

The Sixth Edition.

R E A S O N S

FOR ADOPTING AN

U N I O N,

BETWEEN

I R E L A N D

AND

G R E A T B R I T A I N.

WITH A PREFACE NOW FIRST PUBLISHED.

If this infatuated country gives up the present offer, she may look for it again in vain—*things cannot remain as they are*—Commercial jealousy is roused—it will increase *with two independent legislatures*—and without an united interest in Commerce, in a Commercial Empire, political Union will receive many shocks, and *separation of interest* must threaten *separation of connexion*, which every *bonest Irishman* must shudder to look at, as a possible event.

Speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, (now Mr. Speaker,) in the Debate on the Commercial Propositions.

See Debate on the Commercial Propositions by WOODFALL.

BY WILLIAM JOHNSON, ESQ. M. P.
AUTHOR OF THE LETTER TO JOS. SPENCER, ESQ

D U B L I N:

PRINTED FOR J. MILLIKEN, 32, GRAFTON-STREET.

1800.

THE KING OF GREAT BRITAIN

IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

DO PASSETH

AN ACT

TO AMEND THE LAW

IN SUCH PARTS AS ARE HEREIN CONTAINED

IN THE FIRST PART OF THIS ACT

THE SEVERAL CLAUSES

ENACTED

BY THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT

1801

Houses of the Oireachtas

P R E F A C E

TO THE

SIXTH EDITION.

THERE is a tide in the affairs of nations as of men, which taken at the flood leads on to fortune. I consider the present moment to be that peculiar crisis in the political condition of Ireland, that, on the use which may be made of it, the colour of her future fate will altogether depend. Whether she continues fixed in a state the pity of her friends and the scorn of her enemies, boasting of independence yet really subjected,

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talking of prosperity yet bleeding at every pore, property and life no longer under the safeguard of the law, but held at the will of the robber or the assassin; whether, I say, she will continue fixed in such a state, or take the chance of putting an end to those things by assimilating her condition and indentifying her people with a country where morals, law and religion, yet reign; this is the alternative now proposed to her and on which she is called upon to determine. Ample opportunity has been given for investigation; truth and falsehood have been put to the test of time and disquisition, and, if we are a thinking and a reasonable people, we cannot fail to have formed a right judgment upon it.

Convinced as I have long been, I do not say merely of the utility but of the urgent and pressing necessity of such a measure; I have observed the progress of this discussion with no less pride than pleasure—my own opinion was early formed in the quiet of private reflection and retired enquiry—it grew out of the contemplation of public distress, and was meant to meet the peculiar evils out of which that distress had originated. It is some years since when clouds and darkness were gather-

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ing in our political horizon, I have enlightened the gloom by which we were surrounded with the bright vision of an Incorporate Union. The subject was then merely speculative. Since that time the wisdom and firmness of government have proposed it as a measure of national adoption. When the rumour was first spread that such were the intentions of government, the bare mention of it seemed by many to be considered as insulting and degrading, and men whose tempers and understanding had been the theme of public applause (*tantæ ne animis celestibus iræ*) refused in indignant scorn to discuss or examine it.—Under these circumstances I presumed upon the fruits of long meditation, to resist the general clamour. I wrote my letter to Mr. Spencer—the deserved weight of that gentleman's name, the conviction, of which not an enemy, if he had one, could divest himself, of his perfect integrity, made me think it right to oppose a barrier, if any efforts of mine could do it, to the probable influence of his opinions. A bar meeting was then held upon the subject, the result is well known. Wide as the field of discussion was which the question presented to an enquiring

enquiring mind ; various as were the topics which it fruitfully afforded, the delay of a *little* month, was refused by a class of thinking men for deliberation or reflection. With such an example it can excite little wonder, that other classes shewed equal precipitation. Indeed, to the intemperate resolutions of the bar, I attribute almost entirely the early opposition which this measure met with. Men whose only motives were personal ambition and self-interest, and men who were actuated by the most deadly hostility to the welfare of both countries, I mean the conspirators for separation, flocked in crowds to the standard which had been erected by the bar, under which they plainly saw they could forward their views, and might save their reputation.

Having publicly dissented from the published opinion of my brethren, I thought I owed it to myself and to them to enter into a minute detail of the grounds upon which I had formed that opinion, and to give it to the public. I did so in the following pamphlet. The importance of the question have given it a degree of circulation which I could not otherwise have hoped for, from any publication of mine. It was originally published just previous to
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the last session of parliament; popular delusion was then at the highest. Neither that delusion, nor the coldness of affected friends for the presumption of differing in opinion from them, nor professional combination which sensibly estimated the talents of the advocate by the state of his political opinions, have stood between me and the *considered* purpose of my mind. I could not discern any argument in clamour, or any truth or justice in an unmanly conspiracy; I clung to the hope, I trust now realized, that we were not altogether *without* the scheme of God's mercy to nations, and that, once the great outward impediment to our prosperity had been removed by the destruction of the mistaken policy of Great Britain, he would not suffer his beneficence, so visible in the natural advantages of this country, to be marred by the perpetuated folly of its inhabitants. I relied much also upon what I know to be the character of my countrymen: I knew, that, though we were a proud and irritable nation, we were also an acute and discerning one. In the two first of these qualities, I could readily trace the source of that early resistance which the mere proposition of an Union met with here; and I
confidently

confidently relied upon the last as certainly, however slowly, remedying the evils which flowed from the former.

Unfortunately Parliament met at the moment, when the public irritation was at its highest. Nothing was left undone by the intended opposers of the measure, to excite and support that irritation; every topic by which national pride could be inflamed, or national antipathy excited, was unhappily brought forth and successfully applied to. To convince the understanding if such a thing had been possible, was too slow a process for the object they had in view. The passions were to them much more legitimate auxiliaries,—the issue corresponded with their exertions, and the parliamentary discussion was postponed for a season.

So far as the lot of an individual is affected by that of his country, I feel grateful to Providence that this postponement has been but temporary. In the interval the question has been examined in every possible shape in which it can present itself to the human mind. Notwithstanding the ridiculous, and contemptible, if it were not wicked, affectation of coercion and restraint; of a subdued press and
military

military despotism, I believe, at no time, nor in any country, has individual opinion more boldly stalked abroad. Every degree of understanding, every modification of principle has had its share in this literary warfare. Phrenzy and folly, wit and argument, sedition and patriotism have each in their turn taken the field, and each has employed those weapons best fitted to the nature of the combatant.

That there is a difference of opinion even among the honest and wise, amounts to nothing more than that politics are not a demonstrative science. Many other circumstances, however, contribute to a division of sentiment on this peculiar subject. Every man, of whom there are many, who is fearful of any change whatever, every man who has a present and personal interest in existing abuses, and prefers that to a remote and general advantage, and every man whom the men of talents, to be found in these two classes, can influence and govern, will be against the measure. We may judge how numerous this last class is from the number of individuals, now indeed daily diminishing, whom our intercourse with society every where shews

shews us giving up their political judgment to the opinion of one great leading character, and implicitly governing their faith by the creed he has thought proper to publish. The mischief arising from this might be permanent, if the eminent person to whom I allude had on all occasions professed the same opinions. Fortunately, however, we have the same advantage over him, which the old woman claimed over Philip of Macedon, when he rejected her petition; we can appeal from him at one season, to himself at another. Were there no other instance, than the motto I have chosen for this pamphlet, which I selected as the highest authority I could resort to in corroboration of my own opinions, it would sufficiently shew the radical change his mind has undergone upon those principles, by a reference to which alone the question of an Incorporate Union can be determined. I do not mean in this place to make any observations on the speech which he thought fit to pronounce in parliament on this subject during the last session. He has already had much more able commentators than I can pretend to be; it would now be useless for me to follow the answers which
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that speech has given rise to, as a friend to the Union, I cannot regret that it was made. If it had not been spoken we should have been without Mr. Smith's Reply or the observations on those parts of it which relate to trade.

Since I first addressed the public on this question, the subject has been amply discussed in both houses of the British Parliament. My Lords Auckland, Sheffield and Minto in the House of Peers; Mr. Pitt, Mr. Addington and Mr. Douglas in the House of Commons, have each in their turn examined the subject. So much genius and talents have seldom united in the discussion of any single question. The most comprehensive, and, I may add, philosophic view of it has been taken by my Lord Minto. His theories are the distinct images of history and practice: in them all you discern the natural qualities of man putting into action the artificial combinations of society; the reader as he turns over his pages, feels in his own experience unquestioned evidence of the justice of the Speaker's reasoning; there is scarcely a topick which the subject admits of that he has not touched,—*Nullum fere quod non tetigit, nullum tetigit quod non ornavit.*

The early opposition which this measure met with here, is in itself a proof, if any further were wanting, of the absolute necessity there is of carrying it into effect; it proved the extent of those ideas of hostility and distinctness that are the natural growth of that species of connexion which at present hold us together,—*the inherent vice of that connexion is that it supposes or creates a distinct interest between the two countries. The essential virtue of an Union is that it is calculated gradually to remove and finally to annihilate that hostile sentiment.* While we remain as we are, fear, distrust, and smothered hatred will always exist in one degree or other. Circumstances may arise, under which this hatred may become avowed, this fear and distrust ripen into indignation and resistance, and the whole conclude by a separation equally ruinous to the true interests of both countries. Even if sentiments so hostile to mutual prosperity should not exist, still under our present mode of connexion, England must be considered as *another* country. Without recurring to what took place in Roman language, (which in this respect followed the natural sentiments of mankind,) that foreigner and enemy

enemy were designated by the same term in speech, yet so long as there is such a motive to human action as patriotism, the idea of ANOTHER country is necessarily associated with the idea of distinctness, excites at best but diminished regard and more generally indifference and alienation. How the energies of a state can be at their highest, when it is divided into distinct governments, and its inhabitants meted out into isolated classes, is for those to prove, who seek the prosperity of these kingdoms, by perpetuating such relations.

It would be difficult to make a sensible Englishman perfectly understand the grounds, upon which the people of this country are solicited to reject a Union. He would require an address to his understanding, not an appeal to his passions. If you told him that our independence was to be sacrificed, he would require you to define the independence you enjoyed; he would require you to shew him that the independence of which you boasted, had, or in the present state of things could have, an actual and practical existence; he would not be duped by the founding of a name, but would draw his conclusions from facts, and from facts only. If you told him the Irish constitution would

would be destroyed, he would ask you, would you not acquire the British, and it would be difficult to persuade him that you would not benefit by the exchange. If you said your trade would be ruined, he would express his surprise how this effect could be produced by holding out a security for British capital to be employed in your trade and manufacture; if you expressed your distrust of the British minister, and declared that you could not believe that the good of this country was intended by him, and that you were satisfied his only object was revenue, he would ask you how there could be revenue without wealth, or wealth without trade, or either without industry and quiet. If the minister seeks that end through such means, what have you to do with his motives; if the minister cannot benefit himself with benefiting you, are you therefore to quarrel with your own good fortunes? if you said (which is the same objection in another form) that your taxes would be greater, he would beg to be informed how you proved that a nation was poor and distressed, because its taxes were great and unexampled; he would ask you, if the general state and condition of England was

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was better when its taxes amounted only to a million a year, or now when they amounted to thirty millions a year? If an avowed friend to separation should tell him that he objected to an Union, because, in his opinion, it would lead to separation, he would admire his national propensity to blunder, and, being uncertain whether he should set him down as a knave or a fool, he would probably in his plain understanding consider him as both.

