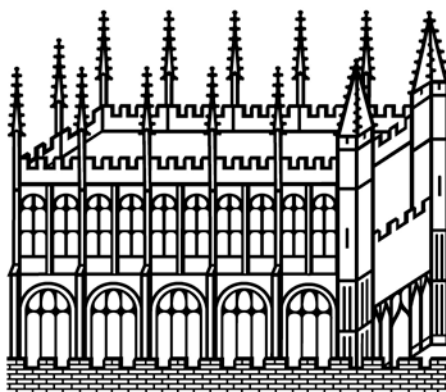




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DD.

*March 24. 1790.
From the Editor.*

THE
S P E E C H

OF THE

Right Hon. WILLIAM PITT,

ON

TUESDAY the Second of MARCH 1790,

RESPECTING THE

R E P E A L

OF THE

CORPORATION AND TEST ACTS.



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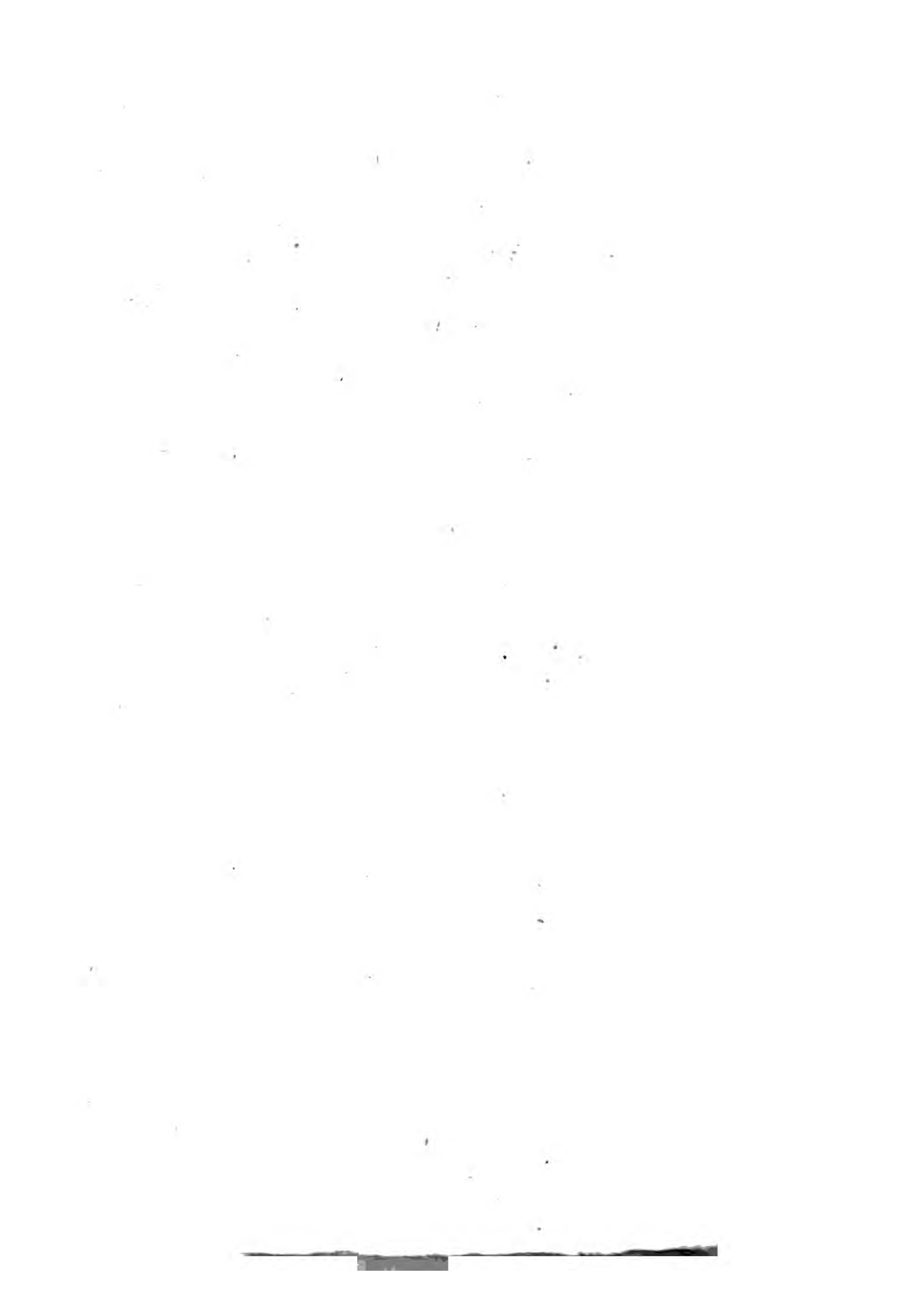
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S P E E C H, &c.

SOON after Mr. Fox had concluded the arguments with which he introduced his motion for a Committee of the whole House, to consider of so much of the Corporation and Test Acts, as requires persons before they are admitted to any office, civil or military, or any place of trust under the Crown, to receive the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England, Mr. PITT rose, and addressing himself to the Speaker, said :

S I R !

Anxious as I have felt myself to suffer as few moments as possible to elapse between the delivery of the opinions of the right honourable gentleman, and my endeavours

B

to

to meet them with an attempt at refutation, upon their *general* ground, I could not avoid soliciting the indulgence of the House, at an early period of the debate. When arguments come forward, supported and enriched by all the vigour of abilities, and all the brilliancy of eloquence, so conspicuous in the orations of the right honourable gentleman, it is necessary to contend against them, at the outset of their *first* impressions, and not suffer them to remain unanswered, until their fascinating plausibility has operated with the force of irresistible conviction. Judiciously, indeed, did the petitioners apply to *such* an advocate. He has developed every mysterious obscurity in the nature of their requisitions, and shewn, beyond a doubt, the vast extent to which they wished to have them, ultimately, carried. With that candour for which, certainly, the House have considered themselves, at other times, indebted to the right honourable gentleman, he has avowed the principles which had determined him to try the merits of the present question. Into whatsoever specious

specious or attractive points of view he may have thrown it, they have not yet so far diverted my attention, as to hinder me from perceiving that, steadfast in its progress, it moves regularly on to the important point, whether we shall, *now*, relinquish the fundamental and invaluable principles upon which the power and the happiness of the establishment of the Church and State, in a considerable degree, depend.

