessor, has rolled the same way without variety or deviation ; but time has impaired its strength and multiplied its impediments. The moment for its reparation has arrived, or ruin threatens the chariot and its guide. In your Lordship the Public have found a mind above the attractions of indolence and pleasure, too high to obey what it should command, and too honest to neglect any of its duties. To your Excellency therefore does Ireland look for providence as to her future condition, as well as for ability, temper, and integrity, in regulating her present affairs.

It is surprising how much the internal concerns of Ireland are misrepresented in England, and how little is the information abroad of the real state of that country. From this ignorance has the British Cabinet proceeded blindfold in the management of Ireland ; their knowledge of Irish affairs is through the medium of the Viceroy, who reports nothing from his own experience ; he is the slave of pleasure, and the agent of his own servants. On his arrival in Ireland he finds an aristocracy holding the keys of Parliament, and in possession of all the great offices of state ; an *imparlance* instantly takes place, and the result of this *concord* and agreement is, the Viceroy's transferring

transferring to the aristocracy all the real and virtual power of government, with the authority of the King's name, in exchange for personal repose, a polite court, and an accommodating Parliament. Hence the statements of successive Governors to the British Cabinet are all of one complexion; not a single ray of light beams on them from any quarter; all is ignorance and darkness. Besides the inertness and inactivity of the Viceroy, other causes may contribute to the want of information, as well as mismanagement of Irish affairs, which it may be useful to examine.

Remotely situated as Ireland is from the fountain of her government, she must in some measure feel the inconvenience of provincial dependency. The common sovereign of both countries can reside in but one; Ireland therefore, as junior and inferior, can enjoy only the reflection of the royal light. She must therefore, from the nature of things, be more subject to abuse, and less likely to be redressed; besides, her distance from the royal ear renders it necessary that her government should be vicarious, which subjects her to further inconvenience. The Sovereign living in the midst of his subjects has an interest in their happiness, and in the peace of his kingdom, at least for the term of his life; the Viceroy bounds all his views within the period of his administration only, which can continue but a few years, and which a thousand causes may terminate prematurely, without reference to impropriety of conduct. The Monarch at his birth derives his duties from nature, and his whole education is how to discharge them; the Viceroy is the steward, whose rectitude is matter of accident, and whose interest contravenes his duty. The character of one is original and parental, affectionate and permanent; of the other, derivative and tutelary, selfish and fleeting. The effects of this difference in character are obvious, and are abundantly confirmed in the history of Ireland. The statute of Henry the Seventh, known by the name of Poyning's Act, which made it necessary
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to transmit into England the several bills intended to be passed in the Parliament of Ireland previous to their introduction there, and to exemplify the causes and reasons for holding parliament, was enacted for the sole purpose of protecting the English colony from the oppression and exaction of the King's representative. This very act, which put the Irish settlement under the immediate protection of the English Government, and shielded it from the rapacity of governors, became in subsequent time, by a strange perversion, the object of popular odium and the subject of general dissatisfaction in Ireland: the people there were taught to view in it an unjust control in the British Parliament, proceeding from force and usurpation; though the history of that act, and its own provisions, demonstrate the parental affection and benevolence of England for that country. Notwithstanding the disadvantage attending the exercise of the royal authority through the medium of a deputy in Ireland, were there any connection between her Legislature and that of England, if the English Parliament had a superintending power to examine and decide on the affairs of Ireland, the inconvenience of vice-regal government would hardly exist, more particularly if Ireland were a constituent of the British Parliament, and had immediate and direct access to its counsels by regular representation. However, at present she has an independent and separate Legislature, which, however it oppose vulgar notions, and give offence to popular prejudice, I shall not scruple to assert, has, under the peculiar circumstances of Ireland, promoted rather than corrected the inconvenience of delegated government; and has opened rather than excluded the admission of abuse, which, in some degree, must ever attend the exercise of power in situations removed from immediate inquiry and control.

The first object with the Chief-Governor in Ireland is to secure the support of the Parliament, which he finds exclusively exercising all the powers of legislation.

tion. To gain the ascendancy in that assembly, and complete influence over its deliberations, becomes the spring of all his efforts, and the application of all his power. The necessity for this predominance over the free agency of Parliament, produced clearly by its disjunction from that of England, creates the imbecility of the Viceroy and the strength of parliamentary patronage, which subjects him to infinite and increasing claims, in most instances detrimental to the Public, and disgraceful to the King's government. Hence has prevailed in Ireland an unprecedented system of private jobbing and intrigue, and of unqualified public venality, in contempt of all character and opinion of the country. At no period was this practice carried higher, or was less artifice to conceal it from the view of the Public, than during the administration of Lord Westmoreland, whose conduct, whatever reprehension it may deserve, derives some extenuation not only from the general difficulty which every Chief Governor sustains in managing the Irish Legislature, but from his meeting a considerable parliamentary opposition, and the occurrence of questions of a delicate and difficult nature during his government. If it be asked, Since the constitutions of both countries are the same, and that prerogative and privilege, the rights of the King and the subject, are extended on the same policy, and defined within the same limit in Ireland as in England, why should the King's government require extraordinary means of support in Ireland? and why should means be legitimated there which in England public opinion alone would render impracticable? this may be explained on general principle as well as by peculiar circumstances in Ireland. It is more likely that the public business should be less obstructed, and be more easily transacted in that country, where the source and powers of Government are derived from the acts of its own people, where the national establishment is of its own making in community of soil and birth, and where the nation has not to look beyond its

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own limits for the original of the counsels which direct, and the authority which maintains the public order, than in that country where the efficacy of government is from abroad, and whose origin and creation are foreign and external. In the latter it is likely that a secret wish may prevail to disengage itself from this connexion, and render its government independent; and if the character of the people be impetuous and enterprising, turbulent and brave, and that nature has apparently supplied their country with the means and capacities of an independent state, it is almost a consequence in strict argument, or at least a probable inference, that a tendency should exist, and, as opportunities favour, display itself in open acts for effecting this separation. It will appear by and by, in the review of this subject, how far this general reasoning is confirmed in its application to Ireland, and whether she has, at any period, omitted an opportunity of weakening her connexion with Britain. This effort to divide is a growing quantity, and must increase with the strength of one country and the difficulties of the other; besides the considerable addition it acquires from the progress of a false philosophy in politics, which flatters the passions of men, and estranges them from their governments. Hence arises the necessity, on the part of the executive, for more considerable influence in its administration of the dependent than of the superior country.

It has been objected to the constitution of England, that, however admirably it has adjusted the different powers of the state in mutual freedom, as well as in necessary co-operation, it has not sufficiently provided against an evil, which, under this fine theory, may produce despotism in practice; that the influence of the Crown is not entirely excluded from admission to the Legislature. Finely tempered as this constitution is between the popular form of government and the monarchical, partaking of the freedom of the one and the energy of the other, I am free to confess myself one of those who think it
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one of the excellencies of that government, that the royal estate and the branches of the legislature are so connected, that the latter are open to the influence of the former; and to this do I ascribe the eminent solidity and firmness which, in an extraordinary manner, the British Government has manifested in these later years. In the midst of conspiracy at home, and an enlarged and tremendous foreign war, she has remained unshaken by the storm; and in the midst of the great deluge which has lately inundated the world, has appeared the only resting-place for religion and liberty: and the very acts of the British Parliament, which are adduced by popular prejudice, through the arts of the disaffected, as abuses of that influence, and as violences and injuries to the constitution, are the creatures of that necessity which the conspiracy of the external foe and the internal traitor had created; and to the timely interposition of these statutes is Great Britain, at the present moment indebted for salvation and existence.

