

The Gazette.

PHILADELPHIA,

FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL 12,

MR. PIIT'S SPEECH,
ON THE
UNION WITH IRELAND.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
JANUARY 31, 1799.

The next consideration is the internal situation of Ireland. While Ireland continues disjoined, any attempt to provide a salutary cure for her internal divisions, or to allay the animosities which arise out of her religious differences, will be impracticable. It must ever be a question of the greatest difficulty to say what shall be the rights of the Catholics, or what securities are necessary for the Protestants? When questions of this nature have been agitated in this house by those who pretend a regard for the privileges of the Catholics, it ever was my opinion that these questions were direct attacks on the independence of the Irish parliament, and assuming by insinuation what could only be obtained by compact. But while I disclaim all interference of this kind, it is impossible to remain blind to what is passing around. I must repeat that the occurrences which have taken place in Ireland have unhappily taught the enemy where our weakness lies. Outrage and cruelties have been complained of, but the lamentable yet necessary severities were the effects of the treachery by which the connexion was assailed, and of the resistance opposed to the unwearied attempts to overturn the established constitution. Whoever looks at the facts into which the population is divided, the remains of the hostility between the English settlers and the native inhabitants, together with the unfortunate want of civilization, more conspicuous than in most parts of Europe, the prevalence of jacobin principles among the very lowest classes of the people, must be sensible of the disastrous state in which Ireland has been placed. The truth of this delineation will not be disputed by gentlemen on the other side. For these evils there is no remedy but an imperial legislation, aloof from the prejudices, uninfused by the passions, and uninfluenced by the jealousies to which a local legislature must be liable. Did I feel myself called upon not only in the regard which I must feel, and the care which duty imposes upon me for the interest of the whole empire, the separate view of the benefits which Ireland separately must derive from the measure, is sufficient to move it to consider it with willing attention. True Englishmen and true Irishmen, however ought to feel the same sentiments.—To allay the evils of the present situation of Ireland, to make way for a better system, to provide a remedy for those evils which are deeply rooted in the state of society, and the distribution of property, a legislative union is alone adequate. In addition to this may be considered the evils which arise from the want of industry and capital, which can only be corrected by blending more close with Ireland the industry and capital of this country. The leading distinction which prevails is that of protestant and catholic. The protestant feels that the claims of catholic for power and privilege (for row is all) threatens his ascendancy; and the catholic considers his exclusion as a grievance. In all the circumstances of the case, it is a difficult thing to say how far the rejection of Catholic claims is consistent with tranquility, and how far their concession would be compatible with the existing constitution. I must fairly say, however, that Ireland in this respect forms an exception to every country in Europe—runs counter to all received principles concerning religious establishments. The religion of the government and that of the multitude are different, and the mass of property is in the hands of the smaller number. It is difficult on general principles therefore to decide what line of policy ought to be pursued. The advocates for the catholic might plausibly contend that if the religion of the majority was not the established religion, it ought at least to have a parity. Some contend that this is their justice and their right. Those who maintain this argument, however, lose sight of the connection between the two countries; doubts, indeed, the agitation of the question is in every view attended with difficulty. No man could say, that in the present state of things, a full concession could be made to the catholics without endangering the existing constitution. On the other hand, without anticipating the discussion or the propriety of agitating the question speedily in an impartial parliament; two propositions are indisputable: When the day arrives when the catholics shew principles which may be safely trusted, concessions might be made by a united parliament, which would be dangerous in the present state of Ireland. The other is, that as long as the privileges claimed by the catholic are withheld, the catholic will feel the inconveniences less under an imperial than under a local parliament, and will less feel the irritation which now prompts him to urge his demands. By what other regulations the measures may be accompanied, how far it may be wise to relieve the lower orders from the pressure of tithes and other inconveniences under which they labor, these are points to which I merely allude.—They must be the subject of future discussion. I do not therefore hesitate to say, on this part of the subject, that with a view to remedy the distractions that had appeared in Ireland, with a view to that which has endangered and still threatens its security, the measure I have the honor of proposing to you promises much more serenity to that country and to this, and consequently to the whole of the British empire, than any other, or in any other shape it can be put; and I confess that, delicate as the subject is, I feel it my duty to submit it to the house,