Not less explicitly and distinctly, than during two former investigations similar to the present, shall I ~~make~~ *enumerate* my objections to such a motion as that which is now submitted to the decision of the House.

To all his arguments, whilst militating against Persecution, and glowing in the support and praise of Toleration, they kept their *general* tendency, I listened with the highest pleasure. They were, perhaps, less novel in their nature, than strikingly conspicuous, on account of the affecting manner in which they stood enforced. But, the right honourable gentleman must permit me to observe, that, in his zeal to give the fullest

and most captivating prominence to his definition of Toleration, he has swelled it into a sense which varies from its nature, and placed upon it a construction, which it is not only incapable of receiving, but which no impartial and dispassionate commentator could have *seriously* thought of, since the first use of the expression.

Toleration does not imply *equality*: it, certainly, differs from *persecution*; and, it differs, also, from an *establishment*. Attending to the *premises* of the right honourable gentleman, I, at first, conceived that he only meant to argue for *toleration* in favour of the *Dissenters*; and, much was I astonished, at discovering from his *inferences*, that he was on the point of extirpating the very signification of the word; and appeared to have forgotten an indubitable truth: that whatsoever may be the predicament of those communities in the state, which seek for *toleration*, they must, of course, and even in consequence of their own acknowledgment, stand, in a particular degree, *below* the power which is desired to *tolerate*.

I trust

I trust that, on the present occasion, it is not necessary to assure the House, with what abhorrence I consider those systems of religious *persecution*, by which the annals of different empires have, at remoter periods, been so shockingly disgraced. All *reasonable* toleration, which far from impairing the security, and debilitating the vigour of government, would operate, in common, with other national advantages, for the preservation of its felicity and importance, I shall invariably endeavour to support. When it can be made apparent that *this* is wanting, and the solicitation for the grant of it comes forward, unaccompanied by the encroachments of indefensible demands, *my* feeble voice shall, certainly, be raised in favour of so just and natural a requisition. But, I will not suffer myself to be so much enticed away by metaphysical distinctions, however eloquently the right honourable gentleman may have advanced them, as, for a single moment, to lose sight of any of the uncorrupted and fundamental principles of *real* toleration. It would give me inexpressible

pressible concern to find, that either the religion or the property of individuals, *actually* wanting a more efficacious protection from the laws, than they have hitherto extended, could not be amply sheltered from the future possibilities of invasion : but, I am convinced, that the most substantial pledge for the inviolable maintenance of both, can arise only from the permanence of a specific *ecclesiastical* and *civil establishment*, within either of which, if *toleration* could secure an *equality*, it would not merely change its name and nature, but introduce alarming, and, perhaps, inextricable calamities.

The question which the right honourable gentleman has offered to the investigation of the House, pre-supposes the existence of a religious establishment ; and true policy requires that it should be guarded against every innovation which, drawing after it a multitude of others, might accomplish its subversion. Establishments, not to mention their consequence in a religious point of view, are essential to the interest and the happiness of a state : they are *essential*

tial to the *interest* of the public government; and I shall always think it my duty to break silence, at the *first* sound of an attack, and oppose whatever refutations my best abilities can supply, against arguments which, if admitted, might diminish its authority.

The extent of the principles maintained, upon the present occasion, by the right honourable gentleman, appears, unless I have exceedingly mistaken the drift of his remarks, to proceed even as far as the admittance of *every* class of Dissenters to a full and complete *equality*. I believe that I do not strain, by misconstruction, the tendency of his conclusions to an unwarrantable length, when I add, that they *seem* to throw open a door for the entrance of *some* individuals, who might consider it as a point of *conscience*, to shake our ecclesiastical establishment to its foundations. The principles upon which the right honourable gentleman was pleased to reason, went to the reception, not alone of Roman Catholics, but of *Papists* acknowledging the supremacy of a foreign, although a spiritual sovereign: of
Papists

Papists who, according to the extraordinary doctrine inculcated by the right honourable gentleman, ought, even in despite of those abominable and dangerous opinions which are peculiar to their church, to intermix with our fellow subjects, and to participate in the obtainment of public and important trusts, until they shall have been proved guilty of an overt act against the Constitution.

It is not requisite that I should remind the right honourable gentleman with how little difficulty he might advert, if such a reference were not likely to defeat his arguments, to the acknowledged fact that some of the Dissenters had avowed themselves repugnant to all religious establishments. Is it absurd, is it even uncharitable to suppose that men of *such* a description, at once excited by the impulse of self-interest, and allured by the imaginary dictates of an approving conscience, would neglect to avail themselves of any opportunity which might arise for exterminating all obstacles against the gratification of their ambition, and the accomplishment of the active predominance
of

of their doctrines? Have individuals who stand in this predicament *no* tenets which, like those of the Roman Catholics, are, in a political sense, hostile to the freedom of a state?

The right honourable gentleman has chosen to contend that it is inconsistent with the unsuspecting spirit of liberal toleration to demand from any person a test, so far as his mere opinions are the points in question; and that we ought, indulgently, to wait until the reproachable nature of his actions should have given us a sufficient ground to doubt the certitude of his integrity. To positions of which, in my humble opinion, the false policy is so obvious, let it suffice to answer, that we should perceive ourselves but ill supplied with irresistible preventions against impending evils, were we to remain absorbed in torpid carelessness, until the designs of disaffected persons became unequivocally demonstrated by the violence of their actions.