There are several circumstances, however, which in England limit the extent of this influence, and secure to the public voice a decisive controul over the administration. In Ireland there are not these restraints; and as she is particularly constituted, her government is considerably less popular, and the influence of the executive is necessarily more extended and injurious, as to her interior, than in England. Since the separation of the Irish legislature from that of England, and Ireland becoming solely competent to direct her own internal government, no other link has remained to connect the two countries, but the influence of the English Minister in the Parliament of Ireland itself. Without this medium, it will appear that the coherence of the countries would be exposed to inevitable danger, as a strong principle of repulsion has unequivocally manifested itself in Ireland; and therefore, however it is to be regretted that the influence of the Crown in Ireland, or, more truly and properly, the name of the Crown, is made use of

of to produce and extend a system of corrupt ascendancy ; yet it is consolation to an English subject, that it is of imperative necessity, arising from causes for which Ireland alone is answerable. The constitutional change of 1782 in Ireland threw the executive at the mercy of her Parliament ; which, as long as it has the sole and exclusive power of legislation, must command the liberality and enjoy the munificence of the Crown. Hence uniformly in Ireland, since the year 1782 particularly, parliamentary interest has been the sole key to the favour of the Court ; all the honours and all the emoluments of the state have moved in the road of Parliament, the great mart for their exchange. Without parliamentary support, talent and virtue have been lame and impotent in Ireland ; they formed no claim to distinction or reward : hence it has proceeded, that in general the active and valuable offices at the bar, and in the civil economy, have been filled by men whose talents and capacities for their situations were considerably inferior to very many of their cotemporaries. It must be admitted, however, that in the short administration of Lord Fitzwilliam, who vainly attempted a government by virtue, pre-eminent talents and unblemished reputation were raised to the heads of the church and the university ; and your Excellency's administration deserves considerable praise for your late promotion of a prelate, whose learning and genius, integrity of life, and amiability of manners, do honour to your government.

The difference of extent, wealth, and importance of the two countries, appears strikingly in their parliaments. In England, charters of incorporation conferring municipal privileges, and giving the elective franchise, were gradually and occasionally granted by the Crown, as towns became respectable and populous, and as commerce and manufacture flourished. Hence, notwithstanding a few exceptions, and the effects of the generation and decay, the advancement and decline which attend every thing human, and affect

fect communities as well as individuals, the English House of Commons is at present near a just representation of the great trading, manufacturing, and monied interests ; but in Ireland, the House of Commons was framed in a great measure with the sole view of creating and securing Protestant ascendancy : its basis was not laid in the population, wealth, and importance of the kingdom, as was the case in England. Without reference to these characters, incorporating charters issued suddenly and numerously, for the mere purpose of procuring a Protestant majority ; and hence appears to me to be derived the real cause of the great inequality of representation in the Irish Parliament : this great inequality has enabled an aristocracy to possess itself of the whole energy of Parliament, which in Ireland has been no more than the medium of its operation, and the instrument of its power. From the limited numbers of Commoners also in the lower House of Parliament it has been less difficult for the aristocracy to engross such an extent of borough patronage as should secure its parliamentary strength. A great inequality of property has uniformly prevailed in Ireland. The many rebellions there, with their consequent forfeitures, and the effects of the ancient division of the kingdom into numerous lordships and principalities, may have occasioned the very unequal division of land in Ireland. Whatever may have been its causes, it has generated and produced the aristocracy, and given it the means of parliamentary patronage.

In England, the strong tendency of its government was originally aristocratical. The monopoly of its soil produced a body of nobles who ruled both the King and the people ; but the enterprises of commerce, and the industry of manufacture, raised the order of British commoners, which checked the influence of the barons, and supported the royal estate, which is allowed to be the origin of the popular part of the British constitution.

The magnitude of the English trade, the extent of her possessions, the qualities of her soil and the faculties

faculties of her people, have produced such a capital of wealth and property as completely to countervail the landed proprietary: numerous trading companies and chartered societies for diversified commerce, have established such a monied interest in England, as to make it the most active and important rank in the state, as it respects the great sinews of its power, the national finances: hence the easy and rapid alienation of her real property, which is ever varying its possessors. Thus the power of the English commonalty increases, and all aristocratical tendencies and effects are obviated. To acquire an estate becomes the ambition of the merchant; the certainty of market and of selling for the value, induces to alienation, and multiplies the sellers, and whatever be the disadvantages of the national debt, the magnitude of the public stocks has so facilitated the means, and augmented the progress of private wealth, as to diffuse among the whole body of the people such a mass of homogeneous property, that all classes of Englishmen not only feel themselves without the collision of opposite views, and the contradictions of separate rights, but combined and connected in one individual interest, the safety of the state; but in Ireland none of those causes have existed, which in England have tempered the aristocracy, and blended it in fine proportion with the rights of the people. Her small territorial extent is favourable to the growth of aristocracy; her inconsiderable trade, her want of capital, and the perfect infancy of the nation in all the modes of industry, and in all the acquisitions of wealth, have left the aristocracy unbalanced. The centre of the constitutional system in Ireland wanting its due position, the whole vacillates and totters with infirmity. Not only the absence of a monied interest, and the want of a great mercantile power in Ireland, account for the inequality of her government; but a positive cause has existed for aristocratical tendency, which seems fully adequate to the effect.

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The people of Ireland, in respect to their religious relation, are divided in triple proportion of Catholics to Protestants; and not only was the whole Catholic body, until very lately, excluded from the lowest participation in the legislative and executive parts of government; but by the operation of severe and impolitic penal statutes were precluded from the acquisition and enjoyment of property. It is not therefore a matter of wonder, that in so small a country as Ireland, in which three-fourths of its population were depressed by a weight of disability and penalties from rising by talent or property in the state; the residuum of the people should have the nature and effect of an aristocracy itself; that this faction should be itself capable of further reduction; and that, by monopoly and unjust exclusion, an inconsiderable part may engross the power of the whole.

From the ease also with which in a small country family connexion may spread itself, the union of powerful men becomes strengthened by affinity, and consolidated by mutual interest. Hence the combination of a few produces a formidable power, which in Ireland has had the mastery in public affairs. It has been openly avowed in the Irish Parliament, that to break the aristocracy, which impeded the King's government during the administration of Lord Townshend, cost the nation half a million sterling; and the kingdom was threatened with similar expence a few years ago, when some parliamentary proprietors shewed a disposition to unite their forces, and turn their strength against the government. Hence has proceeded the degree of corruption and the pursuit of private interest, to the injury of the public, which have prevailed in Ireland; and the business of the Viceroy is hardly more than to appease the importunity, and satisfy the cravings, of the aristocracy. Frauds, peculations, and abuses of every kind, are protected from enquiry and secured from punishment. Boards of commission have been multiplied beyond the necessity of the public business; and places have been

been divided and granted for life, to oblige the greater number, and make them independent of the Government: and in the same policy has prevailed the practice of reversionary grants, to the injury of the succeeding Viceroy, and the weakening of his administration. Improvident bargains have been made with individuals in fraud to the Public; and in the same spirit of jobbing and venality the public buildings of Dublin have been raised on scites not only inconvenient, but highly ridiculous, and at immense expense. Hence also the extravagant collection of the public revenues, and a pension list in Ireland, greater than in England, and above all, the prostitution of the peerage by actual sale, to the injury of merit, dishonour of the old nobility, and great odium of Government. This shameful practice of bringing to market the honours of the Crown, which casts a deep shade on the memory of Lord Westmoreland in Ireland, has contributed more immediately and necessarily to injure the public character of the Irish Parliament, than any other assignable cause. Under his government the Parliament called in 1790, was composed in an extraordinary manner; those wealthy Commoners who once filled the lower House, and who had either acquired borough patronage, or in whose families it had descended with their estates, were ennobled in the gross, and transferred to the upper house of Parliament, by which means the advowson and inheritance of the Commons became vested in the Lords, who for that turn gave up the presentation to the Lord Lieutenant's secretary. This unjustifiable proceeding created an unconstitutional dependency of the popular branch of the Legislature on the aristocratical; it promoted and avowed a system of parliamentary traffic completely sufficient to disgust and alienate the Public; and the obvious consequence of this innovation was not only highly increasing the natural evil of the Irish government in its tendency to aristocracy, but, by removing from the House of Commons the men of consideration