It is frequently asked by those who oppose the measure of an Incorporated Union, is an independent Irish constitution incompatible with British connexion?—The question is intended to involve in it a dilemma from which it is supposed the advocates for an Union, will find it difficult to free themselves. It is very inaccurately put—the meaning of those however from whom it comes is sufficiently obvious. They intend to ask,—is the continuance of British connexion incompatible with the existence of a distinct and independent Irish legislature? In this way of putting the question, which is the only way in which it applies to the present argument, I answer without hesitation in the affirmative. I shall not here insist upon the circumstance, that

that our connexion with Great Britain is in truth on our part a *dependent* connexion—that the King of Great Britain is of right, and *as King of Great Britain*, King of Ireland,—that as to his political existence and the extent of his * inherent regal powers, he is, so long as our present constitution lasts, utterly beyond the control of the Irish parliament, though by the laws and constitution of Great Britain the executive authority of that country is subject, both as to the hands in which it shall be lodged, and as to the extent of its powers to the control of the British parliament, who may therefore in this way appoint or modify the executive authority of Ireland. I say, I shall not insist upon these matters, though as the executive authority constitutes the third estate of our legislature, it shews in the original form of our connexion, an indirect but necessary dependence upon the British parliament.

Upon the restoration of our independence, as it has been called, in 1782, this *dependent* annexation, as it is called by our statutes, of the crown of the Ireland upon that of England,

* In consequence of the constitutional principle here mentioned, the Irish parliament did not attempt to *confer* the crown of Ireland upon King William, they simply *recognized* his title, which took effect four years before that recognition.

land, was not thought sufficient to secure the connexion between the two countries. It was foreseen by our own legislature that further provisions were necessary to guard against the effects which might proceed from the existence of separate legislatures connected only by the tie of a common, though on one part *dependent* executive authority. They accordingly enacted that no bill should receive the royal assent here, unless certified into this country under the great seal of Great Britain—that is, that no law shall pass in this country without the assent of a member of the British cabinet, responsible to the British parliament and irresponsible to us for whatever he does as a member of that cabinet. That however is not all: not only we cannot pass a law in this country without such assent of such responsible officer, but we cannot hold any parliament at all without a licence under that same great seal of Great Britain*. So far then as the responsibility of a cabinet minister of Great Britain subjects him to the influence of a British parliament, so far does that influence interfere with the passing of any law whatever in this country, and even with the holding of a parliament here.

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* See Lord Yelverton's act *passim*.

By stating these provisions, I am far from objecting to them. I think they were wise and necessary in the extreme, and that without such inroads upon our independence it would have been impossible to maintain the connexion a single hour. But even these concessions to British control have not been found sufficient. The enjoyment of great part of our trade depends upon following implicitly, in many instances, the regulations made and *to be made* by Great Britain, with respect to her colonial trade. We have legislatively declared (and we have wisely so declared) that it is just and reasonable we should do so in certain respects pointed out in our statute book, and so far as that creates an obligation, we are under the necessity of complying.

With regard to the great imperial question, of peace and war in which the interests of the country must be always so materially involved, the nature of our connexion requires that we should absolutely give up all *practical* exercise of our theoretic right of control. In case the King of Great Britain declared war and was supported therein by the parliament of Great Britain, what choice would remain to the legislature of this country? The King in his declaration of war could not separate

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his capacity of King of Great Britain from his capacity of King of Ireland: we must therefore be necessarily parties in it, our trade exposed to danger and our country to invasion. Can we ever then make it a question, whether we will protect the one or guard the other? Must we not follow the example of Great Britain, and if we must, what becomes of our right to control? The right indeed remains to us, but it remains a right without power; in order to preserve the connexion, the exercise of it must be surrendered.

Thus we see that the parliament of Great Britain can make laws to bind the crown of Ireland, and regulate its descent; that we can make no law, nor even hold a parliament in this country, without the assent of a responsible cabinet minister of that country; that we enjoy great part of our trade on the terms of following implicitly the regulations of a foreign legislature, and that we have no practical control in the great questions of peace and war; and that all these deductions from strict legislative independence are considered as essentially necessary to the preservation of British connexion. If the present connexion continues, what further con-

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cessions may be required to render it permanent and secure, (if any such can do it) it is impossible to determine*; but this much is demonstratively certain, that its continuance is incompatible with a distinct and absolutely independent legislature in this country; therefore, those who oppose an Union, on the ground of maintaining the independence of Ireland, ought seriously consider the nature of the Irish constitution as it stands at present. In this part of the argument I set aside altogether any consideration of the necessary influence of the superior country in the councils of the inferior, and, with the exception of our power of control in question of peace or war, confine myself entirely to the *written* provisions whereby one country is subjected to the other.

It is a vulgar error that we enjoy the British constitution, or that we ever can enjoy it under any possible mode of connexion with that country, short of an Incorporate Union. In Great Britain the parliament of that kingdom by the express provisions of its constitution can appoint and regulate its executive authority. In this
country

* See the proposal stated in the following pamphlet of a strenuous opposer of an Union, to make still further inroads upon our independence, in order to preserve the present connexion.

country the parliament of Ireland are precluded by the express provisions of its own laws from all interference whatever on so essential a branch of the constitution. In Great Britain there is no third estate between the parliament and the king, whose previous assent is necessary to the passing of their laws. Whenever a bill passes the two houses of parliament in that kingdom, the opinion of the executive *must* be known by an express admission or rejection. No council or minister can stand between the parliament and the throne. By our constitution, however, there is an intermediate instrument, as to us independent and irresponsible, upon whose act, without any interference whatever of the royal prerogative, the fate of any bill, though passed by both houses of the Irish parliament, must in fact depend. By the British constitution, the king cannot discontinue the use of a parliament there for more than three years—here he is under no such restriction, and it cannot even be holden at all without a licence under the great seal of another kingdom *. Great Britain holds no part of her trade to the joint possessions of the empire upon

* The practice of granting the supplies for a year only, insures, in *ordinary times*, the annual meeting of parliament—this, however, does not arise from any constitutional provision on our part.

on the terms of adopting the commercial regulations of another country, and she practically enjoys both the right and the power of controlling the executive authority, in the great questions of peace and war.

Such are a few of the marked distinctions between the British and Irish constitutions—those differences, at least those of them which are of much importance, arise from and grow out of the nature of our present connexion—they are deemed necessary for its preservation, and it could easily be shewn that they are insufficient for that purpose; but who does not see in them a fruitful source of national discontent, disunion and rupture? What a theme do they furnish for the popular declaimer to rouse indignation and to call for redress—what imaginary wrongs might be deduced from this avowed inferiority of the Irish constitution—what a lever for an enthusiast or a knave to rouse a proud, high-spirited and powerful people! Who does not see how effectually the battles of separation might be thus fought under the banners of Independence! A strict independence is incompatible with the nature of our present connexion; but it may well be argued, that strict independence is the right of every free nation; and should the people
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be once induced to act under the influence of such an opinion, there is an end of the connexion, or it must be maintained by force. I consider an incorporate Union as the only effectual guard against one or other of these alternatives. I conceive it to be the only possible scheme of political regulation by which Ireland can at once obtain the British constitution in its form and essence, and by which British connexion can be rendered secure and permanent. With these hopes and these views, I feel that I act the part of an honest man in promoting its accomplishment to the utmost of my power.

If I could trace in the proposed Union any of the new-fangled schemes of modern philosophy, any new system grounded on the fantastical and lately-discovered rights of man, I should have been among the first to oppose and to reject it. I see however nothing in it, but the tried and known principles of the British constitution, adapted to a greater population and an enlarged extent of territory.—I see nothing more in it, than the further extension of that principle of union, by the adoption of which, from time to time, the British Empire has risen to its present unrivalled

unrivalled greatness. We have not merely precedent in many instances, but the success of it in all to govern and direct us. Is it then the experience of six centuries of misery and distress, that is to tie us down for ever to our present condition? Must time pass over this country alone without bringing along with it wisdom and reflection? I do not thus despair of it; no important change was ever yet affected in the great concerns of a nation which had any pretension to freedom without much opposition in its progress. It is well that it is so; that opposition seldom prevails in preventing the final success of a measure called for by true wisdom—faction may triumph for a time—delusion may have temporary sway—the people in the end however will see their true interests, and seeing, will pursue them.

The opposition which this measure met with in an early stage, on the ground of its being an innovation, was founded in a radical ignorance of the history of this country—neither the idea or practice of any union was any novelty here; it had, in some instances, as I have proved, existed in fact, and was at all times the cherished hope of the best
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and wisest among us—An extraordinary document to shew the prevalence of that desire at an early period of our history has lately fallen within my observation. It fully proves the anxious wish, which even the parliament of this country (that body of men, whose personal interest was most likely to be affected by an Union), deeply felt and solicitously expressed upon this subject. The year 1706 had been employed by the English ministers in affecting the Union between England and Scotland. Shortly after it was completed, a session of the parliament of this kingdom was held, which begun on the 1st of July, 1707*. Lord Pembroke, who was then Lord Lieutenant, made, as usual, a speech to both houses of parliament: the minds of the English people being then averse to any Union with this country, from that spirit of commercial jealousy, which it is the glory of the present times to have scouted and abandoned, no notice whatever was taken of the Scottish Union in the speech from the Throne. This can only be accounted for from the desire on the part of the English administration, that no similar measure should become the subject of parliamentary

* See the Commons Journals for that session.

parliamentary discussion here; otherwise it cannot be supposed, that an event so momentous to the empire at large, should have been passed over in utter silence upon the very next occasion of assembling the parliament of this kingdom. This intention, however, of the framers of that speech, did not succeed to the extent which was wished. So anxious was the Irish parliament of expressing its desires on the subject, that they violated the usual etiquette of parliamentary proceeding, and in their reply to the speech totally outstep the limits it had prescribed to them. They begin in their reply with their heartfelt congratulation upon the glory the Queen had acquired in accomplishing the Union of her Majesty's kingdoms, England and Scotland. They call it a great and glorious work, *above the wisdom of former times*. They state the *great* difficulties which impeded it, and do homage to the greatness of that genius by which they were surmounted. They address themselves to God, that he may be instrumental to their wishes, and they fervently beseech him, to put it into the royal heart of their queen, to add *greater strength and lustre to her crown*, by a yet *more comprehensive Union*. Such
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was the language and such were the sentiments of the parliament of that day! they were willing to sacrifice their personal ambition on the altar of public good—no effect, however, followed from this expression of their desires; the measure was above the wisdom of the times.

It remains for our day and for the present parliament to carry into effect the anxious wishes of their predecessors. It remains to be determined, whether we have been as retrograde in wisdom as the people of England have been progressive. Whether the narrow notions of an illiberal policy, from which they have unfettered their minds, have transferred themselves to ours, and are still to be one shape or other, the bane of Irish prosperity.

For myself, I confess, I have other hopes. I do not think that it will be left to posterity to say, that the measure was above the wisdom of our times. I feel happy that I shall be *one* instrumental in the accomplishment of this great work; and if I could hope for future fame, I would desire to be remembered in no other character, than as the zealous advocate for an incorporate Union.

For the noble Lord who, in the name of the Sovereign, presides over the councils of

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this kingdom, I would beseech him to go on—I would say to him almost in the words which Mr. Burke used on an occasion much less worthy the effusions of his divine eloquence: “You are doing a great good, such as rarely falls to the lot, and as rarely coincides with the desires of any man. Use your time—you are now on a great eminence—the eyes of mankind are turned on you—you have lived long—you have done much, but here is the summit; you have never exceeded, you will never exceed what you are now about to do. There is not a tongue which will not bless the presiding and manly beneficence of him who has proposed this great work to us. This tribute you deserve; and it will surely be paid, when all the jargon of party, influence, and patronage are swept into oblivion.”