That it would prove a stretch of persecution, in the extreme, to inflict a punishment
C upon

upon *any* citizen of a free state, either for entertaining *speculative* opinions, or even for submitting them, in writing, to the perusal and the judgment of the world, taking care, however, that, in the detail, they did not pass beyond the proper bounds of decency and moderation, I readily admit: But, *this* is not the point immediately at issue. We are now contending, whether the public safety *does* or *does not* require, in particular cases, a security, from a *Test*, for the inviolable maintenance and welfare of our ecclesiastical and civil establishment.

The right honourable gentleman has allowed that, an oath of *allegiance* may be imposed upon the subject; and, surely, I am not proceeding to an unwarrantable licence, when I draw, from this natural and just acknowledgment, the conclusion that he admits, by *implication*, that, if the legislature knew that certain opinions were entertained by a *minority* of the nation, which, even upon the mere ground of *possibility*, might prove injurious to the *majority*, this majority ought, from every principle of
duty

duty to their sovereign, their fellow-citizens and themselves, to provide effectually for a full resistance against those consequences by such a *test* as they would conceive the most availing for the purpose. The question, therefore, is not whether a *test* shall be imposed; but, whether that of which the imposition continues still in force is, or is *not* the most eligible.

Howsoever adequate the reasoning of the right honourable gentleman may prove, on several occasions, to the unanswerable establishment of his conclusions, I cannot perceive its present power in such decisive points of view as would occasion me to entertain a fear of not supporting, almost without recourse to argument, a doctrine contrary to his own, under the circumstance of maintaining that it is more consistent with justice and practical wisdom, to place an insurmountable barrier against a known existing evil, than to take no measures for a defence which may have been pointed out by policy and expedience. Little more than a century has elapsed since this nation stood

nearly on the precipice of an ecclesiastical bondage to the Pope of Rome; but, the well directed understanding, the virtuous resolution and the successful activity of the illustrious patriots of that æra accomplished the extirpation of the influence of so disgraceful and dangerous an authority. When James the second abdicated the Throne, a security similar in its nature to that of the Test and Corporation Acts was recognized by the House of Commons; all the elected members of which, when they first enter upon the exercise of their parliamentary functions, take the oaths of allegiance and of abjuration, and declare against transubstantiation. It was in the defence of the *religious* and of the *civil* welfare of the state that such obligations were imposed. Wisely were they ordained for the sake of preserving the Constitution; and, it is probable that, had they never been in force, the *Stuart* family might have remained, even to the present hour, in the possession of the sceptre of these kingdoms; nor would the right honourable gentleman have acquired the opportunity of submitting

mitting to the determination of the House any of those extraordinary tenets which he had laboured to inculcate, whilst he harangued in favour of his motion.

Thus warned by the salutary precautions of parliament, a number of conscientious, yet not violent *Jacobites* have been deterred from the *active* prosecution of any of their pernicious principles; and, thus, the prudent foresight of the state has raised the most impregnable securities in opposition to those plots and machinations which, otherwise, might have aimed a desperate blow against the vigour and the durability of its existence. With this idea, I am not apprehensive that those individuals who wish so earnestly for the abolition of the restraining acts will regard me as their enemy. On the contrary, I flatter myself that it is needless to assure them that I should blush at resisting the claims of the *Protestant Dissenters*, if what they considered as *right* and *justice* were not at variance with the *public welfare*.

It is in the breast of the chief magistrate of the state that the discretionary power of appointing

appointing individuals to offices of trust resides, subject, notwithstanding, to some particular restrictions from the legislature; because, although to controul the choice of the Monarch could scarcely prove a justifiable presumption, *that* negligence must be greatly injudicious and reprehensible which makes no specific declaration, by law, how far, and upon what conditions, the choice shall remain exercised without the smallest interruption.

I will not trespass upon the attention of the house by a superfluous disquisition concerning the idea, which appears to have prevailed, in all governments, that *tests*, either of one kind or of another, were absolutely requisite. *They* know that under a monarchy, limited like that of England, the *executive power* should possess the liberty of exercising a right of discrimination respecting the fitness of persons intended to fill the public employments, for a neglect in the discharge of the duties of which, it is, as much as those who hold them unworthily, responsible. The necessity of *public offices*,
for

for the benefit of the *Public* at large, justifies a distinction of the distribution, upon this very principle: that the utmost regard is to be paid to the preservation and the advancement of the general welfare of the Community. The idea, therefore, of a *right* in any person to enjoy those offices is ridiculous; because the existence of it is impossible: and it would prove full as rational to contend, that employments were created to remain an exclusive advantage to those upon whom they were conferred, and should not be regarded in the light of a trust for the public, but, that the money which the placemen received ought rather to be raised by the way of Lottery than paid out of the public revenue. Politically speaking, no right should exist where there is public inconvenience; and where public inconvenience arises, there can be no justice.

It is my wish, to the gratification of which I confidently look forward, in the approaching fate of the motion now under the discussion of the House, that it may be considered,

considered, that these acts are proofs of sound and salutary principles; that they operate as checks upon the growth of the *Prerogative* of the *Crown*; and therefore, that, in a *free* state, they are not likely to prove *unpopular*; and that they even abridge this *Prerogative* when (as, certainly, is the case) they do *not* enable the Sovereign to employ in offices of trust, persons who cannot give to Government an indubitable security that they are well affected to the Constitution. For my own part, I shall not hesitate to declare, that the *executive* branch of the Legislature is that which should be regarded with the most distrust; and this idea accounts, in some degree, for the introduction of the Test and Corporation Acts. To all reasonable lengths, the laws are properly jealous; but, in the example before us, they appear to press at least as much upon the executive Government, as upon the Dissenters: and, surely, even the right honourable gentleman, whose arguments prove adverse to the principles which I espouse, will, in candour, not refuse

refuse to make me one solitary concession. He will allow that, if a certain description of persons, living within a small Republic, and adhering to such religious doctrines as were *fundamentally* hostile and dangerous to its Constitution, should become admitted to offices of trust, without the checks of *tests*, or any intervention of *restraining acts*, every considerate and virtuous citizen would feel that he had too much cause to tremble for the safety of his Country.