deration and landed property, left it to a race of adventurers who were to make their way to situation and fortune by submissive and uniform servility to all the measures of the Court, or by affected patriotism to commence their parliamentary career in groundless and indiscriminate opposition to the Government, and afterwards with shameful apostacy, on the attainment of office, become advocates for the measures they had opposed, and panegyrists of the Government they had maligned. No assembly, however, could conduct itself with more public obsequiousness, or use a higher strain of adulation in all its addresses to the Chief Governor. This, however, is no more a proof of sincerity in public than in private life; for so long ago as the administration of the unfortunate Lord Strafford, they pronounced the highest encomiums on his conduct, and expressed their extraordinary obligations to their Sovereign for committing the government to so able and honest a servant, but a short time before their sending over to England articles of impeachment, and deputing commissioners to manage the prosecution of the unfortunate Earl. And so late as the year 1789, the very Parliament which had repeatedly and strongly expressed its loyalty and attachment to the King's person, and panegyricized his Viceroy, did, on the unfortunate occurrence of his malady, change their political creed; a great majority of Parliament deserted the cause of their Sovereign, and voted a public censure on the Chief Governor. However, as soon as the King's health appeared likely to be restored, and the powers of the state to continue in the same hands, they became as eager to repent as they had been to offend: so true a criterion of human conduct is private interest, and so fallible a pledge of sincerity is human profession.

The versatility of Parliament also on the Catholic question was most glaring; the recency of this transaction, however, precludes the necessity of particular statement: but the violent manner in which it resisted, and the
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fervility with which it soon afterwards conceded the Catholic claims, was fatal to the public interest. It taught the people to look for redress of grievance, not by appeals to the Legislature, but in the application of their own strength. Such has been the state of the Irish Government, and such the causes of that discontent which has so nearly been fatal to the empire.

The acknowledged independency of the Irish Legislature has prevented her concerns coming under the review of the British Parliament; and there being no public medium of communication between the two countries, seems to me sufficiently to account for the ignorance which has prevailed in Britain of the real state of Ireland. A constitution so generative of abuse cannot continue; the system of government which has prevailed in Ireland approaches to dissolution. It is the part of wisdom to foresee change, and to prevent or to improve it. That something must be now done, cannot be controverted; either the Parliament of Ireland must be new fashioned, or, as it is called, reformed, and the aristocracy eradicated, or she must be committed to the Parliament of England by fair and regular representation. That, if the former take place, the dominion of England in Ireland must determine, and the two countries be separated, appears to me the obvious and most necessary consequence. This I shall endeavour to establish, and to communicate the strong persuasion I feel, by reference to the history of that country, to her late unfortunate rebellion, and the general state of politics. Sure I am that Ireland will find an union with England the panacea of her disorders, that it will convert her poverty into opulence, and her turbulence into tranquillity.

If a parliamentary reform be conceded to Ireland, no modification short of a pure democratic legislature can have effect, To extinguish, not to limit, the aristocracy, is their great object: and the first act of popular ascendancy would be the extermination of the superior order, to a moral certain-

ty ; the second would be the demolition of the royal estate, even if it had no foreign concern, but were purely and solely exercisable within the kingdom. From the present state of the public mind, in its long fermented dissatisfaction with its Parliament, and from the political impressions which it has received from the American war and the French revolution, it is beyond doubt that if the frame of Parliament be once innovated, it will be rent from its very foundation, the whole efforts of the people would be directed to the establishing of a democracy, and by every possible barrier to exclude the influence of England and her counsels from the affairs of Ireland ; for, the history of the late rebellion. as it is spread upon parliamentary record, and of the proceedings of the discontented and disaffected in Ireland for some years, preparatory to their coming to open war with the Government, establish it to the conviction of every man, that separation from England was the prime and the grand object ; a reform in the Parliament of Ireland was to be the means, and the decisive step towards the attainment of the former : a more equal representation of the people, therefore, re-founded on every side, as the demand of the nation upon its Government. Under this specious pretext was concealed the hostile disposition towards Great Britain. The body of the people looked no farther than the mere question of reform, which the general conduct of Parliament appeared to render not only reasonable but necessary ; but its real end, and the great scheme of change and independence, were reserved to a few, and lurked in the dark recesses of conspiracy and treason, until the fullness of time and the success of the auxiliary measures should call for the open avowal of the great object, and its publication to the nation. Thus the rashness of the unthinking and the faith of the credulous are ever exposed to the subtlety of the wicked, who enlists them as instruments of his cause and accomplices in his crimes.

That the connexion between the two countries
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has been weakened, and that the public conduct of Ireland has, upon some great occasions, facilitated and promoted the means of separation, will appear from the particular consideration and effect of two remarkable instances, independent of the general review of her history. In the year 1782, a constitutional change was effected in Ireland, the most important which had occurred since her annexation to Great Britain: before that period she formed a more immediate and connected member of the the British empire, under the direct influence and care of the general government. The regulations of her interior, as well as her external relations, were matter on which the English Parliament might act; and the power in the Government of England, as well of original approbation of the general measure, as of its final sanction in detail, protected the people of Ireland from the misconduct and abuses of its own Parliament. This direct and open controul of the English Government over the affairs of Ireland, the dependency of the Irish army on the English mutiny act, and the limited capacity and circumscribed authority of the Irish Parliament, necessarily connected and preserved Ireland, in conjunction with Great Britain. During this time, notwithstanding the measured and subordinate power of the Irish Parliament, it was more respectably constituted than ever it has been since. It was composed almost entirely of men of fortune, whose situations did not expose them to the prostitution of public character, nor chalk out a line of personal aggrandisement through the windings of political intrigue, at the public expence: Ireland did not then feel the great financial pressure which the necessity of parliamentary purchase has since created; she then knew nothing of that common speculation which since has filled the benches of Parliament with numerous and successive adventurers; and Ireland was then equally ignorant of the market for nobility, and that extensive and extravagant system of influence which kept the voice and wants of the Public unheard

and unheeded. But in 1782 the great link of empire which connected the two countries, gave way, and nothing remained after the renunciation of the British Parliament to secure the union of the crowns, but the covered and fatal medium of secret influence in the establishment of an expensive and growing patronage to counteract the acquired independence and improved capacity of the Irish Parliament. The causes of this extraordinary occurrence, the state of the public mind in Ireland at that time, and the means by which this great constitutional change was effected, shall be briefly stated, that the whole design and full intentions of those who moved and led the politics of Ireland may be disclosed and made manifest.

The war with America had produced considerable effects, not only in the British empire, but through Europe: it threw a false and delusive glare over modern politics, instead of a sober and salutary light. Hence some have derived the convulsions of France, and the meteor which has scared and distracted Ireland. It is certain, however, that the peculiar nature of the contest between Britain and her colonies provoked every where and eminently in Ireland, much diffused conversation and general discussion on the principles of government. Perhaps at no time, not even at the revolution of 1688, were the abstract rights of the people more fully examined, or the general theory of civil establishments more accurately analysed; and it is certain that the institution of the trans-atlantic empire, under the circumstances and manner of its original, has given new character and complexion to the politics of Europe: of these politics Ireland had in a great degree partaken. The nature of her connexion with England, the state of her Parliament, and the national obscurity, were topics which engrossed the public attention, and on which the talents of the state were employed. It need not be inquired, what was the result of the public investigation on the question, whether actual force of arms, acquisition in war,

or real and implied compact, was the foundation of the English dominion in Ireland. To argue against the pride or interest of your adversary, is as vain among nations as among individuals. A discussion of this question would be now irrelevant; the present occasion calls for no such inquiry; a temperate, dispassionate, and calm consideration of the present state of Ireland, with the light reflected from her history, and her late transactions alone, is necessary at this important moment. In the American war, armed in her own defence against the common enemy, Ireland seized the favourable opportunity of her own strength, and the imbecility of England, to confirm by decisive acts those argumentative conclusions, which to her mind had refuted the claims and rights of England, and established her own title to independence; to dissolve all other connexion than with the crown of Great Britain; became the great object of Ireland, for which she prepared to make every effort, and apply her whole force. In the crisis of ministerial weakness, the great concession was made. After a mighty amputation of empire, it seemed prudent by any means to preserve the remainder; and England not only yielded the future independence of Ireland, but, in her state of duress and necessity, renounced her former title: she remitted the possession, and confessed herself a disseisor. The fatal consequences which followed the denial to America of sharing the British constitution, hurried the English minister into compliance with the demands of Ireland, in their full and unlimited extent. Had he been guided by true policy, and had he sufficiently distinguished the case of Ireland from that of America, the necessity of the present discussion would not have arisen, nor should the Public have been troubled with this address.