WILLIAM JOHNSON.

*Harcourt-street,
Dublin.*

Jan. 13, 1800.

R E A S O N S,

&c. &c.

PERHAPS no people in the world require more time to form a just opinion upon a subject touching their own interest, than the people of this Country: they have all the ardour and inconsiderateness of youth, unsubdued by a long continuance of chastisement and affliction. This by no means proceeds from any radical deficiency of good sense, but from moral causes, which have absolutely prolonged our infancy as a nation. This peculiar character of my Countrymen was never more conspicuous, than from the manner in which the supposed intention of proposing an Union between this Country and Great Britain has been received here;—alarm, disdain, indignation, vengeance,

“ Each, for madness ruled the hour,

“ Would try his own extatic pow’r.”

* One author states it as his opinion, that the Country’s vengeance would be roused by the bare

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* Mr. Jebb.

mention of such a measure ; and, after describing, with all due horror, the miserable condition to which we have been reduced, asks, “ who, under such circumstances, will venture to express, in the honest terms of virtuous indignation, his opinion on the annihilation of our Parliament ? ” I should be glad to know from this writer, whether the terms, in which he has expressed himself, be honest, or the indignation he has shewn, be virtuous ? If they are, why have the “ Triangles and the Gallows,” whose effects he deplores in such truly melancholy strains, had no effect upon him ? The truth is, these angry patriots mean not half they say ; for, in a few pages after, the same author describes the PRESENT situation of this Country to be tranquillized and happy, and, through all that remains of his Pamphlet, seems never once to have dreamt of the Gallows or the Triangle.

The only thing consoling in this violent burst of alarm is, that it cannot be lasting. We shall look with a steadier eye than we have yet done, at the object which has excited it ; the delusion of our senses will wear away, and we shall smile in the hour of sober recollection, at the idle fears by which we have been made miserable.

To assist, as far as I can, in forwarding this desirable end, I am induced, once more, to intrude upon the public. That I have escaped the fear which has so generally affected others, I do not attribute to any superior sagacity of my own ; I owe it to the simple accident of having had my mind long since turned to the consideration

consideration of this question. Engaged, in no way whatever, in the divisions which have distracted this Country, save in a deep sense of that common misery they had brought upon us, in which, as an individual, I took my full share, I have for a considerable time turned my attention to a consideration of the causes of those peculiar evils under which this kingdom has so long laboured. Among them it was easy to trace, neither last nor least, the anomalous connexion which constitutionally binds Ireland to England. As a matter of deliberate regulation between two Countries, it is, I believe, unparalleled in the history of the World;—in its rise, progress and consummation. The only thing resembling it was the connexion between England and Scotland before the Union;—that, however, was matter of mere accident, owing to the right of the respective Monarchies vesting in the same person, and it was remedied as soon as the temper of the respective Countries would in any way warrant the change.—Here, however, if we suppose our statute-book to contain the deliberate will of the nation, we have solemnly attached the Monarchy of this Country to the person of the King of Great-Britain and his successors for ever, and we have, by the same statute-book, reserved to ourselves the absolute right of a Parliament of our own to form with the King of Great-Britain the exclusive Government of this Realm.

There are but four *possible* modes by which this Country can be connected with Great-Britain—she must

must either be altogether subject to its legislative and executive authority, without any Parliament of her own, and then she is a mere province or colony at the absolute discretion of the parent Country; or she may have the same executive and a separate legislature with a controlling and paramount power in the Parliament of the Sister Kingdom;—this was our condition previous to the year 1782; or she may have the same executive authority with a legislature *theoretically* independent, but *practically* dependent. Such has been the nature of our connexion since the repeal of the 6th of George the 1st: or, lastly, she may be united to Great Britain as one Country, subject to the same executive authority, duly represented in the Common Parliament of the empire, entitled to the same privileges, possessing the same rights, enjoying the same laws, and sharing in the same fortunes.*

I have set down these four modes of connexion in the order in which they strike my understanding to be severally worthy of adoption—on the two first it is unnecessary to say any thing—they are both degrading to the feeling, and destructive to the happiness, of a people wishing to be free—of the second, we had long and woeful experience—

* Among these I do not state a connexion by an Union of the executive authority with a separate legislature in this country, *practically*, as well as *theoretically*, independent; because I am stating *possible* modes of connexion, and that such a mode of connexion between countries circumstanced as Great Britain and Ireland are, could not last a moment—Where there is a relative inequality in power between countries *connected as these are*, there never can exist strict independence on the part of the inferior.

rience—it continued, if I may use the expression, the infancy of this Country to an unexampled period—we threw it off upon the first symptom of maturity—we put on the robe of manhood, and thought ourselves perfectly free—Have we been so? or so long as we are connected with Great Britain in the way we now are, can we be so?

This leads me to an examination which I think most material to the discussion of the present question, whether the connexion which now subsists between us and Great Britain be such, as in its nature, considering the state of the two countries, can give us the full enjoyment of those advantages which our population, our soil, and our geographic situation in the globe, in mute but persuasive eloquence, holds out to us.

By freedom, I do not mean merely freedom of person and security of property—I mean also that national freedom which sets afloat the dormant powers of the state, and gives life and vigour to the inertness of buried wealth, whether it lies hid in the restrained industry of its inhabitants, or uselessly reposes in the bowels of the earth—this I call freedom—and I again ask, whether we have enjoyed, or, under our present connexion, are ever likely to enjoy this freedom?

In whatever I shall say upon this subject, I ardently call upon the attention of those who are ready to say in their heart of that connexion, of whatever nature it may be, which will most conduce to the prosperity of the two Countries, *esto perpetua*.

The privilege of being bound by our own laws only has been obtained within the memory of

of us all, and though no doubt it considerably improved our condition, and yet more gratified our pride, it still left the Countries connected but in a single point, namely, the Union of the respective executive authority of each in the person of the same individual—had an Union of this kind (supposing such a thing for a moment to have been practicable) taken place between Countries of equal strength and weight, *though while it subsisted*, it would not give that efficacy to the combined power of both which it would have received from a more intimate Union, it would yet entail no particular grievance on either—though it would not increase, it would not, *while it lasted*, check the internal prosperity of either—but, in Countries, situated as these were, the disadvantage to the inferior was striking and obvious; it gave to *that a theoretical independence and an actual and necessary subjection*—by giving *that a theoretical independence*, it furnished a perpetual subject of contention between the two Countries, without the possibility of having it practically decided in favour of the inferior, and created, by this necessary subjection, discontent, and heart-burnings in the latter, which scarcely any prosperity could allay.

If any instances have occurred in which the independence of this country has been practically asserted, they will be found to have taken place at times, either * when England was weak and beset by an host of enemies, or when, † by the suspension of her executive authority, she was as a wreck upon the

* 1782.

† 1789.

the waters; such instances, when the cause of them is considered, are the most striking proofs I could produce of the truth of the position I have laid down. Indeed it required no proof. It is one of those self-evident propositions which we at once admit without recurring either to practice or experience; its truth rests upon the unchangeable relation of quantity, greater and less. This relation must ever continue the same, while our connexion remains such as it is. Were the internal circumstances of this Country other than they are, I think such a connexion would, so long as it lasted, be adequate to our rational happiness and prosperity as a nation; and I would not recur to an Union from any other motive than to give permanency and security to that happiness and prosperity;—to guard against the insolence of wealth and power, that might make us forget the assistance by which we had climbed to greatness, and, in the silly pride of standing alone in the world, endanger the safety of the British empire, and render us an easy prey to French ambition.

In any condition, then, that I can suppose this Country to be, whether harassed by divisions as it is, or in the full enjoyment of the fruits of industry and quiet, I would recommend an Union, as a scheme of the wisest policy she could pursue. In speaking this language, I address myself solely to those who wish the Countries to remain connected for ever; who desire to guard “against the folly of those who are honest, and the machinations of those who are not so;” who con-

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sider the joint and continued efforts of every part of the British empire as necessary, in the present condition of Europe, to the security of the whole,—who think, that at once to give the most efficient power to the State, and fully and perfectly to secure the Liberty and Property of the Subject, are the ultimate objects of the British Constitution; and who will not hesitate, if they can do it without a sacrifice of principle, to vary their means in order to attain their end.

We have hitherto endeavoured to secure the connexion, and promote the prosperity of the two countries by a simple Union of the executive authority of each with distinct and independent Legislatures. A connexion more slight could scarcely be imagined; we touch politically in a single point only—between countries of equal strength and power, such an Union would not have lasted a moment; and where it has taken place between a greater and inferior country, every step that diminishes the inequality between them, lessens the probability of its continuance. This consideration will, of necessity, determine the superior to preserve its relative condition inviolate. If the continuance of the connexion be an object with the superior Country, she will find the strength of it to depend upon maintaining her advantage.

In fact, such a connexion can hardly ever be supposed to take place between countries equal in strength and power; because, in the very terms of it, it admits an actual inferiority. But, if by any concession on the part of one of them such a connexion

connexion should take place, it must soon of necessity dissolve, if they preserve their respective equality of power. Where there exists no control open or disguised, by which the opinion of one of the connected countries can be moulded to the will of the other, they will necessarily differ upon questions, upon which not to agree will be to separate. It follows therefore, that if such a connexion has taken place between countries unequal in strength and power, it cannot subsist a moment when that inequality is removed. I do not mean that it would require a mathematical equality to destroy this kind of connexion, but such an approach to it, as that the difference would be easily made up by national pride and human arrogance.

I ask any man who knows the past history of these countries, or indeed has the slightest insight whatever into human nature, if this country had, at any time past, possessed an equal share in the fleets, armies and resources of the empire with Great Britain, and could have made her voice be heard, not only within the pale of that realm, but in Europe also, as loudly as that of her sister country, whether the connexion, *as it now subsists*, between these kingdoms, could have endured to this day?

If we will then have the connexion *in its present form*, we must be content with the *studied* preservation of that decided inferiority, by virtue of which alone it has continued, and by virtue

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of which alone it can be preserved; or, look forward, if that inferiority should be in any great degree removed, to final separation and mutual debasement.

It is the prospect of this latter alternative which has united all our internal enemies in one common effort against this measure—whether we remain in our present connexion, a discontented and divided people, or, by a fortunate termination of our present distractions, grow under it a powerful and wealthy nation; in either event, they consider the dissolution of our present connexion as morally certain. In the former state they will have a continuance of all the materials upon which they have hitherto worked with such industry and success; and in the latter, they know that in the course of events imperial questions must of necessity arise between the two countries, upon which they will unavoidably differ. The reasons which at present, on all such occasions, secure the acquiescence of Ireland, will then in a great degree have ceased; and they have little knowledge of the world, who do not see that the season of prosperity and power is not the moment when a nation will conciliate or concede. If the countries do not agree, and they cannot agree without submission on one part, the connexion, with very little assistance from treason and disaffection, is at an end for ever.