The *Test* is to be regarded as a kind of jealousy in the Monarch ; as that species of doubt which is at least *countenanced* by the spirit of our Constitution. It does not *stigmatize* the individual whom it *precludes* from a participation of employments ; neither has he, upon this ground, a juster motive for complaint, than those who, in consequence of their being, by Statute, disqualified from exercising the right of an Elector, can neither vote for Representatives in Parliament, nor take a Seat, as Members in the House of Commons. How frequent are the examples, in private life,

of

of that sound and necessary precaution which induces us to entertain a dislike against trusting any man with the concern of our affairs, unless we know that all his principles are such as render him intitled to our favourable opinions! And, shall this vigilant and judicious care, from which we are afraid of swerving, in the midst of our domestic and family arrangements, be deemed needless in the more important management of the public business of the Country? The question answers itself; evincing that the Government proceeds not to any usurpation whatsoever, if, disapproving of the political opinions of the Dissenters, it enacts that, without a *Test*, they shall *not* become intrusted with the execution of the duties of any of the offices amidst its several departments.

As yet, I have not heard one single reason in the support of a pretext, that the motives which induced our ancestors to institute these laws have, from a lapse of time, and change of circumstances, become so groundless, that even the Opposers of the
 Repeal

Repeal will not venture to rest a syllable upon them, in the shape of argument.

It has been argued, during the course of the debate, that the *Sacramental Test* is a law which leads to profanation. Yet, such effects have not arisen from it; and, like the sanction and the testimony of an oath, it amounts only to a religious obligation, necessarily connected with a civil compact.

To the opinion of the right honourable gentleman, that neither the merits nor the demerits of individuals can, with fairness and propriety, be thrust into the discussion of the present question, I cordially subscribe; yet, upon this occasion, he must permit me to regard the conduct of the Dissenters as too singular not to excite astonishment, although it should escape from reprobation. In the very midst of their animadversions against the *Test Act*, they had indicated, in a manner not altogether *private*, a design of forming associations, throughout the whole Country, for the purpose of putting the Members of *this* House to a *Test*, and of resolving, in consequence of their votes upon

the present motion of the right honourable gentleman, to judge how far they merited the seats which their Constituents had chosen that they should occupy. Thus has the word *Test* been laconically and significantly brought forward, either to ascertain the rectitude, or announce the defection, of the Representatives of the People. *Test* against *Test*! is the watch-cry! An imposition of *one* Test advances forth to make sure of the abolition of *another*. Yet, to obviate this apparent want of liberality, resolutions have been disseminated throughout the public newspapers, and in hand-bills, under the signature of the Chairman (Mr. Jeffries) of a Meeting of a Committee of the Dissenters, in which it is stated, that they do not mean (as it had been *industriously* asserted) to oppose *Test* to *Test*; but, only to mark, particularly, such members as are inclined to favour, and such as are determined to oppose their requisitions! Some honourable gentlemen, in my view, receive this observation with a smile: but, I can assure them that when I introduced it, I did
not

not entertain a thought of treating a point of such magnitude and importance with the smallest degree of *levity*: but, rather designed to prove, in *serious* language, that the Dissenters appeared determined not to consider any person who refused to vote for the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, as Friends to either religious or civil Freedom. Surely, therefore, they come with an ill grace to solicit for the abolition of *one* Test from the very House whom, in the case of delinquency and of disobedience to *their* will, they have presumed to menace with another!*

On

** To throw open for our readers a source exclusive of that which is presented to them in the remarks of MR. PITT, in order to enable them to draw the fairest and the truest inferences respecting the point immediately in question, we submit the following Extracts to their perusal.*

London, King's-Head Tavern, Jan. 13, 1790.

SIR!

WE notified to you some time ago, as well as to the Chairman of the other Dissenting Committees, the wish of this Committee that the application to Parliament for the Repeal of so much of the Sacramental Test-Laws as affect Protestant Dissenters might be renewed in the ensuing Session; and we are happy to have received from all
quarters

On the supposition that (as no uncommon powers of argument were necessary for the purpose)

quarters the most unequivocal and unreserved testimonies of approbation, and promises of support. That zeal in the cause of religious liberty, which has so eminently displayed itself in the different parts of the kingdom, must now be called into action; and we take the liberty of suggesting to your Committee the necessity of making application to every Member of Parliament, within your district, to give his attendance and support when the motion shall be made in the House of Commons. We presume not to dictate the mode in which those applications should be made; but we know, from our own experience, that they may be made with most effect by those, who are personally acquainted with the Members, or those to whom they are under obligations, without, at the same time, neglecting any intermediate channels of application which can be employed to advantage.—We beg leave, however, to suggest, that it may be very important to have a regular return, made to your Committee, of the applications made, and the answers given, by the Members applied to; and we think that it would tend much to the furtherance of the general object, to transmit such returns, from time to time, to this Committee. By these means, it will be seen when *every* Member has been regularly applied to, and we may be enabled to judge, with some degree of precision, of our prospects of success; and regulate our proceedings accordingly.

Should

purpose) I have refuted the idea of a claim
of

Should it be thought by your Committee an advisable measure to send Delegates from your District, to become a part of, and co-operate with, this Committee, we shall be happy to have their assistance and influence, particularly at the moment of our parliamentary application.