The transaction in 1782 is particularly dwelt on, because it furnishes a clear demonstration that the constitutional change which was demanded and effected, was not because it was the most suited

ted to the necessities of Ireland, but because the Irish nation had been inflamed by every art to view the connexion with England as injurious to her honour and detractive of her national character. The object was more to shake off the dependency of the kingdom on the English Legislature, than any enlarged view of the future interests of Ireland. It was a question of pride more than of policy, and it is not the character of pride to respect its real interests.

The full principle of the constitutional change of 1782 became the basis of a most important transaction in 1789, at the lamentable period of the King's indisposition. The *patriots* in Ireland, and the great movers of her *politics*, on this occasion gave full scope to their zeal for the *unity* of the British empire, and their attachment to its *combined interests*: they contended, that, on the intermission of the royal functions, Ireland, as an imperial independent nation, was exclusively competent to provide for this emergency; that the two countries had no other union than in their executive; and therefore, that in every possible case of its suspension or determination, the Parliament of Ireland alone was adequate to the great imperial duty of supplying the vacant power. By a free election of a royal fiduciary, to hold the King's prerogative in trust for themselves only, under such limitations as they should define its exercise; and indeed the argument went the whole length of establishing, that, on such an occasion, the Parliament of Ireland might take the executive into their own hands, or altogether discontinue the royal estate. And had it not been for the accidental sympathy of the parliamentary opposition in both countries, this abstract argument would probably have had a decisive practical effect in the delegation of the royal authority to a regent not deriving under the Parliament of England: in which event an actual separation must have taken place, as there would not have remained a particle of connexion between the two countries. Their con-

conduct, however, and proceedings, on this trying occasion, demonstrate the danger which threatens the empire: it establishes the tendency of Ireland to separation; and that on the present constitutional footing of these kingdoms no barrier is formed to prevent its effect. It is clear also, that, without seeking for it, an opportunity may arise again of vacancy in the Crown, or its intermission; that Ireland may again feel herself called upon to exercise the imperial right by the spontaneous occurrence of public circumstances, without any arbitrary or uncalled for discussion of her right; and it is manifest, that, on such an occasion, her conduct would not be regulated by the interests and policy of the empire. The parliamentary report of the late rebellion also proves incontestibly, that, since the year 1789, the principle of separation has gained rapidly, that it has wonderfully increased under the mere influence of general political impression made by the French revolution, without the actual interference of the French government in the affairs of Ireland, the intrigues of her emissaries, or her systematic and authorized abominations. And the conduct of the Irish Parliament in 1789 shows, that the influence of England in the Irish Legislature, through the medium of its patronage, forms a very frail and precarious combination. The shameful tergiversation of the Irish members, at that time, must convince that the honour of individuals is no security on which to repose the strength and happiness of the British empire.

From the first records of her history, Ireland has been particularly and specially distinguished for domestic dissension and division. Before her connexion with England, during her old government, if the term be not much abused in this application of it, the kingdom was subjected to numerous principalities and authorities, which carried on with each other incessant and implacable wars. The wildness of uncorrected nature marked the face of the country: as savagery

ry unsoftened and unhumanized their manners and practices in war, traces of hostile incursion were every where manifest; and plains, to which Nature had not denied fertility, mouldered into bogs and morasses. In the violence of civil strife, no peaceful improvement could be effected. In the division of governments there was nothing national; and thence, as all things sublunary tend to degeneracy and decay, unless sustained and recruited by collateral aid, the want of culture deteriorated the soil, as the absence of civil discipline still farther brutalized the national manners.

On the arrival of the Britons in Ireland, in the year 1172, every thing manifested to them a country deeply sunk in the misery of ignorance and barbarism. Before the connexion with England, therefore, neither commerce nor manufacture could have existed, or any one work of public utility been devised or executed; and since that connexion, though in that great length of time Ireland has naturally improved in many important respects, and that this improvement has arisen entirely from her communication with England, and in its direct proportion; yet, in every period almost has she had her tranquillity interrupted by general rebellion or local risings, and has ever been the prey of civil and religious dissensions. This continual disturbance and uncertainty of the public condition in Ireland has counteracted her natural advantages, and prevented that enlarged intercourse with England, which would have extended her trade, and assimilated the national manners to the sobriety and subordination of the English character. The truth of these positions will appear established by the following brief review of the Irish history.

Henry the Second acquired the dominion of Ireland as much by his high reputation for justice as a king and wisdom as a legislator as by the terror of his arms. The piratical depredations of the Irish on his English subjects, their cruel treatment of prisoners of war, and the military levies which

which his enemy the French King was enabled to make in Ireland, considerably induced the English monarch to sanction with his own authority and presence the private adventures of his subjects. It is remarkable that the same policy should so strongly apply at this day for permanently uniting and preserving that which Henry the Second thought it so necessary to acquire. The politeness of the times justified this expedition of Henry by a papal bull, consecrating the title of conquest for the great end of civilization and religion. Almost all the native princes, who were very numerous, submitted to the King, did homage, and took the oaths of fidelity and allegiance. Voluntary submissions, however, were not more effectual and sincere at that time than they are now. The English colony planted in Leinster was subject to every kind of outrage, and the utmost cruelty characterized its barbarous enemies: their continual aggressions, and the commotions of the country, determined the unfortunate Richard the Second on two royal voyages to Ireland. The force with which he was attended in his first, spread terror and consternation; so that, as the historians of these times observe, the Irish had recourse to a policy, which they often practised with success, to divert the blow which they could not sustain. With feigned acknowledgments of past transgressions and insincere assurances for the future, all the powerful leaders of the Irishry waited upon the King at his arrival, with submission and fealty; and the Earl Marshal was empowered by special commission to receive homage and repetitions of fidelity from the Irishry of Leinster, which they rendered on their knees, and were afterwards admitted to the kiss of peace; and in like manner the King himself received the submission of Ulster. However, as soon as Richard had departed, and the military force was dissolved, this humility was renounced, and, in violation of sacred engagements, the public peace was again interrupted, and the borders of the English pale again suffered the ravages of war.

It is observable, that this perfidious quality, which surmounts all religious barrier, and violates all social principle, has continued characteristic of the lower Irish to this hour. In the late rebellion, an enlightened and merciful policy proclaimed pardon and protection; but the very wretches who availed themselves of the benignity of Government, in many instances, have since been apprehended in the commission of new crimes, and the perpetration of greater enormities. So permanent must be the qualities of men, to whom the improvements of life do not descend, and whose political place debars them from any share in the general civilization.