Indeed so obvious does this appear to the honest opposers of an Union, for I do not deny there are many such, that Mr. Jebb, whose candour, sincerity

cerity and good sense, those who differ most in opinion from him, are ready to allow, proposes certain regulations between the two countries, to guard against the effect of a difference of opinion upon such imperial questions as may arise between them—and how does he do this? why, by an absolute surrender to *the Parliament of England* of the Purse and the Sword of this nation.*

We all know that, however the theory of our Constitution may have invested the King with the power of declaring war, the practical exercise of this right is of necessity in Parliament. From the appropriation of the Supplies, which is now the law of the land, we know that the King could not support war a single day without the consent of Parliament.—Whenever therefore the King of England declares war, it is in effect the Parliament of England that have done so. What then does Mr. Jebb propose? Why, that in all such cases the Parliament of Ireland should *be bound* to follow—that is, to follow in the only way in which a Parliament can follow, by granting a proportionate supply. However, this country, though enjoying a separate and independent Parliament, may have hitherto deemed it *expedient* to follow the example of Great Britain in the wars, in which the latter has thought proper to engage, it would be hard that she should altogether renounce by compact the theoretical right of judging of this expediency. Yet the most sensible and judicious opposer of an Union considers such a renunciation as not altogether

* Mr. Jebb's Pamphlet, pages 24, 25.

gether unnecessary in giving security and permanency to the connexion which at present subsists between the kingdoms.

But to secure this connexion in its present state, Mr. Jebb not only gives up the Purse and the Sword, but is willing to stipulate that the King, Lords and Commons of independent Ireland should not do any thing which may *affect*, such are his words, the religion of the state, without the concurrence of the British Parliament. They must not provide for a single Dissenting Clergyman, or grant the smallest privilege to the Roman Catholic (for such acts, by construction, may be said to *affect* the religion of the state,) without the previous approbation of a foreign legislature. Even Mr. Jebb, the decided opposer of an Union, considers all these sacrifices as instrumental, if not necessary, in preserving the connexion between the countries as it now stands.

But even those concessions would not do—the seed of dissolution is incorporated in its frame; it is perishable as the breath of man, and precarious as human conduct.

If any accident were to happen, within the period of eighteen years, to our present Sovereign and his immediate successor, a question would arise between the two nations, which nothing but the providence of God, on a former occasion, prevented from dashing our fragile connexion to pieces—whether if such a question should again arise, he would so favour us a second time, is beyond the limit of human conjecture, but it is within
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the compass of human prudence to prevent its recurrence.

But this is not all, the permanency of this connexion depends upon the personal conduct of the Sovereign. I can easily suppose a case, remote indeed from our fears under the gracious reign of his present Majesty, which might render a revolution in this country, as to the person of the Sovereign, matter of melancholy and ever-to-be-deplored necessity in this kingdom, while the same measure would not be justified in England. The executive authority here is under no control from the English Parliament. Suppose King James the second had been more sagacious than he was, but equally intent on the introduction of popery, whenever circumstances would enable him to make the attempt with any probability of success; suppose from policy he had maintained the just rights and liberties of England, and in pursuance of his favourite scheme, confined his machinations in favour of popery to this kingdom. As the connexion stands at present between the countries, England could not interfere, so says the Minister of England, in the domestic concerns of imperial Ireland—The maintenance of our establishment must have been left to the honesty of our own Parliament, and the zeal of the Protestant inhabitants of the land. The mutual independence of each country under the form of distinct legislatures would prevent any conjunction of their authorities to resist the encroachment. Suppose the pertinacity of the King on the one hand, and the firmness of his Protestant subjects

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on the other, had carried matters to extremity, and that the latter had been successful in the struggle—the Executive authority of the country must have shifted hands, or we should have set up a new form of Government for ourselves; in either case the connexion between the kingdoms must have been at an end.

If the countries were connected by an incorporated Union, such a dissolution of their unity could not be effected. The acts of the common Sovereign would be subject to the inspection and control of the Imperial Parliament—he could not play one kingdom against the other—an undue or tyrannical exercise of the Prerogative, in any part of the Empire, would constitutionally excite the vigilance of the common legislature, and constitutionally demand its interposition. If the regal authority should be transferred from the person of the offending Monarch, the transfer would embrace the Executive power of both Islands, and though a shock might be given to the regal succession, the Union of the People would remain untouched.

It is melancholy to think on the extravagancies to which an heated imagination has led some men on this subject.* One author, a *known friend to British connexion*, says, “were an Union fraught with blessings, were it the elixir of life, you ought to reject it.” What must be the opinion of that man of our understandings, if he supposes we can be affected by idle rant of this kind? Is this the sobriety of discussion, which a question like the present demands?—

* An Address, &c. by a *Friend* to Ireland.

mands?—yet in this manner, it has been for the most part treated.—The changes are perpetually rung upon our independence. You are asked, with a gravity that would be contemptible, if it were not wicked; “will you annihilate independent Ireland?”—Let us examine this independence.

I approach the sentiments of the honest part of my countrymen on this subject with respect; they spring from a sacred principle, the love of our common country; but I wish them to consider calmly the true nature of this independence, and to caution them against sacrificing a better and more valuable interest, nay, the very basis upon which that independence rests, to false notions of dignity and pride.—This strong sense, and jealous feeling of Irish independence, sprung up with the recovery of our rights in 1782; but the true nature of it, has, in my mind, been generally misunderstood. National independence, in the strict sense of that word, is not applicable to the situation of this Kingdom. The Crown of Ireland is annexed to, and dependent upon the Crown of Great Britain.—In this sense Ireland is a dependent Kingdom;—as far as that Crown is influenced in the exercise of its prerogative within this Kingdom, by the sentiments of the people and parliament of England, so far is this Kingdom, in that respect, a dependent kingdom. But there is a circumstance peculiar to the internal condition of this Kingdom, which still more encreases its dependence;—the Religion of the minority of its inhabitants

bitants is the established Religion ; and the landed property and political power, are in the hands of that minority This is an unnatural state of things, were we to take this Country solely into our view, and could never subsist without external and foreign assistance. We derive this aid altogether from Great Britain ; and it is morally, I might say physically, impossible, that the present establishment in Church and State, could subsist one year without that support—in this sense again, we are a dependent Kingdom.

Whenever, therefore, the assertion of Irish independence may lead us to hazard British connexion, we ought to take special care that we proceed with temper and caution, that we are not misled by a name, and that in the theoretical assertion of the abstract right, we do not lose even that degree of it which we practically possess. The only consistent advocates for the strict independence of Ireland, are the friends of separation.

If it could be shewn, that this same notion of Independence has deluded the nation on former occasions, and induced them to cast away with disdain the most solid advantages, and endanger their best interests, nay their very existence as a nation ; that they were unconscious at the time of the deceitfulness of its operation, altho' now it be universally acknowledged ; should not the consideration of these facts induce us to pause for a moment, to look into our own minds, and to ask whether there be not some danger of our being
again

again deluded in the consideration of other momentous questions of imperial policy by a phantom.

Two striking instances of this kind have occurred in our history within a few years; the commercial propositions in the year 1785, and the regency in 1789. *It seems now to be generally acknowledged, that on both these occasions the true interests of the nation and the empire were sacrificed to the founding of a name. Yet let me ask any man who recollects those periods, and the temper and language that were held on those occasions, whether the cry of independence was not then as loud and overbearing, particularly on the former, as it is at present: on the latter, indeed, the public indignation was somewhat divided between those who denied the right of Ireland to elect a regent separately from Great Britain, and those who basely deserted the standard of their Royal Master in the hour of visitation and calamity: on both, however, the true interests of this Country were sacrificed, and the still small voice of reason and truth was drowned, as it may be now, in the popular cry of independent Ireland. It is the nature of good sense, to repose for a time, in silence, upon all great subjects of mental enquiry; the flippant declaimer, to whom meditation and reflection would be useless, is ready in a moment; and it often happens in the affairs of nations, that

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* See Note (a)

their greatest interests are irrevocably decided upon, while passion and prejudice have been the only advocates attended to.

It cannot be contested that, as has been already observed by a very sensible writer on this subject, “if the Parliament of Ireland should at any time exert its *inherent and acknowledged powers* on any great question of imperial policy contrary to the declared sense of the Parliament of England, the empire would be endangered or dissolved.” Now, in the struggles of British and Irish faction for power, and in the cabals of party working upon the spirit of independence, can any man take upon him to say, that the future exertions of these acknowledged powers, may not produce this effect? Our present Constitution of distinct national legislatures, as it gave birth to this spirit, so it will foster and support it. The sense of danger, and the feeling of calamity, that might possibly restrain the exercise of this power at present, will, every day, lose their influence. Hostile as this principle is to the permanency of our present connexion with Great Britain, it must grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength; a state of prosperity, must foment and cherish it.—To those who think as I do, that British connexion is the vital principle which supports us as a nation, it is obvious that, if that connexion remains upon the footing it now is, the hour of maturity will be the hour of our dissolution. The practical assertion of this strict
right

right of independence will be listened to in the moment when wealth and power shall have given birth to their natural progeny, pride and arrogance; we shall then eat of this forbidden fruit, and “in the day that we do so, we shall surely die.”

That such would be the effect of any great advances we might make as a nation, is as obvious to Great Britain as it can be to us; it cannot escape the sagacity of any rational enquirer; it is founded in the principles of human nature, called into action by the circumstances in which we are placed. Can it then be expected that she will be an indifferent spectator of that growing wealth, which must tear us from her for ever? Will not her jealousy watch over our progress, and say, “thus far you may go, and no further?” If the connexion be maintained under those circumstances, will it not perpetuate a spirit of national antipathy, which has been already so prejudicial to the interests of both?

It is curious to observe the strange topics of argument which have been used by the opposers of an Union.—Heaven and Earth are ransacked in search of objections. One of the gentlemen who have written upon this subject, says, “the Almighty has thrown the channel as a perpetual barrier to an Union between Great Britain and Ireland.” If this be so, the impiety of man has done much to encroach upon this decree of Providence. Cromwell, devout as he was, laughed at it when he summoned representatives
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from this country to sit in the English Parliament. Molineux, that great defender of the independence of his country, whose happiness in his opinion, as I shall shew hereafter, would have been best effected by an Union, does not rest his vindication of the rights of his country upon so ridiculous a position.— He says, “ it is absurd to fancy kingdoms are separate and distinct, merely from their geographical *distinction* of territories ; kingdoms become *distinct* by *distinct jurisdictions*, and *authorities legislative and executive*.” He refers his proposition expressly to the situation of Great Britain and Ireland ; he saw a much greater likelihood of opposition to an Union, from the mistaken pride of England, than any imaginary will of the Deity, to be collected from his works. Having shewn several instances from records of representatives from this country serving in Parliament in England, in the reigns of Edward the First and Edward the Third ; and it appearing that Ireland had been bound by laws made in such Parliaments, he says, “ if, from these last mentioned records it be concluded, that the Parliament of England may bind Ireland, it must be allowed that the people of Ireland ought to have their representatives in the Parliament of England ; and this, “ I believe,”* says Molineux, “ *we should be willing enough to embrace, but this is an happiness we can hardly hope for.*” I have transcribed his words exactly. If Molineux, the warm and enlightened advocate of the liberties of Ireland, had seen in this
dreaded

* See Note (b)

dreaded name of Union, “* the annihilation of our Parliament, the subversion of our Constitution, the depopulation of our metropolis, and the conversion of the kingdom into one vast barrack ;” if he had discovered in this measure his fellow citizens reduced to an “ † humiliated, degraded, and discontented people,” would he have described it as an offer we would very willingly embrace, but as a happiness we could not hope to obtain ? would he have thus stated it, if it had appeared to him, as only calculated to continue “ ‡ religious discontents, jealousies and disturbances, insurrections, and perhaps rebellions,” for such had existed in his time ? He thought very differently from the politicians of this day ; a due representation of this country in the British Parliament, one King, one Legislature, was to him a consummation devoutly to be wished, though he thought it not within the scope of reasonable expectation.