In recommending these measures, we wish not to spare ourselves, but, shall rejoice to be told in what manner we can give you any assistance, in your district, and are ready to make every exertion to promote a cause in which the best interests of mankind are so deeply concerned.

Permit us to observe, that it has been industriously asserted, that we seek to impose, at the ensuing general election, a Test in our own favour, upon the Candidates for a seat in the House of Commons, at the same moment that we desire a religious Test to be removed from ourselves. These cases are by no means parallel; and we conceive, that, in point of fact, the Dissenters have only resolved to pay a marked attention, at that period, to those Candidates, who shall already have voted in their favour, or who shall, at that time, profess their principles and intentions to be friendly to the great cause in question. Should the Dissenters, indeed, have proceeded farther in support of an unalienable right, such conduct would have been perfectly justifiable on the part of the Constituent towards his Representative. But, since the point at issue is still considered, by many well-meaning persons, as open to a discussion, which we ourselves wish to promote, for the sake of the general good, it may be advisable to express
ourselves :

of right in the Dissenters to the enjoyment of public

ourselves so clearly on this subject, as not to be misunderstood.

The zeal of many respectable Friends of the Church of England, and of other Persuasions, having, in various instances, only waited for an occasion to display itself in our favour, it may be worthy of consideration, whether it would not be wise to avail yourselves, where a proper opportunity offers, of their friendly advice and concurrence in your meetings, as well as of their assistance in other respects.

With heartfelt satisfaction, we contemplate the Union now, for the first time, effected of the Dissenters of all denominations through the Kingdom, and see them forming, notwithstanding their difference of opinion upon many points, one great and powerful Phalanx for rescuing the right of private judgment from violation. From this new circumstance, assisted as we are by the friends of religious liberty, in general, and by the increasing influence of liberal principles, we look forward to the event with pleasure. The Cause is glorious; the Crisis is important; and we have no doubt that the Spirit which now pervades the Kingdom must, if properly directed, have its full Energy, and ultimately be crowned with Success.

Signed, by Order of the Committee for conducting the Application to Parliament, for a Repeal of the sacramental Test-Laws.

EDWARD JEFFRIES, *Chairman.*

At

public offices, it, now, remains for me to examine the question, as to the point of Expediency and Policy. Policy should be first

At a Meeting of the Committee for conducting the Application to Parliament, for a Repeal of the Test-Laws, holden at the King's Head Tavern, Poultry, London, Jan. 13, 1790, EDWARD JEFFRIES, Esq. in the Chair:

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

I. THAT the opinions and principles of the Protestant Dissenters have been proved by experience, and are well known to be perfectly congenial to the Spirit of the Free Constitution secured to these Kingdoms by the glorious Revolution, and friendly to the just authority of the Monarchy, as established in the illustrious House of Brunswick, to which their loyalty and attachment have ever been conspicuously distinguished.

II. That every Test, calculated to exclude such men from civil and military offices, on account of religious scruples, is a violation of their rights as men and citizens of a free State, inconsistent with the principles of the Constitution of this Country, and repugnant to the genuine spirit of true Religion; subjecting a large number of deserving members of the state to a species of persecution not more injurious to them than dishonourable to the Government of which they are useful and loyal subjects.

III. That exclusion from the enjoyment of civil rights, and incapacitation from holding offices of profit or honour,

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being

first considered, in all political cases whatsoever: it must be disposed of before the question of justice can be argued; because
public

being a mode of punishment well known, in many instances, to our law, every such exclusion partakes of the nature of punishment, and consequently, of persecution, when applied to religious opinions.

IV. That the Sacramental Test of qualification to offices, which now stands established by law, is liable to this farther objection, which must greatly weigh in the minds of serious and religious men of all persuasions, that it is a profanation of a rite holden sacred in Christian Churches, by applying it to a purpose unconnected with religion, and repugnant to the pious object of its original institution.

V. That such a Test defeats the professed purposes of its own Establishment; as, from its nature, it can only operate to exclude from offices the most sincere and conscientious men, while it leaves the door open to the profane, and the hypocritical, of all denominations; thereby depriving the state of the services of many valuable members, but affording no security against any one unprincipled individual.

VI. That it is a duty incumbent not only on all Protestant Dissenters, but on those of the established church, and all others who concur in the principles we have stated, to exert their united efforts, by all lawful and *peaceful* means, to procure a repeal of those laws, which tend to
subject

public advantage is the effence of policy ;
and the rights of private individuals constitute, chiefly, that which is, in a general
point

subject numerous and deserving bodies of men to unmerited disadvantages ; to deprive the state of the services of many of its most faithful and conscientious subjects ; to pervert a sacred Christian rite from its proper objects ; to violate the principles of the best and freest Constitution in the world ; and—to dishonour one of the first Protestant Churches of Europe with an imputation of intolerance and persecution, peculiarly injurious to the interest and honour of the Protestant religion, at a moment when our Catholic Neighbours are holding out an example of the most free and liberal Toleration.

VII. That we have received, with heart-felt satisfaction, the testimonies of approbation with which our conduct, in the former applications to Parliament for the repeal of the Test Laws, has been honoured, and perceive, with the utmost pleasure, that Spirit of zeal and unanimity which pervades the whole body of Dissenters throughout the kingdom, which is still heightened by assurances of approbation and concurrence from many respectable members of the Established Church. Encouraged by such a prospect, we will adopt, and pursue to the utmost of our power, every constitutional means to give effect to that spirit, which, when firmly and unitedly exerted in the cause of truth, cannot fail of ultimate success in a Free and Protestant Country.

point of view, denominated justice ; and, here, as the most invaluable interests of the Nation are concerned, it is scarcely possible
for

VIII. That it appears expedient to renew our application to Parliament in the ensuing Session.

IX. That the thanks of this Committee be given to the Chairman, for the Ability, Zeal, and Assiduity, with which, for the space of three years, he has conducted its concerns.