From the reign of Richard the Second to that of Elizabeth was one continued series of disturbance; but in her reign the most formidable and dangerous rebellion occurred of any since the reduction of Ireland. The rebels having had the aid of foreign power, the Spaniards effected a landing in Kinsale, and their standard was soon joined by several of the Irish lords, particularly by the Earls Tyrone and Tyrconnell, who had marched from the North at the head of a considerable army; but being engaged by the Lord Deputy Mountjoy, were entirely defeated. The Spaniards submitted on the terms of leaving the kingdom; and the rebellious Lord Tyrone experienced the same merciful indulgence, which, to the immortal honour of Great Britain, has continued to this day her peculiar character, and to which your Excellency's conduct from the commencement of your government has given the strongest attestation. Lord Tyrone was received to submission and mercy; and in 1606, King James issued a commission of grace for confirming the possessions of the Irish against all claims of the Crown arising from the attainder of those concerned in the rebellion. From this royal clemency and most gracious favour, a perfect settlement of the kingdom might have been expected, as no small foundation seems to have been laid for the return of general tranquility

quility. However, nothing could reduce to social order and subordination minds so ferocious and intractable: for at that very time, an impunity for rebellion, these same Earls Tyrone and Tyrconnell, and almost all the Irishry of Ulster, were engaged in a new conspiracy to provoke a general rising, seize the castle of Dublin; and, for the accomplishment of these nefarious purposes, had actually solicited foreign aid. The same Providence, however, which at this day preserves and favours the British empire, defeated this conspiracy.

A surprising parallel runs through all the transactions of the Irish history, which seem to partake the same spirit, and continue the same character. The trial of Henry and John Shears, convicted in July last, records a scheme of treason wonderfully similar, though more artfully laid and more extensively diffused. In both, the first sacrifice of rebellion was to be the King's representative and council; the English ministers and all the supporters of English councils were to be devoted to the fury of the mob, and become the first victims for establishing the acquired independence.

The rebellious Lords having fled beyond sea, made violent complaints abroad, that they had been driven from home for matter of religion, and with great injustice as to their claims and pretensions; on which the King thought proper to make a declaration, which was published through Europe. But in the late rebellion, the full and free confessions of the principal traitors have prevented the successful repetition of this artifice. Besides the convictions and outlawries had against the actors in these rebellions, there was a general attainder by the statute of the 11th of King James, by which 500,000 acres of land in the north of Ireland were forfeited to the Crown, which enabled the King to make that Protestant plantation in Ulster which has become the seat of the only manufacture in Ireland, and continues to be distinguished in a very great degree above the rest of the kingdom for its industry, wealth, and population, though in quality of soil

soil much below the average fertility of the kingdom : a plain and irrefragable proof of the advantage which Ireland has derived from her connexion with England, to whom, whatever improvement she has acquired since the days of her King Dermot, must certainly be referred : which observation appears to be justified still farther, by the superior order and improvement of the hither coast of Ireland to the farther. The western division of Ireland is more purely Irish, which may have proceeded from the policy of Cromwell, who forced the ancient and native families to residence beyond the Shannon ; and though those parts of Ireland, originally of English settlement, were perhaps the most disloyal and disaffected in the late rebellion, yet it must be remembered, that colonial establishments but seldom have had the merit of filial gratitude ; and though the north of Ireland partook largely of the late conspiracy, yet she preserved her tranquility in a much greater degree than the zeal and ardour of the rebel leaders to make her the great reservoir of treason gave foundation to expect : nor was her conduct in the midst of the rebellion stained with those enormities which were committed in the other parts of the kingdom ; and which, for the honour of humanity, and pity for that unfortunate nation, ought not to be particularly stated : but it is matter of duty to read to the world the great lesson of misfortune and punishment which are sure to follow the commission of crimes.

It may be further observed, with respect to the north of Ireland, that the circumstances of her prosperity and her superior opulence formed the temptation for her seduction ; that the less important parts of the kingdom might more easily take the example of infidelity. The religious persuasion also which prevails in the North having peculiar partiality to republicanism, facilitated and predisposed that country to measures which manifestly tended to gratify their favourite principle.

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From the rebellion of Tyrone until the year 1641, Ireland appeared to have enjoyed general tranquillity; the interests which divided, and the animosities which irritated, the different descriptions of her inhabitants, appeared to have been succeeded by union, fraternity, and peace. The new possessors of lands had diligently applied to their cultivation, and the much calumniated administration of Lord Strafford had made great progress in the general improvement of the kingdom: these appearances, however, were delusive; more extensive mischief was in preparation, which the intermission of actual hostility gave leisure to improve and mature.

Among the reasons and causes which are assigned for this rebellion, is the great change of property which had taken place in Ulster after the forfeitures of the six countries under the act of James; and probably in the relentless temper of the Irish, the jealousy of property which they had forfeited was peculiarly inveterate. The ascendancy of Protestantism and the English interest, which each defeat had promoted, were without doubt the great and leading causes of the rebellion of 1641, which, for indiscriminate and shocking murders, had no precedent. The unfortunate situation of the English monarch, the disaffection of his parliament, and particularly the successful rebellion of his subjects in North Britain, gave occasion and opportunity to the execution of the design. The Irish leaders saw clearly that a favourable moment had arrived for terminating the English dominion in Ireland; and that one great effort, no matter in what way, would give emancipation to their country. The embarrassment of the King's government, and the disposition of the British Parliament, augmenting instead of removing public disorder, gave confidence to the cause, and inspired high hopes of easy and rapid victory. The design, however, against the capital was discovered; the first object of the rebels failed, but through the king-

kingdom a massacre commenced too horrid to be dwelt upon.

The forts and garrison towns were assailed, and the kingdom was shaken to its centre. The restitution of property, the domination of the Catholic religion, and deliverance from English supremacy, were the great and sacred objects which were to sanctify, by their attainment, the wickedness of the means. Such were the inducements to lead, and such the hopes to animate the family of the ancient proprietor, the ignorant and bigotted crowd, and the numerous class of Lords and Princes who delighted in the ambition, but felt not the miseries of private war. The idea successfully propagated at that time among the body of the people was the danger of their religion; they were made to believe that the English Parliament had determined on the abolition of Popery in Ireland, and that the Scots were to be the zealous instruments of this persecution. There was no foundation for this alarm; the ignorance, credulity, and superstition of the lower Irish, made it unnecessary: they were already disposed to the most unfavourable suspicions of those whom, under the influence of long and systematic delusion, they had been made to consider as enemies. The ascendancy of Presbyterianism, and the influence of the Scots, at that time gave colour and pretext to the fears and insinuations which the deceiver was every where suggesting. The most violent animosities raged between the churches of Rome and Scotland, which confirmed every fear and magnified every danger which the credulity of one might apprehend from the fanaticism of the other. The divisions between these bodies of men in doctrine and affection were extreme, inveterate, and implacable: so wonderfully does man pervert the beneficence of his God in educating discord, and creating differences, from the very religion which came from heaven to harmonize and unite. The leaders found in this prejudice of the people
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the direct key to insurrection, which at this hour locks up the minds of the lower Irish, or opens them to rebellion. The leaders of the late conspiracy adopted the clue of their predecessors in 1641, and with the same fatal effect. After this great lapse of time, the common people in Ireland are found equally credulous and bigotted; they were made lately to believe, that the Catholic religion was in imminent danger, and that its persecution impended from that government, which since the accession of the King, has breathed the mildest influence on sectaries of every denomination, and which has not only tolerated the Catholic subject, but removed, the restraints of former times, and given him constitutional rank.

The Presbyterian not having now ascendancy in the state, and being fraternized with the Catholic, the artifice of 1641 could not be repeated; some new object therefore was to alarm, some new enemy to be suggested; and the common people of Ireland were impressed with conviction that certain societies which arose in the North, and afterwards were formed throughout the kingdom for the protection of their families and properties, had been actually commissioned by the Government to put down the Catholic faith; under which pretence, and most wicked and groundless insinuation, were the Catholics raised, as it were, to protect their altars from profanation, and assail the public authority by force of arms. It must be remembered also, that as the misfortunes of Charles the First, and the distractions of the British Government, marked the period of the rebellion in 1641, the conspiracy of 1798 was formed and carried into effect, when Great Britain was involved in a war the most difficult, varied, and extensive she ever waged, and when the enemy she had to combat was the most active, insidious, and deadly; and that in co-operation and confederacy with that enemy, the Irish rebels laid their scheme of massacre and ruin.