This measure has been called an innovation : I need not express my respect and regard for the persons who principally supported the resolution which contained that word ; an enemy, however, would say, it was studiously and invidiously adopted ; he would say, those who used it well knew the terror it was calculated to inspire ; that they well knew the idea was necessarily associated with those modern attempts in politics, which have subverted all moral order, and blasted the happiness of human kind ; that they hoped to excite the dread which the review of such things was likely to produce ; and that, therefore, they called an Union an innovation. He would
say,

* Mr. Jebb.

† Ditto.

‡ Ditto.

say, they relied upon what they supposed to be the literal acceptation of the term, as a sufficient justification for using it, and that they considered an acquittal on the letter of a law as equal in legal effect to the full establishment of innocence; and that in this, they were misled by the habits of their profession. I only say, that their zeal for a moment made them unjust. What is the real meaning of the word? It is an introduction of change by novelty. Now, the truth is, that neither the practice, as I have shewn, much less the idea of an Union, is a novelty in the history of this country; and though it may be admitted to be a change, it is not an innovation; it overturns no one principle in the nature and essence of our Constitution; it leaves the Church and the State exactly as they were; and professes, as its vital principle, the protection of all ancient establishment; it effects no disturbance of the orders of society, civil or religious; it is a proposed change in *form*, for the avowed purpose of preventing *radical change*, and resisting *innovation in substance*. Was it not uncandid, not to say insidious, at this day, to call such a measure an innovation? We know that appellations vary their significations, according to times and circumstances; any man unacquainted with the mover of the resolutions would say, that the phrase was fixed upon, as carrying with it, at this day, a signification offensive and revolting—it is associated with all the horrors of the French Revolution, and the very sound of it in politics, brings in review to the reflecting mind, all the crimes

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that have there degraded and insulted humanity; he would say, that therefore, and therefore only, the term was made use of, and that it was intended thereby to couple the measure of an Union with the new fangled chimeras of French philosophy, and to affix to the one the contempt and execration so justly merited by the other.

But even an introduction of change by novelties, if this measure were of that kind, might be both justifiable and necessary. Bacon says, " he that will not apply *new* remedies must expect new *evils*, for time is the greatest *innovator* ; and if time, of course, alter things to the worse, and *wisdom* and *council* shall not alter them to the better, what shall be the end ?"

The question is not whether any other policy on the part of England would have rendered an Union unnecessary, but whether in consequence of that policy, or *any other cause*, it is now become necessary ? This question is perpetually argued, as if we were not a kingdom connected with England, or, at least, as if that connexion left us practically, as it does theoretically independent ; now one proposition is as false as the other. We are *dependently connected* with England : it is important to know even disagreeable truths, if the knowledge of them be necessary to our right conduct.

But let us see the scheme upon which the opposers of an Union rest their hopes of happiness for this kingdom, their plan of maintaining the present connexion between the countries. Mr. Jebb details it,

it,—We are first, as I observed before, to give up the purse and the sword to England, and a joint control in every thing which may affect the religion of the State. But this is not all; “an Irish Parliament is to make one great effort of Patriotism—it is to bury in oblivion the errors and vices of their misguided Countrymen!” Modest and practicable—“the Catholics are to wait *patiently* the operation of time, and the workings of generosity in *Irish* bosoms.—They are to declare publicly that to an *Irish* Parliament only, will they be indebted for the full and complete advancement to the privileges and honours of the Constitution,” (to an Irish Parliament, who *left to itself*, kicked their humble petition out of doors, and only allowed them to be heard when they spoke through the mouth of their Sovereign)—“then indeed,” says the writer, “we shall become a powerful people.”

It is to this Utopian scheme of subjugation of human passions and prejudices, when no alteration is proposed of those circumstances which have engendered them, coupled with an unequivocal surrender of even the theoretical independence we now enjoy, that we are to look forward as the wonder-working procurer of peace and power! There is something curious in this counter-project which is to serve us in place of an Union; wherever it is useful it is impracticable, and wherever it is practicable it

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is degrading. It demonstrates, however, that, even in the opinion of those who oppose an Union, we *cannot go on as we are*; that some great change is necessary, by which our condition may be improved for the better—that this cannot be done without a sacrifice in a great degree both of the practical exercise of the right of independence, and of the theoretical right itself—that to remain connected with England, we must record by compact our *necessary subjection*, and submit ourselves and our posterity, in the most material points of our self-government as a nation, to the control and interference of a foreign legislature.

I now ask the candid advocates of the independence of this Country, for to them only I address myself, whether this proposed system for maintaining the connexion does not more necessarily and completely sacrifice the independence of this Country, than an Union upon fair and liberal terms could possibly do?

The Scotch Union has been much dwelt upon by the opposers of this measure, either as furnishing no analogy on which to build the argument in favour of the Union now in contemplation, or as abounding in many respects with arguments against it. The Union with Scotland, however necessary, as I am free to admit it was to England, was not necessary, however beneficial it might be to the former Kingdom; and the opposers of that Union in Scotland might have used many arguments that cannot

with any truth or justice be adopted here. The Scots are not as we are (I speak of the Protestant and most of the Roman Catholic inhabitants of this Country) descendants of Englishmen; there had been little or no mixture between the nations; the Kingdoms had been always separate, generally hostile, and till very recently before that period the Scotch had enjoyed an ancient and independent Monarchy; the regal state to which national pride clings with ardour and affection, had existed within the memory of many of them; the father could tell it to his child, and the child could catch the enthusiasm of the father. Ancient and honourable prejudices stood in array against the measure, and nothing could be opposed to them but the cold calculations of commercial profits. —Is our case such? Is the Union now sought, an Union with strangers and hereditary foes? What regal state, what ancient Monarchy, do we part with? Do we not return to that parent stock from whence we sprung? Is there, as was the case in Scotland, any dissimilarity of law, established religion, usages, or customs to stand in the way of our incorporation?

In another respect, also, the situation of the Countries was materially different—there was no party in Scotland enjoying exclusively the power, and in a great degree, the wealth of the State, to whose existence in those particulars the protecting arm of England was essential. A Union could be no otherwise necessary to Scotland than

as a security to defend her against England—here it is necessary to defend us against ourselves. There is an enemy within our dwellings and our bosoms, whose machinations can be only stifled by the imposing authority of the English name—whatever career we may expect to run as a nation, whatever route of glory we may hope to take, it is that influence must support our progress.

The Scottish Union had its opposers, as has that of this day, many of them wise and honest; among those Mr. Fletcher of Salton stands conspicuous—his principal objection rested on the incorporation of the two Parliaments; he was of opinion, that the rights to be reserved to Scotland would never be preserved in that united Parliament; and he specifies particularly the objects which, he supposes, however secured by the terms of the Union, must, in the course of time, be necessarily sacrificed by the predominating influence of England; they may be reduced to six particulars:

First, he thought it impossible that the established Church of Scotland could support itself a moment after the incorporation of the two legislatures; for this opinion, he gives his arguments at length, which are so strong, that scarcely any thing but experience could have confuted them. The uninterrupted enjoyment, however, of the church establishment in Scotland, as settled at the Union, from that time to the present moment, shews how groundless his fears were.

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Second, He apprehended the nobility in Scotland would be utterly destroyed ; in this, also, time has refuted his conjectures.

Third, He states, what indeed comprehends all the other subjects of his terror, “ that the Scottish Parliament having subverted the whole fabric of the Scottish constitution, an united Parliament would overturn whatever is secured by the Union.” It is unnecessary to observe, how unfounded his fears were in this particular also.

Fourth, He lays it down as certain, that in all questions of trade, the English Members will out-vote the Scotch.* Sir John Dalrymple, himself a Scotchman, says in a modern publication, “ that the fears of the Scotch, and above all of Mr. Fletcher, that in every thing concerning the interest of Scotland, the forty-five Members of Scotland would be weighed down by the weight of English Members, has been disproved by the event.

Fifth,† He considers as certain, that the municipal laws, and local judicatures for administering justice, would be utterly abolished.

Sixth, He alarms the fears of his countrymen, by more than insinuating, that the equivalent settled by the articles of Union, to be paid by England to Scotland, for the undertaking of the Scots to pay part of the English debts, will be withheld by the united Parliament. In all these particulars, his fears are substantially refuted ; that spirit, which so boldly ventured to prophesy, wandered in darkness without the slightest

* See Note (c.)

† See Note (d.)

slightest glimpse into futurity. The Church has been upheld ; the nobility have been preserved ; the trade has been protected ; the settlement at the Union un-
 infringed ; the municipal laws, * save in a single alteration stipulated for by the articles of Union, and beneficial to both countries, are still in force ; the local judicatures continued ; and the stipulated equivalent regularly paid. So wild were the conjectures of an honest and an able man, when misled by the inveterate prejudices of national independence ! If such a man was deceived in his speculations upon an Union ; if his vaunted developement of unborn misery has ended in the idle ravings of a distempered fancy ; what claim in the name of common sense have the present prophets of ill to the credit which they seek ? Had not Scotland more ground for rational fears, than the people of this country can possibly entertain ? Is not the church we wish to support the Church of England ? Are not the laws and the judicatures of the respective countries precisely the same ? Is there any antient animosity to subdue, or inveterate prejudices to overcome ? Have we the remembered splendour of any antient Monarchy to catch and influence our affections, and to make our hearts sicken at the prospect of departing greatness ? All that could cause the apprehensions, wound the pride, and excite the regret of a nation, which had been recently before *really* independent, assembled in authoritative opposition to the Scottish Union. The arguments, built upon those circumstances, were captivating in the extreme. † Mr. Fletcher, of Salton,

was

* The alteration of the law of treason in Scotland.

† See Note (c.)

was aware of their force, and has turned them to the greatest advantage for his cause; time, however, the unpurchasable arbiter of all political reasoning, has decided against them, and they remain the melancholy, but instructive monument of the fallacy of human reason, when it is influenced in the investigation of truth, by the pressure of human passions.

The opposition which this measure met with in Scotland, was as virulent and ill-founded as any which is likely to occur in this Kingdom; there have existed, and there will at times exist in every Community, men, whose interest, and whose passions, are at variance with the sober and rational interest of their Country—great, and in many instances, malignant opposition was given to the Scottish Union. The Jacobite of that day was nearly as hostile to the interest of the United Kingdoms, as the Jacobin of this. There is this in common between them: that, as the destruction of our present constitution, through the means of a French invasion, was the favourite measure to which the efforts of the Jacobin were directed; so the same end through the same means constitutes the fond hope of the Jacobin now; with this view the Jacobite of Scotland resisted an Union with England in his day; with the same view, the Jacobin of Ireland resists it now.

I trust, however, the future historian of these times, will record the completion of this measure in nearly the same terms used by the historian of the Scottish Union: They are so apposite to many circumstances which have taken place, and are likely still

still to take place in the progress of this business here,
 that I cannot forbear to transcribe them. Speaking of
 the passing of the first Article, he says, * “ It was on
 “ this happy day, the first Article of the Union was
 “ passed in Parliament, after infinite struggles, cla-
 “ mour, railing and tumults of a party, who, however
 “ they endeavoured to engage the honest scrupulous
 “ parts of the people with them, yet gave this discovery
 “ of the principles of their own actings, in that there
 “ was an entire conjunction of the most † opposite fac-
 “ tions in this particular, and the very discovery of this,
 “ opened the eyes of a great many people, who, in the
 “ simplicity of their hearts, had joined in opposition to
 “ an Union; but when they saw the *tendency of things,*
 “ *and whither it led;* when they saw the society they
 “ were going to embark with; when they saw the ene-
 “ mies of Protestant settlement, all engaged, and *those*
 “ *very people who had filled the land with the groans of*
 “ *oppression, and the cries of blood,* coming to join hands
 “ with them, against an Union with England; when
 “ they saw that, to shun an Union with Christians,
 “ they were of necessity to come to an Union with
 “ devils, men that had transformed themselves into
 “ the very infernal nature, and visibly acted from
 “ principles, in this particular diabolical, in that they
 “ intended to erect the absolute subjection of the na-
 “ tion to the lust and unbounded appetites of *lawless*
 “ *tyrants;* when they saw these things so plainly, we
 “ then found an alteration, and the *best, most thinking,*
 “ and

* De Foe's history of the Union, pages 244, 5.