X. That the above Resolutions be signed by the Chairman, and inserted in the Public Papers.

EDWARD JEFFRIES, *Chairman.*

The COMMITTEE then came to the farther following RESOLUTIONS, and ordered the same to be printed with the former, on a sheet of paper, for circulation.

XI. That the appointment of Delegates from the country-districts, to form a general meeting with the Committee in London, seems calculated to promote the Union, so necessary to the attainment of the important object of a Restoration of the Dissenters to all their rights as Citizens of a Free State.

XII. That this Committee will make application to the present Members in Parliament for the Counties of *Middlesex* and *Surry*, and the Cities of *London* and *Westminster*, and the Borough of *Southwark*, and request their attendance, when the motion for the Repeal of the Laws,
imposing

for any question to prove of greater import. Convinced am I that there is no occasion whatsoever to expatiate respecting the acknowledged fact, that, in *this* Government, as in all others, there ought to be an *Established Church*. Each side of the House assents to this idea; and, even the right honourable gentleman has declared, *nearly* in express terms, that, it was *necessary*; and, afterwards, recollecting himself, he not only admitted that a *Church Establishment* was advantageous to the Constitution in a high degree; but, becoming the Panegyrist of the *Established Church of England*, he descri-

imposing the Sacramental Test, shall be brought on in the ensuing Session of Parliament.

XIII. That it be recommended to the Protestant Dissenters in *Great Britain*, to make similar applications, in such manner as they shall see fit, to the present Members for the Counties, Cities, Boroughs, or Cinque Ports, in which they reside.

XIV. *That it be recommended to the Protestant Dissenters to shew a particular and marked attention, at the ensuing General Election, to the interest of such Candidates as they believe to be well-affected to civil and religious liberty, but especially to such as, being now in Parliament, have proved themselves Friends to the Rights of Protestant Dissenters.*

bed

bed her in the most amiable and truest colours ; as equally devoid of all needless *exterior* ceremonies, and of every superfluous enthusiasm or superstition in her *interior* rites. *My encomiums*, cordially as I should bestow them, could only serve as foils to heighten and set off the brilliancy of *those* which have been justly lavished, by the right honourable gentleman, upon our *Ecclesiastical Establishment* ; and, therefore, I shall dismiss this particular part of the subject, by observing that the grand outline of our National Faith is drawn with the most unexceptionable propriety, and with the strictest consonancy to morality, and the unsullied spirit of the Christian precepts.

That the Dissenters are likely to exercise *power*, if it should ever fall into their possession, is evident from the propensities of human nature. Who is conscious of being endued with *power*, and yet feels a disinclination to circulate its activity for his own advantage ? Upon this acknowledged principle, I am convinced, that even the Dissenters will not do me the injustice to imagine,
that

that I, illiberally, mean to cast an *odium* upon *their* persuasion, when I infer that, having acquired *power*, they would use it; and that, *probably*, they might indulge a wish to avail themselves of it for the *subversion* of the Established Church: nor do I contend that they would *deserve* the violence of reprehension, if, still adhering to the *principles* which they now profess, and acting *conscientiously*, in obedience to *their* dictates, they made it a point of duty, in the character of *honest* men, to aim at *this* subversion; for, persons who regard the *Establishment* “as
“sinful, and bordering upon *idolatry*,” would not act with a consistent rectitude of heart and mind, unless they resorted to all the legal means which might present themselves for the extirpation of an *idolatry* thus odious to their ideas, and thus insufferably repugnant to their doctrines.

The House will, I flatter myself, do me the honour of coinciding with my opinion that it would ill become *me* to enter into a discussion of the propriety, and the merits of letters said to have been written by a Pre-
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late of distinguished eminence, and by a reverend Gentleman of a different Persuasion*. Were I to enlarge upon this point, it would, doubtless, lead me to the acknowledgment that both were blameable, and went beyond their province. As to the rest, I heartily embrace the doctrine which has been maintained, at the opening of the debate, with such decisive powers of argument; and I agree that ecclesiastical employments were instituted for other purposes than those in question; that it is the duty of Churchmen not to blend the affairs of State with matters of a sacred nature; that from an union so dangerously heterogeneous only discord could arise; that it behoves the Clergy to confine themselves to good order, and to the inculcation of virtuous principles; and that no competitorship should intervene amongst them except a competitorship for the most exemplary rectitude of conduct, and for the strictest purity of precepts. The important and the sole struggles of their vocation

* The Bishop of Saint David's, and Doctor Priestley.

should

should be for the advancement of piety, morality and truth ; and for the acquisition of the most efficacious means of rendering a service to the Community, by meliorating the morals of the People. To these salutary and important ends, the *Church of England* is fully equal, because the form of its Constitution is most congenial with the Civil Constitution of the Country, and best suited to its mixed Monarchy, the balance of which would become deranged, were any of its parts either diminished, or encreased in power.

It is a principle of the wisest and most beneficial Policy for the State to extend the utmost plenitude of that Power which it can spare, and that aid which it can grant, without debilitating its own vigour, to the Church ; who, thus *constitutionally* supported, will continue perpetually enabled to return even the magnitude of the obligation, by the profusion of an interchange of benefits ; and by conferring, though with a difference in the mode, advantages not less essential than those which She receives. These

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principles have been demonstrated by facts, subsequently to the Revolution.