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From the extinction of the rebellion in 1641, by the force and perseverance of Cromwell, we come to the period of the Revolution. The unconstitutional acts and superstitious bigotry of the House of Stuart had removed it from the throne of England; which removal, by the law of England, and an express act of the Irish Legislature, equally applied to Ireland: but the superstition of James found adherents in the ignorance of the Irish, and all those who wished the separation of the countries were united in his cause. The rivalry of the Catholic and Protestant was this time at its height; and as the former had predominated much in Ireland, and the Revolution established the ascendancy of the latter religious as well as political considerations insured the abdicated Monarch the support of Ireland; and though loyalty and affection for the House of Stuart may be advanced to justify the conduct of the Irish, and that attachment to the reigning family is highly meritorious; yet it is too plain, that it was the religion of James, and not his relation to the throne of England, which recommended him to Ireland. The British Legislature, on true and sound constitutional principles, alone was competent to create and supply the vacancies of the throne; and by the express provisions of statutes in both nations, the sovereignty of Ireland necessarily and immediately followed that of Great Britain; and therefore, by adherence to the House of Stuart, after the determination of the English Parliament, Ireland broke her constitutional engagements, and divided herself from the empire.

It is true, that the then chief governor of Ireland, Lord Tyrconnell, who was also at the head of the army, and a very considerable number of persons in official stations under the Government, were in the interests of James, and bore arms in his support; and that, however great and national the question then at issue was, affection to a family long in possession, and the violence to old prejudice in its sudden expulsion, and sub-

substitution of a foreigner, all amount, in a great degree, to excuse and extenuate the conduct of Ireland in its resistance to the new government, which appears from the conduct of King William himself, who carried on the war in Ireland not as with traitors and rebels, but as with fair and legitimate enemies; yet important instruction is conveyed to us by these transactions, which suggest the imperative necessity of now fixing the constitutional relation of the two countries in such a way, that it shall ever be understood, and put beyond controversy, that Ireland cannot in any case decide, or at all discuss the question of title to the common executive of these kingdoms; that her crown cannot be separately considered, or abstractedly become the subject of public argument; but that, to every possible purpose, there is a legal and constitutional merger of it in that of Great Britain. And it is manifest, that, as long as human affairs proceed in their natural progress, great occasions may arise, in which the policy or liberties of Great Britain may require, that the rights of persons claiming title to her crown, should be modified, and even extinguished; and, that as long as Ireland shall have a separate legislature, she will have the means of discussion and determination of such rights; she will have no physical impediment to the exercise of her own free will; and as to her propriety in its exercise, that will depend on the views, public and individual, of the members of her legislature. Speculations of the probable nature of her public carriage in those trials, will be considerably aided by reference to her history, and all her former conduct; and as the most aggravated evils peculiarly attend disputes and contests for royal succession; and that in Ireland there would be religious discord to add to their inveteracy; it necessarily results from enlarged and humane policy, that Ire-

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land should not, by the form of her government, be left exposed to the intrigues of the royal claimant, who should happen to be disfranchised and deposed; and that a way should not be left open which must lead to her own convulsion, and the distresses of the empire.

In the reign of William, the question of the dependency of Ireland, and the authority of the English Parliament to interfere in her concerns, to the exclusion of her own legislature, was publicly agitated. In 1644, the power of binding Ireland by an English statute was argued on legal grounds by Sir Richard Bolton, and ably answered by Serjeant Mayart; both arguments may be seen in Harris's *Hibernica*. The opposition which uniformly had been made in Ireland to the dominion of England, now openly questioned and denied the control of her legislature. Soon after the Revolution, several acts had passed in England, in which Ireland was expressly named and included. To obviate the effect of these statutes, and establish their incompetence to bind Ireland, her Parliament transmitted acts of their own, enacting and confirming the matter of the British statutes; and in 1698 an ingenious writer published a subtle and popular refutation of the claims of England, in which he freely and openly contended for the freedom of the Irish Parliament. But, to my conception, a great part of the general doctrine and argument of Mr. Molyneux tends as strongly to disprove the authority of the English Crown, as of its Parliament, over Ireland; but whether his reasoning was legitimate or not, was immaterial; it became the standard of political orthodoxy in Ireland.

The English Commons, however, were attentive to the public interest. There then existed no national difficulties or embarrassment to extort from them concessions repugnant to the constitution of
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the empire. They addressed the throne on the pernicious assertions of this publication, and the dangerous tendency of the late conduct of the Irish Parliament; and assured the King of their determination to maintain and preserve, in a parliamentary way, the dependence and subordination of Ireland to the imperial crown of the realm.

In the reign of Anne and George, the rival claims of the throne of England, and the prevalent Catholicism of Ireland, produced several acts of Parliament, certainly of a very penal nature, against persons of the Romish communion. The Revolution was the era of British liberty; it undermined the antiquated and priestly notions of passive obedience and hereditary right, and ushered into these kingdoms a sober, salutary, rational, and useful freedom. The Catholic religion had connected itself with these political errors, and was the faith of the banished Monarch and his adherents in both kingdoms. And hence in England arose the necessity of discouraging, by civil disabilities, a profession of men, whose doctrines were hostile to its new civil arrangement, and whose minds were attached to the fortunes of a family whose claims of power were incompatible with the political and religious liberty of England. But the popery laws in Ireland were marked with peculiar and inconceivable severity. Not only the reasons for those acts of penalty which existed in England applied to Ireland; but there were others peculiar to herself, which sharpened her resentment, and produced a series of statutes by no means creditable to her legislative code. A very considerable change had taken place in the possession of lands in Ireland, in consequence of repealed forfeitures, and particularly the immense confiscation which followed the triumph of the House of Orange in 1688, when 1,060,000 plantation acres fell to the disposal of the Crown; so that in Ireland the

jealousy of property was added to the virulence of her religious dissension. Besides, the great disproportion of Catholic to Protestant made it also necessary to supply paucity of numbers by additional muniments from the legislature ; and indeed the measures of the Irish Parliament during this period went the whole extent that the most jealous proprietary or most bigoted fanatic could require for the security of their acquired lands, and the ascendancy of the Protestant faith. We have lived, however, to see a complete separation of divinity and politics, and the country of the Most Catholic King become the metropolis of irreligion and paganism ; the triple crown has fallen, and by means of that very power, whose head once gloried in being eldest son of the church, the same nation whose enthusiastic Christianity once covered the East with her legions, now embraces the infidelity she then persecuted, and paganises the land she went to reclaim. The House of Stuart is no more ; its misfortunes are nearer our recollection than its power. The rights of property in Ireland are confirmed by length of time, by prescription, by alienation, and acquiescence.

The proportion of numbers in Ireland between Catholic and Protestant is now much varied in favour of the latter ; hence the penal laws have survived the necessity which created them, and the reasoning by which they were justified. The danger to modern government arises, not from the theory of religionists, but from the enemies of all religion ; and therefore the laws which necessity and prudence demand for the preservation of government, and the security of the public, should have a free and general operation ; not applying to distinct descriptions of subjects, but making one division only, that of the just and unjust ; that all may be

be enjoined the great precept of religion and policy — Fear God, and honour the King.

In 1719 the Irish House of Peers asserted a right of final judicature over all judgments and decrees given in courts within the kingdom, and committed to the custody of their Black Rod the Barons of the Exchequer, who, in opposition to their order, enforced the decree of the English Peers in the case of Annesley and Sherlock. This attempt produced the act of George the First, which declares, that the Irish Lords have not the appellat jurisdiction, and again repeats the dependency of the Crown of Ireland, and the supremacy of the British Parliament.