† The Jacobite, Prelatical, and Popish interests.

“ and *most judicious people*, began first to stop and con-
 sider, and afterwards wholly to withdraw from the
 party; and the clamour of the people, as if come
 to a crisis, began not to be as universal, but to
 abate; and the more it did so, the more the *secret*
 party, which lay at the bottom of all the rest,
 began to appear and distinguish themselves.” It
 is scarcely possible to imagine language more appli-
 cable to the present crisis, the same *clamour and*
railing, the same *conjunction* of the most *opposite fac-*
tions, the same *misleading of the honest and scrupulous*
part of the people, a similar tendency in all their en-
 deavours to a separation from England, the perfect
 picture of the Jacobin, who had filled the land with
 the groans of oppression, and the cries of blood; the
 same consequence of an Union with devils, if the
 present Union with Christians be rejected; the same
 infernal attempt to submit the nation to the lust
 and unbounded appetite of lawless tyrants. It is
 impossible not to recognize in these traits, the Jacobin
 and his French Idol. May the issue be similar! may
 such designs be defeated, and this Country and Eng-
 land become one and indissoluble!

Perhaps the intended plan of Union between the
 two Kingdoms is nothing more to be desired, than
 in this, that it promotes the general interests of the
 several inhabitants of this Country as distinguished
 into religious classes; and holds out to each of them
 something that ameliorates their particular condition.
 In political consideration, the religious persuasions of
 Ireland resolve themselves into two, Protestants and

Roman

Roman Catholic—any attempt utterly to subdue under existing circumstances the fear of the Protestant, or the jealousies of the Roman Catholic, would be idle and Utopian; human passions and prejudices, when they have once grown to any considerable strength, will not fall suddenly to decay; the auspicious undertaking must commence in the removal or abatement of the causes which produced them.

As long as you confine the contention of Protestant and Catholic to this island, the fears on the one hand, and the jealousies on the other, must continue. The recollection of Catholic claims, the contemplation of their superior numbers, the memory of victory, perhaps abused on the part of the Protestants, must make the latter tenacious of the strong hold they possess in the constitution, and on which they probably altogether depend, for the protection of their liberty and property. If the Catholics were to be admitted, in the present state of the constitution, to equal privileges with the Protestant, the latter might fear the issue of the contest against Catholic encroachment within the walls of a national Senate. He must know, that every day would add to the strength of that body which has been the object of his habitual fears; and he may not irrationally be supposed to see in the complete adoption of the Catholic into the constitution, not only the extinction of his power and authority, but the instrument of his final downfall and destruction.

As long therefore as our connexion remains as it is, you cannot root out of the Protestant mind these, if I may so call them, hereditary apprehensions.—

Recent events have given them additional stability. The steady resistance then with which it is likely the Protestant would in our present state, and so long as it continues, make to any further concessions to Catholic claims, leaves the original jealousies of that body subsisting in full vigour; the latter will, as heretofore, persevere in their attempts at what they call emancipation, and their opponents unite in a determined maintenance of that ascendancy, on which they rely for the support of every thing which is dear to them.

Under these circumstances, no amelioration of our condition can be hoped—it would be vain and childish to look to that Utopian oblivion of errors and vices, so benevolently, but impracticably, recommended by Mr. Jebb. Such a speculation may gratify a good, but can never mislead a wise man; the latter calculates upon human beings as they are, and applies his remedy to the imperfection of our natures, without vainly relying upon qualities, which however they may be found in individuals, never act upon mankind in the gross.

If our connexion remains as it is, the fears of the Protestant, and the jealousies of the Catholic will encrease; that internal contention, the bane of Irish happiness, which degrades our morals, while it checks our prosperity, will be perpetuated among us. The constitutional disease which has grown up with our growth, will be confirmed in all its malignancy, and impede, as it has impeded, our progress as a nation.

Let us consider then for a moment, how things may be changed in those particulars, in case a Union should

should take place between the countries. I do not mean to enquire in this place, whether a grant of equal privileges to the Roman Catholic is to make any part of the terms of the Union? if it should, it is obvious that all ground for jealousy would be removed from the Roman Catholic; and it would be easy to prove, that all rational motives for fear would be thereby taken away from the Protestant. He would have the whole mass of Protestant influence in the empire arrayed within the walls of an Imperial Parliament, to stand between him and Roman Catholic encroachment. The Roman Catholic would have enough to satisfy the most querulous on the subject of political liberty; but his power would be as dust in the balance to the attainment of political ascendancy.*

On the other hand, if it should not be within the scheme of the councils of both countries to yield at this time the last remaining privilege which the Catholics require, I still say, the condition of both parties in this country, will be much better than it is.

With respect to the Protestant, his apprehension of the Catholic will of necessity diminish. He would obtain, by an Union, greater strength to withhold with less danger from concession—as you diminish his

* It will not be seriously urged as an objection (I know it has been foolishly insisted on) that by admitting the Catholics to a participation of privileges in a state, where they will be outnumbered by the Protestants, you mock their hopes and give them only the shadow, while you deprive them of the substance. What is this but saying, what none but their enemy will say, that what the Catholics wish for, is not equality of right, but superiority of power?

his fears, you diminish (such is the nature of man) his hatred also. Placed beyond the reach of injury by the interposing shield of the great and united Protestant interest of the empire, he would no longer regard the Roman Catholic as an object of terror; he would cease to consider the Catholic pretensions as a subject of personal concern, and leave them as a matter of imperial regulation to the presiding councils of the state; he would feel that he was safe in either alternative of concession or resistance; and, relieved from the political storm which has hitherto agitated his life, he would give an undivided attention to the management of his private concerns.

The condition of the Catholic will not be less affected for the better—an Union, even if it should not be attended in the first instance with the full gratification of his desires, will exceedingly diminish the force of those reasons which might be urged against them. In the decrease of Protestant apprehension, he would trace the latent seeds of future benefit to himself; he would perceive, as the one sinks from the view, the other must rise into light; and in the extinction of Protestant fear, he would find the consummation of Catholic privileges; he would perceive, that whatever claims he may find it prudent hereafter to make, must be made to an imperial Parliament, in which local jealousies would give way to enlarged views of general policy. He knows, that in a great degree, whatever benefits he has already received, he owes to the liberal sentiments of a foreign Cabinet, prevailing over domestic apprehensions;

sons; and he would look forward, in the necessary decay of the latter, to the full attainment of his wishes. He knows, that causes like these, though certain in their operation, are necessarily flow in their effects: and he would fill the interval with growing reconciliation, and anticipating hope. There would be an end of that system, which, it is alledged, has been adopted with respect to Ireland, of playing parties one against the other. Our connexion with England would not find its support, (as has been said by many) in the *promoted* divisions of the country; but *that* being secured, Ireland would be left to its *unrestrained* powers of improvement; and we should be, what we are capable of, a wise and happy people.

It may be necessary to say a few words on the competency of our Parliament, to effect a legislative Union, on the part of this country with Great Britain. Those who deny this competency, have many difficulties to overcome. The principle upon which they rest all their argument, is this: They suppose the Constitution to be something absolutely fixed, and utterly independent of parliamentary control, within which Parliament may move, but beyond which it cannot proceed. Now I should be glad to know the precise extent of this circle, within whose magic ring, the powers of parliament are confined.—Are the prerogatives of the Crown, one of its limitations? It is said, and justly, that these prerogatives of the Crown are vested in it for the good of the people; and that the Crown is a mere trustee of those prerogatives for their use, and can neither enlarge nor diminish them.

them.—In this I perfectly agree; but at what period of our history was the prerogative of the Crown so fixed as to be out of the reach of parliamentary control? We know perfectly well, that this prerogative, forming so essential a part of our Constitution, has been always the subject of parliamentary interference; and that to that interference, we owe most of our present liberty. It follows then, that parliamentary control is not limited by the prerogative of the Crown.

Let us try further:—Is the right of the elective franchise one of those impregnable fortresses upon which Parliament cannot call for the surrender? Our constitutional history, if I may so speak, is a continued series of parliamentary control over this privilege, supposed to lie without the bounds of its jurisdiction. Theoretically speaking, this should be the strong ground of those who argue against the authority of Parliament. In abstract reasoning, nothing can appear more absurd, than that persons delegated by virtue of a certain recognized authority should have power to rescind or modify that very authority, by the exercise of which alone they enjoy any power whatsoever; that is, that the thing which is *produced*, should have a paramount power over the thing *producing*. Experience, however, sets at nought this refinement of *a priori* reasoning; accordingly the legislature has constantly exercised a full and uncontrolled authority over this fundamental privilege of the people.—They have limited and enlarged, from time to time, as to them seemed fit, both the numbers and qualification

cation of electors; and on one occasion they absolutely disfranchised, (and their power in doing this was never questioned) a certain class of the inhabitants of this country, amounting to two-thirds of the whole; but they have not confined themselves to a discretionary modification of the number of electors, but have even pointed out to those electors, whom, and whom only, they shall elect. By laws made within this century, the whole body of Roman Catholics are excluded from the power of sitting in Parliament. We see, therefore, that this control extends both over those who elect, and over those who can be elected.

But Parliament cannot only diminish the number of those capable of electing, or of being elected, but it even can, under certain circumstances, diminish the number of those by whom the people are represented in Parliament.

We know that all the boroughs in this kingdom, the representation from which constitutes so large a part of our House of Commons, derive the power which enables them to send members to Parliament, under grants from the Crown; now, by the common law of the land, it is of the essence of such grants from the Crown that they are forfeitable by an abuse of the franchises conferred by such grants. In ordinary cases this abuse is enquirable into by the Court of King's Bench, and the charter must fall if a sufficient abuse be established. With respect to abuses of the elective franchise, the enquiry into them, as it concerns the purity of Parliament itself,

is

is with great propriety reserved to Parliament alone; and Parliament both can and ought to disfranchise a borough guilty of notorious corruption in the exercise of its elective franchise.

But its power goes still further; the duration of Parliament itself is subject to its control. It has occasionally limited and prolonged the date of its own existence, in opposition to the known limitation of its political life, at the time of its delegation. Thus, we see, that the prerogative of the Crown, the privileges of the people, the constitution of Parliament itself, as to duration and numbers, are all subject to Legislative control.

By the exercise of these various powers in Parliament, our constitution has become what it is; in the first attempts which Parliament made in any of those particulars, the argument of incompetence was always urged, and always overruled. If there be any things by their nature beyond the authority of Parliament, it is the extension of their own power, and the curtailment of those privileges from the exercise of which those powers flow. Can the argument of incompetence apply to any thing more directly than it does to them? Yet how stationary should we have been in political improvement, if this argument of incompetence had prevailed!

Those who suppose our Constitution fixed beyond the power of alteration or improvement, mistake its most valuable quality; the power of Parliament, *always exercised*, of moulding it according to the dictates of wisdom and experience, to secure the liberty,

liberty, and promote the prosperity of the country, under all changes and circumstances is its distinguished feature. This power, in its moral extent, has no other limitation than the good of the people; and in its physical, none known to the Constitution.