Whilst, in necessary justice to the Dissenters, I allow that multitudes of their Body have distinguished themselves, even amongst the most pious, moral and learned of their Fellow-citizens, still let me have permission to contend, that if their wishes for the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts were, now, fulfilled, they would not consider themselves as amply satisfied; but, think of coming forward, at some future period, with another requisition. Is it not evident that when several of this Persuasion *openly* declare their disaffection to the *Establishment of the Church of England*, they would proceed to greater lengths, whether in *solicitation* or in *opposition*, were they to obtain the favour for which they are, of all others amongst their Brethren, the most eager and unwearied in applying? *Their* opinions, which militate against the *Ecclesiastical Establishment*, should teach us *caution*, although they may not fill us with *alarms*. It is the duty of the House always to remain prepared for danger:

danger: not that when I take the liberty of pressing this point upon their serious attention, I feel myself at all inclined either to refuse the Dissenters the concession of any right which they can fairly claim, or to preclude them from the acquisition of any fresh immunities, which, being once conferred, would not draw after them a train of detrimental and inevitable consequences.

It is essential to the security and happiness of the Religious Establishment of a State, that a competent provision for its Clergy should be collected from amongst the People: but, probably, the Dissenters, were they admitted to a share in the offices of trust, under the Government, would murmur at the obligation to pay *Church-dues* to Ministers with whom their doctrines are at variance, and consider it as unjustifiably severe. Perhaps, they might do more than murmur: perhaps, their next and *early* prayer might be for an exclusion from the payment of *Church Dues*. Should this, hereafter, prove the case, their right honourable Advocate would not find himself

under the necessity of making an additional preparation for their defence; because the arguments with which he introduced his present motion are of so pliable a texture, that they will bend with ease to fit another.

Some years have elapsed since the repeal of an act against the exercise of the authority of which the Dissenters complained and petitioned. A reverend Gentleman (Doctor Kippis) whose talents and integrity effected what they might have accomplished for him in any other Community, and secured to him a pre-eminence amongst numbers of his own religious Persuasion, published a Pamphlet, in which it was asserted, that the Dissenters were moderate in their wishes; and that, if they obtained the Toleration which they solicited, they would not ask for more; but, retire, in quiet silence, to their closets and to their studies. This *complete* Toleration they have received; and, yet, they *require* now ~~now~~ a Toleration *more complete*. Where will the limits of their demands terminate? If the Dissenters are received into an *Equality* with the Establishment, they will,

will, perhaps, *then*, endeavour to secure to themselves an exemption from contributing to its support. I am vain enough to imagine that the House will not regard this as inconclusive reasoning in proof of the position that, from the *professions* of the Dissenters, it is extremely difficult to ascertain what grants *will* satisfy their desires; or where they *actually* intend to fix a boundary to the progress of their requisitions.

The right honourable Gentleman adverted to the Repeal of the Test Act, in Ireland, and appeared to urge it as a case exceedingly in point with the supposed merits of the present question: but, he must allow me to contend, that, as only five years have passed away since the period of this Repeal, sufficient time has not been given us to judge, decisively and experimentally, of its effects. The comparison between the *Church of England* and the *Church of Ireland*, as to their respective situations, will not impart so unanswerable a validity to the argument of the right honourable Gentleman as he, probably, imagines; for, although the number
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of the followers of the *Church of Ireland* is considerably smaller than the number of the People of the Country, it has a security in the multitude of Roman Catholics being as six to one over the Dissenters.

Not less open to refutation are the remarks of the right honourable Gentleman concerning the Kirk of Scotland, where a Test Act must prove, indeed, a feeble barrier; because the majority of the Dissenters from the Kirk conform to *their* mode of receiving the Sacrament. Besides, the Kirk of Scotland is secured, by a sacred Pledge in the act of Union, to maintain the Presbytery.

Examples drawn from the state of France, at one particular æra, will not effectually assist the right honourable Gentleman in the endeavour to establish a part of his conclusions. During the two or three reigns previous to the revocation of the Edict of Nantz, the fullest system of Despotism prevailed in that oppressed and wretched Country. The Corporation Act could not, *then*, have applied to Corporations in France, where

where the People enjoyed no share whatever in the Government. In England, the great object of the Government is the People; and its important aim is to prevent one description of them from acquiring a superiority over the other. In France, at the period alluded to, so interwoven were Church and State, within the System of Despotism, that the People saw no prospect of emancipating themselves from the violence of its dominion, except by an attack against the *Established Religion*, for the purpose of accomplishing its subversion. In France, no Test was, *then*, necessary; for, had the times proved less bigotted than they actually were, the *Church must* have remained safe, because the arbitrary will of the Sovereign was the *Law*.

The inferences which the right honourable Gentleman has drawn, for the support of his reasoning, from the particular predicament of America, are so contestable, that very few remarks will answer all the purposes of refutation. Even at the present day, her form of Government is not, actually

tually and ultimately determined. Neither the ecclesiastical nor the civil branches of it resemble ours ; and the true cause of her continuing without a *Test* is, that She has not a *Church Establishment*. Should it, hereafter, come into existence, she, doubtless, will not fail to imitate the wise Policy of other Nations, and introduce a *Test* for its Protection. So much do I declare myself a well-wisher to America, that I confess I should rejoice to see her Constitution at least in such a degree of similitude to our own as to enable her to extend to all her citizens an equal share of happiness and freedom.

During the prosecution of the war against the Colonies, the opinions of the inhabitants of this Country were at variance with each other. Numbers contended for the necessity of not sheathing the sword, which had been drawn against the revolting Provinces, until the reduction of the whole to unconditional submission : And multitudes declared, that the least expensive, the safest and the *surest* way finally to conquer, was to recall our Fleets and Armies, and leave an
obstinately

obstinately resisting portion of the Empire to itself.

The general, I had almost said the universal opinion was, that, *probably*, England could not *exist*; and *certainly*, She could not *flourish* without her Colonies. Time and a variety of occurrences have exploded this idea. America is separated from Great Britain; and, yet, the *latter* may triumph in the circumstance of having *lost* but little of her commerce; and rejoice at being relieved from the obligation of sacrificing no inconsiderable part of the public treasure to the maintenance and the prosperity of the *former*. We appear, therefore (if I may be allowed the expression) to have *lost* only the immense sums of money and the too abundantly streaming blood of our fellow-subjects which we have squandered away, and spilt, —to *lose* the Colonies!