In 1751 an appropriated surplus remained in the Irish Treasury, which the Duke of Dorset, then Lord Lieutenant, consented, in the King's name, to apply to the discharge of the national debt. The Irish Parliament forbore stating in the act which they transmitted, this previous consent of the Crown: the clause, however, was introduced in England, and afterwards received in Ireland with much dissatisfaction, as it was insisted there, that their own Parliament was competent to appropriate the residuum without the King's previous consent, notwithstanding that the King had an independent hereditary revenue in Ireland, and that the surplus in the Exchequer resulted as well from the branches of that revenue as from any other parts of the public income; which is a power that the Parliament of England, under similar circumstances, could not claim against the Crown. And in 1753, on the recurrence of this question, the amended act from England was rejected. However, the prerogative of the Crown was vindicated, and the money was issued at the Treasury under the authority of a King's letter only.—These distinct facts, at different periods in the history of Ireland, are enumerated to shew the rise and growth of a disposition for
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weakening the connection with Britain, and establishing an independent government.

The circumstances which follow, which have occurred in the present reign, admit of no equivocal construction, and establish important conclusions.

In 1778, during the dissensions of Great Britain with her American colonies, petitions and claims of rights were set on foot among the people of Ireland at that time, of a commercial nature only; these, however, grew in extent, and the public demand became louder, as difficulties abroad and discontents at home embarrassed the King's government. This clamour had its effect; and what was called a free trade was conceded by the British Parliament.

Whenever the public mind is inflamed by the agitation of political questions, which are first advanced by a few of more sagacity than virtue, whose private pursuits are masked under the appearance of public interest, the concession of the national request will not allay the ferment, or extinguish the fire which consumes the public peace. Another grievance calls for redress, or some new privilege is suggested, more important than the former and without which, it is said, the state cannot exist. Thus concession leads to new demands, and the public appetite grows with what it devours.

The attainment of commercial advantages in extension of trade and removal of restraints, was followed immediately by demands of a constitutional nature, which went to change the frame of government altogether. It was insinuated that freedom of trade could be secured only by independence in the government: and the imposing analogy was advanced, that as, with the individual, he will not be industrious unless the fruits of his labour be secured, so the capital of a nation will not expend itself in commerce or manufacture, unless it has the sole power of its regulation. The transition therefore from
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the subject of trade to that of government was natural and easy; but as the latter goes more to the feelings of men over whom pride has more dominion than interest, a greater degree of union and earnestness prevailed in Ireland upon this question than on the former. The nation at length became extremely agitated; armed associations covered the land, whose origin was for the meritorious defence of their country against the common enemy.

The extent and multiplied demands of the war in which Britain was then engaged had much reduced the military establishment in Ireland; and her coast having been more than once insulted by the enemy, the government could not but applaud the voluntary exertions of those who came forward in the public service. Nothing, however, can show more the want of strength, or the want of wisdom of the government at that time, in suffering a large military force to rise in the country, totally independent of its authority. Long experience has shown, that the best institutions of human wisdom are subject to abuse, and that good and evil are so intimately compounded, and so insensibly distributed in all the allotments of human life, that nothing can be said to be absolutely good which may not partake of evil; and no measure to be so convenient from which mischief may result. Had the volunteers of Ireland adhered to their first principles, and kept in view the object of their association, their conduct would have been beyond all praise. Whenever the necessities of our country oblige us to assume a military character, it should be well understood, and never for a moment forgotten, that the exercise of civil rights is suspended; it is for their final preservation that the soldier is created, who may be called the great executive of the state, while it is the citizen who legislates; and as these two great powers of will and action, of command and performance,

performance, cannot combine in the state without despotism, neither can they concentrate in the individual without producing anarchy. No principle of the British constitution can be so clearly proved, none is more suitable to its wisdom, and certainly none, in its application, contributes more to the tranquility, to the liberties, and to the happiness of the state.

The volunteers of Ireland, from soldiers became politicians, and formed a military convention, in perfect mimicry of the forms of Parliament, at the very moment when the lawful government was in the exercise of its functions. Such was the state of public affairs; the intended effect was produced, and the British Parliament renounced all dominion and authority within the kingdom of Ireland.

The continued practice of popular conventions, and of arbitrary, self-formed associations in Ireland, for discussing and resolving on abstract questions of government, for exploring defects and suggesting innovations in the constitution, have been highly detrimental, and have palpably contributed to the origin, formation, and systematic progress of the late rebellion. When it is considered that these questions are in their nature the most difficult; that erroneous notions concerning them are most dangerous; that the bulk of society is not competent, from learning, experience, or judgment, to treat of them; that the few who have capacity may want integrity and virtue; it is clear, that such societies are most likely to become pernicious instruments of sedition and treason, instead of a medium for enlightening and improving the Public. And hence well-regulated states have annexed conditions of age and property to the members of the legislature, that its deliberations may be directed by the wisdom which results from years and education, and secured by the virtue which dwells with independence.

independence. The Convention Act of the present Chancellor in Ireland prevents all popular meetings by election and delegation. The licentiousness of original societies, however, has produced such fatal consequences, as particularly to demand the notice of Parliament.

As soon as the constitutional change of 1782 was effected, and Ireland declared an independent nation, new grievances were stated for redress, new evils were suggested for reform, complaints were made of inequality in the parliamentary representation, and the preponderance of English influence. The convention called for procuring the parliamentary reform, openly, and in the most unqualified manner, discussed the plan of innovation; and to raise the political importance of this extraordinary assembly, it had its sittings in the very metropolis, attended by a considerable guard of volunteers. The Government at length saw its danger, it remained firm, and the project of correcting and new-modelling the parliamentary representation has hitherto failed.

The friends of democracy, and those who wished to establish a separate government in Ireland, finding that their own power was insufficient to attain their purposes, and knowing that the great majority of the people of Ireland, being Catholics, and excluded from the exercise of the elective franchise, were in a great measure indifferent to the constitutional changes which were demanded; they therefore applied themselves to the seduction of the Catholics, and, suspending the open pursuit of reform and separation from England, applied their whole force to procure a repeal of the penal laws, and the admission of the Catholic body to the full participation of the constitution. The very men who were secretly undermining the Government, and had resolved on its complete subversion, were obliged, in furtherance of their designs, to declaim publicly

licly on its excellence, and the injustice of any portion of the King's subjects being excluded from the full enjoyment of so admirable a constitution. The former method of speaking to Government, through the medium of conventions and national delegations, was again resorted to, and again succeeded. However, before the Catholic convention thought proper to dissolve itself, it voted the resolution for reform; thus requiting the services of their new friends by reciprocal obligation, and concurring in hostility to the constitution, into which they had been admitted.

In the year 1785, certain commercial regulations respecting the trade of the two countries occupied the attention of their respective legislatures. The propositions offered by England have been universally admitted as highly promoting the interest of Ireland. However, Great Britain considered it essential to the harmony of this adjustment, and for the further satisfaction of both countries, that the regulations of one should prevail in the other; that the trade and manufactures of Great Britain and Ireland should enjoy the same freedom, and feel the same restraint. On this express condition was it proposed, that those laws which have created and expanded the commercial power of England, should be adopted occasionally in Ireland, in similar cases only, and enlarging and restraining equally in both. As this system manifestly appeared calculated to cement the interests of the two countries, to assimilate their commercial system, to exclude the jealousies of trade, and fully and deeply to blend the capital, the industry, and talents of both, the friends of disunion were alarmed; they perceived that this measure would produce the union which they deprecated, that it would bind what they meant to untie: every opposition, therefore, to the measure was to be given. They represented

presented the constitution of 1782 to be in danger; the people were told that their liberty and happiness could not survive the ratification of this agreement. Every art which could delude a credulous, unsuspecting, uninvestigating nation, was practised, and with success; every topic of pride and self-importance was urged to a people, whose passions, and weakness, and propensities have ever been the triumph of its enemies. The commercial detail of the propositions was not examined; it was lost in their constitutional effect. The cry of condemnation became general, and the measure failed.