As man has no other guide than the limited wisdom and goodness assigned to his nature by the Deity, this portion of wisdom and goodness must be trusted to in the conduct of human affairs. Experience has taught us, that the interests of society are best managed by a delegated number of those of the community, likely to have the greatest share of the qualities I have mentioned; they are the *head* of the political body allotted to think, direct and govern; they are not to be dictated to by any faction in the State; nor can their power, *while the Constitution lasts*, even be controled by an *adverse will* on the part of the people.—If this *will* be clearly ascertained and clearly expressed, no doubt, when so expressed and ascertained, it will be attended to by Parliament; their wisdom will make it a limitation of their moral right, because it amounts in fact, to a limitation of their physical power.

In no case is this express assent necessary on the part of the people, because, having the power of expressing their wishes by petition, their assent is a necessary presumption from their silence or acquiescence. Whenever, therefore, there is no restraint upon public opinion, from fraud or force, it may be fairly said, that whatever Parliament can do, they may do.—That there is no such restraint now,

is evident from the freedom of discussion with which this question has been treated—in the very seat of Government the people have met, and, as far as the opinion of a district goes, have expressed their opinion against it.

What would be the consequence, if the power now denied by some people to Parliament, really did not belong to it? I mean the power of concluding an Union with Great Britain, with the assent of the people really expressed or necessarily implied.—Let us suppose for a moment, (however unwilling the opposers of this measure may be to concede so much) that the Majority of the people are really of opinion, that an Union with Great Britain would be advantageous under all circumstances to this Kingdom—are the present forms of our Constitution, so fixed, that they must not bend even to the will of the people?—this will hardly be said. Then, I ask any reasonable man, what is the mode recognized by our Constitution of giving expression to the will of the people?—can they speak in any other way, save *through* Parliament or *to* Parliament—that is, when they are silent and acquiesce, the act of the legislature is, by necessary presumption, the act of the people; and where a measure is in agitation before Parliament, upon which the people are divided in sentiment, those who are of opinion against the measure shew that opinion by petition against it, and those who agree shew their assent either by express petition
for

for the measure, or by acquiescence from which that assent is necessarily to be presumed. This is the beaten road of our Constitution, out of which, I do not wish to travel in favour of any new-fangled theories of the hour.—I like not those systems which require an utter dissolution of Government, upon every suggested improvement; but approve of that wisdom which has infused into our Constitution a principle of self-correction, by which it is always adequate, without any violation of essential form or principles, to amend itself. Now in a case like the present, it will not be contested, that the proposed alteration is within the power of the people to accomplish: the expression of their will, *according to the forms of the Constitution*, is the only way by which such a measure can be constitutionally effected. What mode then has the Constitution provided for this expression of the will of the people? I say again, it can only be spoken thro' Parliament, or to Parliament—but this expression of the people's will would be nugatory, if there did not exist some tribunal, which was *alone* competent to determine what was the will of the people. Nor can there be any other tribunal than the Parliament, competent to determine what is the preponderating will of the people upon any question where there exists a division of sentiment like the present—like all other human tribunals, they may err in their judgment, but this inherent infirmity cannot be got rid of in the management of human concerns by human agents. They and

and they only, can decide—if they cannot, who can? either we are to remain fixed as we are, and neither the people or parliament can effect a change—this will not be contended—or our situation is capable of change, either through the people or parliament—this will be conceded. Has then the Constitution provided for the expression of the people's will, otherwise than through Parliament and to Parliament? Is there any other way in which the people can constitutionally act? if not, the final decision must be with Parliament—that is, if our situation can be changed, it can only be effected by Parliament, judging of the people's will, and carrying it into effect.

I have chosen to argue this question, rather upon principle than authority; there is a jealousy in most men which makes them yield with reluctance to the sound of a name. Were I speaking to Lawyers only, it might be sufficient to mention the names of Lord Coke, Lord Somers, and Blackstone. The two last are express upon the very point in question. There is an expression in Blackstone on this subject, that I find noticed by the elegant and ingenious author of the Letters to Mr. Saurin and Mr. Jebb, which is very remarkable: Speaking of the powers of Parliament, he says, “it can create afresh the constitution of the kingdom;” and he refers to the Union with Scotland as an instance—the opinion of those who contend that Parliament is incompetent to effect an Union, is grounded upon an assumption, that an Union amounts to a dissolution of the constitution,
and

and the erection of another, different in its nature and principle. I ask any man, does an Union do more than extend the basis in point of territory of popular representation, and enlarge as a necessary consequence the representative body to a proportional extent with the territory represented?—what other change in principle is wrought by it? When this modification takes place, have we not still the English Constitution? Is there a single circumstance by which that constitution has obtained the admiration of the world, lost to us by that modification? Do not our laws and our religion remain? Are they not guarded by the same principle of representative Government? Are the prerogatives of the crown increased, or the privileges of the subject diminished?—When the countries were first connected, had their relative situation permitted an Union, would not the adoption of an Union at that time have amounted to a grant to this country of the English Constitution? that Constitution was accepted at that time by this country, in the only way it could then be received; but if an Union had been practicable, we should still have enjoyed the English Constitution. Shall we not enjoy it after an Union? How then is it subverted?

I think it is perfectly obvious, that if our connexion with England be rendered more secure by an Union, and the spirit of republicanism, which is kept alive only by the hope of separation, be thereby extinguished; if the fears of one party in the kingdom, and the jealousies of the other, be in a great degree

degree mitigated, if not subdued, the trade of the country, were it even to remain upon its present footing as to commercial privileges, would necessarily advance and flourish. This, however, would be merely the result of internal quiet, and would be a consequence of that state, were it produced in any other way whatever. This I admit; but it does not appear to me, that that state of internal quiet can be either so suddenly, or so permanently secured in any way as by an Union. I have argued this question throughout, upon a supposition, that we were a people not devoted to final misery as a nation; of course, that our understandings were not so blinded, nor our hearts so hardened, but that we would be convinced by truths and swayed by interest. Under this hope I shall say a few, and but a few words, upon the effect this measure may have upon our trade.

I have already stated its effect upon that, as a measure likely to produce and secure internal tranquillity.—It is said indeed, that we gain nothing by an Union in point of trade, or at least nothing that may not be effected without it. I need not say, that it makes no difference whatever in the obtaining any particular object, whether the thing through which we are to attain it, *cannot* or *will not* be done—therefore if this *will* not be done for us without an Union, it is precisely the same thing to us as if it *could* not be done without an Union. We have now, as we ought always to have had, what is properly enough called a free trade; that is, according to Mr. Flood's definition of it, a liberty of trading with all the world,

world, subject only to our own restrictions, and *those* of that country with whom the trade is carried on.— Such restraints are of necessity inseparably incident to all foreign trade. In all matters of trade, England, and Ireland are, under our present connexion, as distinct and independent as Ireland and Portugal; that is, the trade we carry on with her, is a free trade, according to the definition given by Mr. Flood.

In our trade with England is to be included not only our trade with the Island of Great Britain, but with all her Foreign Settlements, in whatever part of the world they may be situated. I admit I am not well acquainted with the detail of the trade of Ireland, but I believe I do not hazard too much in saying, that our trade with Great Britain, and all her various settlements, is greater and more productive than our trade with all the rest of the world. All this trade, which constitutes so great a portion of our wealth and revenue, we hold *under our present connexion* altogether by the curtesy of England; that is, subject to the restrictions which her own Parliament may impose upon her own ports and commodities. Such restrictions exist at present to a considerable degree, upon our direct trade with England; they have been lately taken off from our trade with the West Indies; but the power which took them off may impose them again, without the least violation of right; against this, we have no security at present, but her prudence or generosity; so that for the permanent enjoyment of the most beneficial source of our wealth, we depend

pend altogether upon the prudence and generosity of England. We know how England has, during the present war, encreased and is still likely to encrease her foreign possessions. Our trade to all these must, as we now stand connected, depend upon the same security.

How would an Union alter our condition in this respect? The balance of trade between this country and England is enormously in favour of Ireland: An Union would of necessity take off the prohibitions which at present lie heavy on many articles of trade, which might be exported from this country; and of course, still more encrease that balance of trade already so much in our favour. An Union, therefore, would not only extend the trade we at present possess to a variety of articles, from the exportation of which we are now in effect excluded, but it would change the security upon which we hold that trade from a courtesy to a right. We seem to forget that our linen trade, upon which the commercial prosperity of this country absolutely turns, depends upon the breath of an English Parliament; that that country pays 37*l.* per cent. upon the Irish linens which she consumes, in order to secure to us the monopoly of her market; that is, she has laid a duty of 37*l.* per cent. upon certain foreign linens in her own market, by the operation of which duty alone, the foreign merchants could be prevented from underselling us;* then it follows therefore, that if it requires a duty of 37*l.* per cent. upon the foreign
linens

* See Chalmer's estimate.

linens to secure the English market to Irish linens, those foreign linens might be sold in the English market if that duty did not exist 37l. per cent. or nearly so much cheaper than the Irish linens, and that of course the English who purchase Irish linens pay 37l. per cent. in the value of the article, in order to secure the exclusive trade in that article to this country. It is alledged, and we have every reason to believe it to be true, that the security which our linens have for preference in the English market is to be permanently continued by the terms of the Union—so that it is strange to hear men contending that our trade is not to be benefited by the adoption of an Union, when not only the tenure of that trade is changed from a curtesy to a right, but that many prohibitions, by which our trade is in a variety of instances confined, must of necessity be abolished, if an Union should take place.

It is said by the opposers of this measure, that it will confer no benefit either in point of extent or security to the trade we already have; yet in the same breath they alledge, that the only object of the British Minister in proposing it to this country, is to encrease the revenue he may draw from it—but how there can be an encrease of revenue without an encrease of trade, they have utterly failed to shew. It will not be contended, that under the present system of things there is any producible revenue that could be had from this country, that is not in the hands of the Minister, if he chooses to call for it. Those who recollect the taxes upon salt and upon

leather, laid within a very little time upon those articles, will not say, that his power in obtaining revenue here is limited by the will, or I had almost said, by the capacity of the people. His object, then, by an Union, if his object be taxation, (which can scarcely be, when there are so many other more pressing causes) cannot be the extension of his power of taxation, but the encrease of those sources of revenue upon which alone taxation can effectually operate; this can only be effected by exciting internal industry, and opening new sources of foreign trade; and no doubt this, and through these means, is one of the objects intended by an Union.

With respect to the argument, grounded on the probable encrease of absentees, this may in general be answered to it, that if it has any force, it applies to all empires where, from the extent of them, the seat of Government is necessarily at a distance from the extremities; and I believe it was the first time it was ever urged as an objection against concentrating the powers of a state by the erection of a single and supreme authority, or used as an argument for weakening imperial power by the establishment or continuance of local Government. If, therefore, the exaggerations that have taken place on this subject, were really founded in fact, they would be no argument against the adoption of a measure otherwise founded in general utility.

The truth is, this topic has been much and needlessly insisted upon, and much and insidiously exaggerated. The necessary attendance upon Parliament in this kingdom is, in ordinary times, from four to five months

months in the year; it must be admitted, that this attendance is accompanied with considerable benefit to the place where the meeting of Parliament is held; but it necessarily draws, between the members of both Houses, from four to five hundred persons, with all their attendants, from their various residences in the different parts of the kingdom. What particular use arises to the kingdom at large, from such a concourse to the capital, I leave to those who are more curious in such calculations than I am; this however I think is obvious, that if an Union leaves from three to four hundred of those persons, to the cultivation of their estates, the improvement of their tenantry, and the promotion of manufactures, no great mischief is done by rendering the attendance of one hundred of them necessary for the winter months in London.