The right honourable gentleman considers the *Indemnity Bill*, which is passed, or, rather, renewed by the Legislature, in the course of every Session, as a decisive proof that the *Test* and *Corporation Acts*

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are deemed inefficacious. Granting the justice of these premises, the inevitable inference, hostile to the conclusions of the right honourable gentleman, is, that the ground of every complaint of oppression becomes intirely removed; because the law, even according to *his* demonstration, is *not* in force; but supposing (as it proves to be the case) that this law were not perpetually carried into the strictest execution, who could, liberally, take an advantage of the mild and lenient forbearance of the Government? Who, without betraying wishes, at once immoderate and indefensible, could call aloud for the Repeal of Statutes, which continue dormant until the sound of an approaching peril awakens them to action: Statutes of which the general object is the Preservation of the *Church Establishment*? Whilst I admit that it must be cruel, during a state of perfect public tranquility, to injure any particular Body of individuals, by putting laws into unnecessary force, I think it my duty to contend against the glaring impolicy of suffering the remedies for evils which

which *might* arise, to drop out of the hands of Parliament ; whose important Province it is, amidst a general attention to the welfare of the Community, not to submit, upon any consideration whatsoever, to the Repeal of *salutary* laws, lest, at the unexpected and alarming moment of impending dangers, it might prove difficult, if not impossible, to have them re-enacted. Yet, after all, it does not appear to *me* that the *Test* and *Corporation Acts* either deprive or exclude the Nonconformists from any essential benefits.

But, the right honourable gentleman maintains, that *no* dangers are to be apprehended from a *Repeal* of the *Test* and *Corporation Acts* ; whilst, on the contrary, I can easily imagine that, were these Acts to cease continuing in force, some restless Individual, endued with all the powerful abilities of the right honourable gentleman, but, destitute of his inflexible integrity, and stimulated by unprincipled ambition, might avail himself of his irresistible arts of persuasion and of his fascinating influence, to raise the spirit of the disaffected, and excite them to

attacks against our *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical Establishments*. Far am I from bowing, with a blind submission, to the authority of those who, wedded to the common-place phrase, perpetually dwell upon “*the inseparable Union of the Church and State* ;” but, though disdaining to be seduced away by the expression, I never can forget that they are considerably connected.

If the right honourable gentleman and those by whom the motion is espoused, will please to pardon the presumption of the remark, I shall venture to declare that this attempt, for a Repeal of the Restraining Acts, intrudes itself rather with an ill grace, at a time so inconsiderably distant from the General Election. For my own part, I can affirm, that, howsoever others may be actuated by the expectation of an approaching return of support from so great and so distinguished a body as the Dissenters, I will not relinquish the ground of those opinions in the maintenance of which I verily believe that justice, policy and reason are united. Persuaded am I, that the abolition of the
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Sacramental Laws *must* render the *Eccefi-*
astical Establishment completely insignificant
 and defenceless. 

In consequence of some remarks which
 fell at the opening of the debate, from an
 honourable Baronet (Sir Henry Hoghton)
 and which were peculiarly distinguished by
 their guarded moderation, I am led to con-
 clude that several of the Dissenters, far from
 considering the acts in question as evils
 operating to *their* detriment, do *not* deny
 that they are public benefits. This is, in-
 deed, the *fairest* example which can be
 afforded that the *whole* body are not guided
 by *Unanimity* of sentiment; and, another
 proof, at least as striking, though, certainly
 more unpleasing, is, that amongst a number
 of those who are so violently urgent for the
 Repeal, some claim it as a *right*; others de-
 mand it as an *act of justice from the Nation*;
 whilst a third and less unreasonable Party
 intreat for it as a *favour*.

The honourable Baronet, in language lau-
 dably expressive of the candor, the impartia-
 lity and the benevolence of his mind, has la-
 mented

mented over the animosity and rancour which have appeared, in many places, during the discussion, of either the *supposed* advantages, or the *imaginary* evils, of the Acts in question.

He has declared himself concerned that any unbecoming expressions should have been used against the *Established Church*, which, in *his* liberal opinion, is intitled to the respect of *all* Persuasions. After such ingenuous remarks, it was natural to expect another; and, therefore, I was more pleased than astonished to hear the honourable Baronet observe, not alone in his character of a Member of the Legislature, but as a *Protestant Dissenter*, that he wished well to the *Ecclesiastical Establishment*; and that he would always, strenuously oppose every attempt to strike at its existence; convinced that wise and honest Men would rather patiently submit to grievances than run the hazard of introducing the most calamitous confusions, by endeavouring to effectuate its subversion.

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All of the Dissenters who solicit a Repeal, upon the ground of either *favour, right, or justice*, resolve (if I am well informed) to persevere in the repetition of their applications, should the present motion of the right honourable gentleman prove unsuccessful. Again, perhaps, their enterprising Champion may bring forward the strong powers of his understanding and the rich splendour of his eloquence to their support.

The pomp of talents and of oratory, when it proceeds from *Him*, is sure to captivate; but, it may *dazzle*, yet not *convince*: Upon the present occasion (however it may influence my opinion, during the discussion of *other* questions) it shall not allure me beyond the unavoidable admiration of such a dexterous use of arguments as cannot fail to *charm*, where it is impossible to *convert*!

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Having troubled the House with these remarks, it is superfluous to add, that I shall vote against the MOTION.

1. The first part of the paper
describes the general situation
of the country and the
state of the population.
It is a very interesting
study of the country and
the people. The author
has done a very good
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