Since the commencement of the present war, England has experienced all the difficulties which are incident to the state of hostility, and which required the utmost vigilance and exertion of her Government. The common enemy has been unwearied in his aggressions, and singularly active and copious in his resources. He has prosecuted the war by internal treachery, and subdued nations by detaching subjects from their government. Among the numerous objects which his principles have deluded, and his stratagems beguiled, Ireland is most conspicuous and unfortunate. The enemy saw that, through her, the power of Britain might receive an irrecoverable blow, and that she had not only much to reward, but to solicit his attention. Her peculiar government had generated much abuse, which her imperfect connection with England had rather promoted than corrected. Great inequality of civil rights had divided her people; and a disposition of hostility towards Great Britain, and for the separation of the countries, had progressively advanced. The enemy has fully availed himself of the state of Ireland and besides the activity of his enmity towards great Britain in every way in which she was vulnerable, his interference has been courted and invited by the disaffected in Ireland. To refer to the particulars of the correspondence

dence between the French Government and the Societies of United Irishmen is unnecessary. The Report of the Committees of both Houses last session is full and satisfactory in its developement, not only of the rebellion itself, but of all the preceding steps and machinations which led to the unhappy consequences, and prepared and organized the nation for open violence. This Report contains a demonstration as clear as the mind of man can expect on any subject, that to separate these countries was the sole ruling object of the United Societies; that all their demands of reform and of justice to the Catholic, were colourable only, they were pretences to deceive the unthinking, to bribe the interested, and to force Government to concessions, which by gradual encroachment would undermine its whole system. The founder of the Society of United Irishmen in Dublin, the misery of whose last days should convey some morality to the wicked, made it the basis and the first principle of the Irish Union, that connexion with Britain was ruinous to Ireland. It is this paramount object only which gives consistency and uniformity of character to all the measures and proceedings of that execrable Society: and this same principle, Tone maintained on his trial, and sealed with his death: and one of the self-convicted traitors, now in custody, had the confidence to make the same profession at the bar of Parliament, and to enter particularly into argument that Ireland could exist as an independent nation unconnected with Great Britain. And it does appear by the same parliamentary report that it was determined solemnly by the Union not to be diverted from their great purpose by any concession of Parliament, or any acquiescence to their demands.

After the review which has been taken of the history of Ireland, and the particular facts which have been adduced, the supplement of evidence which is furnished by the late rebellion, establishes, beyond

beyond all doubt, that a great degree of restlessness and disquiet has long prevailed in Ireland; that her lower classes of people have been uniformly turbulent and untractable, qualities which indisposed them to the dominion of England, from the peaceful habits and subordination it would produce; that religious difference and the jealousies of property forfeited by rebellion, and transferred to English settlers, have promoted and inflamed their prejudices; and that they are ignorant, perfidious, and credulous. It appears also, that the American war, and the revolution in France, have produced a strong disposition for change, and for new-modelling established governments; that this spirit has had extensive influence in Ireland; that the American war separated Ireland from the English Legislature; that the conduct of the Irish Parliament in 1789 endangered the only connexion which remained, that of the executive; and that in the present war the dependency of Ireland on the English Crown has been preserved by the force of arms only.

A series of continual efforts anticipated the constitutional change of 1782. From the time of the Revolution attempts had been made to establish a separate legislature, and the embarrassment of Britain in the American war produced its accomplishment. The King's malady and suspension of the royal power produced the extraordinary decision in 1789; and the conspiracy and rebellion in 1798 were preceded by the reception of French principles, the new enthusiasm of democracy, and by reiterated complaints against the system of corrupt influence, which after the separation of the legislatures remained the only possible mode of keeping the countries together; and this conspiracy and rebellion took effect when Britain was involved in a war, the unprecedented nature of which required that she should direct her whole attention, and pour out her whole strength, against the efforts of the common enemy.

Every

Every man therefore who regards the British empire is called upon to consider with seriousness and attention the present state of Ireland. That there exists within that country a considerable body of men strongly disposed to effect a dismemberment of the empire, is beyond scepticism to deny ; and that this disposition is artfully concealed under public professions of attachment to the constitution of England, and of claims for its full participation by reforming the parliamentary representation, and giving the people more efficacy, is equally clear and indisputable. And it cannot be denied that the vices of the Irish government, its aristocracy, and enlarged and unqualified corruption, are sufficient to give colouring to popular complaints, and to alienate the people from a connection with England, which seems to require such odious and mischievous supports. These vices can be no longer tolerated. A government which despises public opinion cannot long exist. The public authorities should be respected, and the people should have confidence in the legislature. When abuses are carried to an extent which no one attempts to justify, which all are ready to condemn, and which provoke some to acts of rebellion, the public safety is endangered, and this danger is much heightened by the extraordinary occurrences of these days, in which the fall of an ancient and venerable monarchy has shaken the states of Europe to their foundation, and in which an insolent and presumptuous democracy affects universal dominion by her principles as well as arms. Ireland has confederated, and Britain is at war with this democracy. If it stood therefore on the mere footing of policy and of self-interest with Great Britain, it is impossible for her any longer to sleep over the affairs of Ireland ; she cannot abandon her to the enemy ; she cannot consent to her own dismemberment and disgrace. But claims of a higher nature and views, such as be-
come

come Great Britain, call for her immediate interference. The late rebellion has rekindled the heat of religious bigotry, and revived the animosities of party. These divisions in Ireland are marked with uncommon virulence, and accompanied with peculiar atrocities. To repress their violence and extend the King's protection to all his Irish subjects, is now a difficult exertion of his government; but the very moment in which the present vigilance is intermitted, or that any change of government is conceded, which shall lessen the King's influence in Ireland, and augment the popular power, at that instant the torch of civil fury will again light that unhappy country to new scenes of murder and desolation. The United Irishmen and the whole class of the disaffected are now directing their whole attention to force a Parliamentary Reform. In this pursuit they are joined by many men of good intentions, who lament the present faults in the mode of administering the government of Ireland, but who have not examined the origin of these faults, nor the necessity which has produced and continues them, and who are equally unconscious and unsuspecting of the consequences which would infallibly result from the attainment of such a measure. A democratic House of Commons in Ireland, and connection with England, cannot exist together; they are incompatible. England would soon be driven to the deplorable necessity of maintaining her dominion by direct and continued war, or abandoning Ireland to the extravagance of popular ascendancy, and the designs of the common enemy. That an independent House of Commons would establish a republic in Ireland is as certain as any event can be which is future, and which the mind of man can foresee and anticipate, reasoning from what has happened, to what may happen, from the certainty of past experience to the probable dependency of like effects on like causes in the great series of human

man action, and feeling at the very moment of this deduction that it shares in that great progression which silently, though rapidly, is accelerating the consequences it predicted.

It is not in vain that the providence of God, in some instances, imparts to man a portion of his intellect, to penetrate into the future, and foresee the revolutions of time. Human nature is seldom visited by misfortune without deserving it, and knowing that it proceeds from its own omission or offence ; and never does God spread before his creatures the pit of delusion and fate, without giving them faculty to see and avoid it.

The moment has therefore come, in which the government of Great Britain is urged by its own interest, by its parental duty towards Ireland, by the irresistible claims of that great portion of the Irish people who issued from her loins, who share her religious faith, and whose property rests on English title ; and, above all, by the characteristics of the English nation, her order, humanity and religion, to save Ireland, without delay, from the evils which impend, and the destruction to which she is exposed. Whatever difficulties may impede an immediate incorporation, whatever inconvenience may attend the present agitation of this measure, they are as nothing to the embarrassment which will accrue, and the direful necessity in which she will be involved, if the present occasion be neglected, and the schemes of the disaffected prevail. Her magnanimity will encounter danger if it exist ; there will be none if she is firm ; she will regard as idle sound the clamour which is raised by the stupid politics of some, and the wickedness of others ; and true to the great character of her nation, she will conduct herself with wisdom, philanthropy, and justice.

THE END.