At present, as soon as Parliament rises in this country, a much greater number of the Lords and Commons, than would in case of an Union be deputed to the Imperial Parliament, actually leave this kingdom to spend their summers in the watering places in England; they settle all their Irish affairs, during the time they are necessarily obliged to remain here, and are really absent from the kingdom upon the present system, a much longer period of time in the year, than would be necessary for their attendance upon Parliament, in case an Union should take place. In such an event, hardly any person will be deputed, who will not have Irish affairs to attend to, and Irish interests to cultivate. The only time left to him, for that purpose, will be the Summer months,

months, which he now usually spends in England, or would, if circumstances permitted, consume in rambles on the Continent. The Winter residence in Ireland upon the present system, leaves him at full leisure to indulge himself in these particulars, and the Summer rolls away without a single visit to his country residence in this kingdom. This course will be inverted as to those who may be deputed to the Imperial Parliament.—Summer being the only time in the year they can attend to their Irish affairs, will be devoted to that purpose, and their residence in this kingdom, while they do reside, will be usefully employed in the different parts of the kingdom where their property and connexions are, instead of being confined, as it now in a great degree is, to the capital in the course of their parliamentary attendance. With respect to all those who now form the two Houses of Parliament, they, with the exception of one hundred, will not be under any necessity of even occasional absence; if, however, any great number of them should follow the seat of Government, it will only be for the period of parliamentary attendance. The same argument, as to the probable return of those who will be really deputed, applies equally to them; and the probability is, that an Union with England would only vary the season of absence, without actually encreasing the number of absentees.

I will now take a general, but short view of this question:—The history of this country, at least such part of it as deserves the name of history, commences
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with our connexion with England—from that period we date our being as a nation, and the history of that connexion, is the history of our country. The present inhabitants of Ireland are in the proportion of fourteen to one the descendants of English settlers;—though these last cover the island at this day from one extremity of it to the other, the progress of English power and occupancy was extremely slow. It was not until after a lapse of four centuries, that it could be said to have been fully established. During this period the connexion between the countries was the natural result of the condition of both; loose and undefined, it was sometimes a strict tyranny on the part of the Sovereign, more often anarchy and rebellion on the part of the people. Bound to England in no way but in the dissoluble connexion of a common Sovereign, Ireland excited in that country none of those presiding cares, which would have been bestowed on it, had it been considered part of itself, nor did there exist between them that cordial affection that would have arisen from unity of Government and interest—confined and illiberal notions of trade, the error of the times, checked the latent powers of the country, and the unfortunate divisions of the inhabitants among themselves aided the operations of external jealousy. Time, which brings wisdom to nations, as well as to individuals, has shewn the impolicy of commercial restraints, and England has thrown open, what should never have been closed, nearly the whole world to our trading speculations. The original error in our connexion, however, remains tainting

tainting the sources of public prosperity, and fomenting, instead of allaying, the internal disorders under which we labour: *Giving to one country an authority contested in principle, and irresistible in fact;—to the other abstract independence and necessary subjection—keeping alive a distinctness of interest, by preserving a distinctness of state, and holding out to our enemies foreign and domestic, a temptation to conspiracy and invasion, by the apparent practicability of separation.*

That the nature of our connexion with England has been the inviting cause which led to the conspiracies, from which we so recently have escaped, and may be so to those which we have yet to encounter, is manifest from this, that no such attempts have been made in Scotland, though its separation from England would of necessity be almost an equal blow to imperial greatness. Recent, I mean comparatively recent, as the connexion between England and Scotland is, and unfortified as it was, for a long time, by coalescing habits and mutual affection, yet no invasion or conspiracy has taken place there with a view to separation since the Union. The rebellions of 1715, and 1745, were of a perfectly different nature; their object was not to separate Scotland from England; but to place the united Crown of both countries upon the head of the abdicated family. It will not be said that those conspiracies and invasions took place here rather than in Scotland, because this country could not be so easily assisted from England as Scotland.—

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The fact is directly the reverse : considering the peculiar nature of the power of England, this country could certainly receive assistance, and with less expence and more facility than Scotland could possibly do. This then could not be the reason ; it arose from the radical defect in our present connexion, which, slight in its own nature as any political connexion can well be, *was necessarily attended with such a mode of general administration as furnished continual ground for disaffection and treason to work upon, in irritating the passions, and alienating the affections of the people.*

It is admitted, and was expressly so admitted by the present Speaker of the House of Commons, that without an Union in point of trade, these countries would probably be separated for ever. We have already an Union of religion established, and an Union of the executive is the bond of our present political connexion.—One would think matters like these necessarily pointed out the utility and uniformity of a legislative Union. Private ambition, local interest, and rooted prejudices are however in array against it ; they may succeed as they have often succeeded, but truth will remain when they are forgotten.

Even if an Union should take place, its beneficial effects will not be immediately visible ; the evils it is at once intended and calculated to cure, are too deeply rooted to be suddenly removed—the dispositions of men, upon the good cultivation of which, independent of all positive law, the happiness of society depends, are slowly changed from
evil

evil to good—a prejudice deeply rooted, a passion which has long controled, will maintain their influence when the circumstances by which they were first excited, have been long past and forgotten. We are recently escaped from the horrors of a Civil War, the result of long conceded and active machination—the spirit which produced it, though suppressed, is not effectually laid—it walks yet in darkness—and only waits its time for a second visitation. We have still to guard against those men, who will be ever found, in times of disturbance, ready to uproot the State from its foundation—who, ruined in character, and desperate in hope, in tranquil times would sink and be forgotten, and who can look to the attainment of wealth and power only through the plunder of revolutions—such still infest the secret recesses and the open walks of society—while you leave them hope, you leave them activity : that cannot be taken from them while we remain as we are. The inherent principle of dissolution which they see and upon which they calculate, that exists in the nature of our present connexion with England, keeps alive their hopes, and animates their exertions—even in the division which this question has occasioned, they see cause for exultation—their labours to promote that division are not even disguised. Men, who a few weeks since would not be allowed to taint the private circles of life with their sentiments or opinions, now find ready listeners in the dupes

dupes of independence.—Men, whom their fellow Citizens refused to associate with as soldiers, and with whom they would not make common cause to defend their Country from invasion, now find their place in deliberating assemblies, and talk in the high tone of honest independent Irishmen. Attention rests upon their lips, while they flatter this public prejudice; and the honest, though *discouraged* supporter of what he deemed good for this Country, retires ashamed* and unheard. I feel a duty, however, superior to the call of those private habits which I have cultivated, because I love them; and I appeal (if this tract should be preserved by the importance of the question of which it treats) from the present day to posterity.

* It may be necessary to inform some of my readers, that there is such a thing as one man blushing for another.

Houses of the Oireachtas

N O T E S.

N O T E (a.)

IT is a well-known fact, that the great outcry in this Country against the commercial propositions, was, in a great degree, occasioned by the opposition in England. Mr. Fox declared in England, that the commercial propositions were a tame surrender of the Trade and Commerce of England, and opposed them entirely on that ground in the English Parliament; and at the same time, his friends wrote over to their followers here, that they were ruinous to the Commerce and Constitution of this Country—for these two curious facts, see his own speech on that occasion *passim*, and the Attorney General's, now Earl of Clare, speech on the propositions. The commercial propositions were grounded upon an intended Union of trade, as the present measure embraces both an Union of trade and legislation. The observations of the present Speaker on the former occasion, are strikingly apposite to the present question, so far as it relates to trade; and it might be easily shewn to legislation also.—Expressing his hope, that the propositions would be adopted, he says, “when commercial jealousy shall be banished by final settlement, and trade take its natural and steady course, the Kingdom will cease to look to rivalship.—Each will make that fabric that it can do cheapest, and buy from the other what it cannot do advantageously. Labour will then be truly employed to profit, and not diverted by duties, bounties, jealousies, or *legislative interference*. This system will attain its *real object*, consolidating the strength of the remaining parts of the empire, by encouraging the communications of their markets among themselves, with preference

ference to every part against all strangers;”—and still more strongly in another part of the same speech. “If,” says he, “this *infatuated Country* gives up the present offer, she may look for it again, in vain: *things cannot remain as they are*. Commercial jealousy is roused—it will increase with *two independent legislatures*; and without an United interest in commerce, in a commercial empire, political Union will receive many shocks, and separation of interests must threaten separation of connexion, which every *honest Irishman* must shudder to look at, as a possible event.

N O T E (b.)

See the edition of Molyneux’s Case of Ireland, printed in the year 1698, pages 97 and 98; it is a curious fact, that an edition of this book was published in Dublin about the year 1782, or 1783, and the words “that Ireland would willingly embrace an Union, but that it was an happiness she could not hope for,” are omitted.

N O T E (c.)

The Malt-tax has been relied upon by the opposers of an Union as an instance in which the united Parliament violated the Articles of Union; the misrepresentations on this subject have been a gross perversion of historical truth; it is provided by the Fourteenth Article of the Union, “that any Malt to be made in that part of the united kingdom, now called Scotland, shall not be charged with any duty upon Malt during this present war.”—When the duty came to be imposed, the question was, whether the war alluded to by the Articles was at an end or not; it was a mere question of time and not of principle; the preliminaries of peace had been signed; hostilities had ceased on all sides; and both Houses of Parliament had been informed of those facts by the speech from the Throne. The war in fact was at an end: both the letter
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and the spirit of the Articles were answered by this construction, and in this the so much relied on violation of the Article altogether consists.

By the Eighth Article of the Union, several allowances are made as drawbacks upon Fish cured in Scotland and exported again; the reason of this was, that the salt with which they were cured, paying a great duty, that duty ought to be drawn back upon exportation. Now between the ratifying the treaty, and the first of May when it was to take place, a very great quantity of foreign salt (French) was imported, which, by the passing of all the goods so imported as before, paid none of the English duties. It was alledged, that as the duty did not commence upon the salt, so the drawback ought not to commence, which was the effect of that duty; but the letter of the act being express, (Art. 8,) that all Fish cured with foreign salt shall drawback, &c. the Parliament voted it, and Scotland got about 20,000*l.* drawback when they paid little or nothing duty. So that we see, even the letter of one of the Articles was set up against the manifest spirit of it, in order to give the Scotch an advantage.

N O T E (d.)

By the Eighteenth Article of the Scottish Union, a power was reserved to the United Parliament, of making all laws concerning public right, policy and Civil Government, the same throughout the whole United Countries; but the laws concerning private right were not to be altered, but for the evident utility of subjects within Scotland. In consequence of the first mentioned provision in this article, the law of treason, which perhaps more emphatically than any other law relates to public right, policy and Civil Government, was made the same through the United Kingdom. This is another of the trumpeted violations of Scottish Union. Some men have been guilty of those misrepresentations, from whose habits and education, a very different conduct might have been expected.

N O T E

NOTE (e.)

The character of Mr. Fletcher of Salton, as a writer, is thus given by Sir John Dalrymple—His style is easily known, because every word has a precise meaning, and distinct from any other sentence; the structure of the sentence is as simple, but as various, as that used in private conversation; the method in his composition is perfectly regular, but artfully concealed; and one singularity in his reasoning is, that the arguments are placed in an order to derive force from what went before, and to give force to what comes after, so as to seem to grow out of each other; but above all, when he is animated by passion, his flashes are sometimes as quick as lightning, and sometimes followed by the thunder of a period. All which mark an original genius, but made chaste by reading the antients.

THE END.

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