and what I have said of the subject has arisen from the least intention of any duty. I have spoken hitherto in general upon the nature of the subject, but there are other objects which, although of less importance than these general points, which ought to form the basis of all legislation, are yet in themselves of great importance, and therefore material to be considered in a secondary view. I have heard it has been repeatedly asked—what are the advantages Ireland has to gain by this measure? I think I have already given a sufficient answer to that question. I think it is a question that has no difficulty in it—we know it has been asked, what are the advantages we have gained by the present war? I might say we have had brilliant successes—our triumphs have been great—our glories have been unparalleled—our territories have been increased—our trade has been protected—our power has been enlarged; but instead of dwelling upon such topics, by way of answer to such a question, I would say in a few words, "that what we have gained by this war is the preservation of all that we should have lost without it." I would say in answer to the other question, What will Ireland gain by the union? It is enough for Ireland that she will thereby have more than she enjoys at present of the British constitution—that she will have more of the blessings of that constitution in proportion as she becomes closely connected with this country—that she will be protected in the hour of danger, and that she may rest in safety on that account. I should say it had gained security for refuge from its calamity when at any time threatened to be overwhelmed by it. There are great politic and state considerations, and ought to be regarded as superior to all considerations of pecuniary advantages. There are in politics questions which are superior in their nature to any advantages that can appear from accounts, and such as cannot be comprised under them. Such do I deem that which has a tendency to the amelioration of the condition of a whole society, by improving the system on which it is to be carried on—by improving the progress of civilization—by enabling the Irish to converse more freely, and to copy English manners, and to acquire English habits of industry, by placing them in the way to increase the national wealth—by leading them on that path which will in time conduct them to a superior condition of life—by finally producing that cessation of disorders and confusions which have so often distracted that country, and which at present it has no power within itself to resist. Here I should have been contented to stop upon this part of the subject, but since there are those who will still ask what Ireland will gain by this measure in point of commerce? I am desirous of making this opportunity to answer them, in addition to what I have already advanced in its favour, a solid and unalterable compact between the two countries, and above all, the great advantage Ireland will derive by having made permanent those advantages she now enjoys, only upon a discretion which may be contingent and precarious. I beg leave to allude to a great and respectable authority, which has been subjected (Mr. Foster, speaker of the Irish house of commons.—[Here he read the words of the report of that gentleman's speech in the house of commons of Ireland upon the subject of the Irish propositions in the year 1785, by which it appeared that the trade to Ireland would be much improved by them, but by which it was contended that the conditions on which that was to be obtained was injurious to Ireland on other points of view, and stating the amount between imports and exports with regard to both countries; and then he proceeded to shew by reference to the state of trade at that moment, that Ireland had gained very considerably in her trade by the allowance of Great Britain that Ireland should have so much power of importing hither duty free; in those articles also which improved the value of land in Ireland, which enlarged their commerce, which improved their manufactures; and which, in short, improved their exportation from about one million to five millions sterling; that was to say, four fifths of their trade was improved by the allowance of the parliament of Great Britain. In favour of Ireland all this was done. Here he went over the article of linen and other commodities in which indulgences were granted to Ireland, as well as the other articles in which we had laid on a duty of thirty per cent. upon the importation from other countries, in order that it might amount nearly to a prohibition, and thereby to give the greatest possible encouragement to the trade with Ireland, and that Great Britain sacrificed upwards of 700,000l. per annum, for this purpose in one particular. This he illustrated by reference to various documents; and concluded what he had to urge upon that head of the subject with the observation, that all these advantages, great as they were to Ireland, depended upon the will and discretion of the parliament of Great Britain, and upon that only.] But, continued he, it is not to any indulgence of any opinion of my own, that I should wish to give way upon this occasion; but I am speaking the sentiments of the best informed men of both countries, who have judged the subject dispassionately, when I say, that the advantages to Ireland in point of trade will be very considerable if the measure now proposed should be adopted. In saying this I am not alarmed, lest I should awaken the jealousy of the people of this country; I know that they wish for the prosperity of Ireland, and that they feel, that to increase the wealth of the one without diminishing that of the other, is to increase the strength of both; such as I am convinced will be the effect of the measure proposed, whenever it shall be adopted, and I hope I shall not be compelled to feel the melancholy persuasion, that these general principles on which, I have said, depend the prosperity of empires, are to be set aside for ever by the power of prejudice. That would indeed be fatal to the interests of the British empire. But to any act of force I shall never agree,

to that fatal extremity I shall never consent; all the subject I wish to be discussed fairly and liberally; that it should be proposed by the legislature of this country to that of Ireland, with good temper and firmness, and I hope, no fatal stop to the final adoption of it will be taken, in consequence of the blindness of those who may lead the councils of our sister kingdom. I say, if we feel ourselves to be interested, as most unquestionably we are interested, in the prosperity of Ireland, we must feel also a wish, that such prosperity may have a lasting security; at present the whole of its commercial prosperity depends entirely on the discretion of the legislature of Great Britain, and not on the legislature of Ireland. If that is the state of the case, as most unquestionably it is, while the two kingdoms are separate in parliament, Ireland cannot have even the security itself could wish at this moment, for the continuance of its own commercial advantages. I have stated the reasons why it appears to me that this measure ought to be dispassionately weighed in the sister kingdom. I am aware, however, that objections have been urged against it, with that resemblance to reason which has the same force as the best arguments in some cases, and too often produces the most unhappy effects upon the affairs of nations. For the present moment the case is so with regard to this measure, but I hope the delusion will soon vanish. I must here, however, take notice of some of the objections which have been urged against the measure. The first objection is, that which was stated in the house by the honourable gentleman on the other side of the house, namely, that the parliament of Ireland is incompetent to the discussion of the question, or rather, to embrace the measure without the consent of the whole people of Ireland. The honourable gentleman, I believe, said this for the purpose rather of deprecating the discussion, than to convey any doubts which he really entertained of that competency. I did not understand that he had in reality that doubt. I hope I understood him rightly—if not, my next hope would be, that there may be an opportunity afforded of having that subject distinctly discussed between us. For the present I will assume the right of parliament in this particular. I will say that no man in this house can deny the competency of the Irish parliament to exercise an active power over the whole of that, as well as any other object: That the Irish parliament exercising its power freely, fully and lawfully for Ireland, and it certainly may, have legitimate authority for that purpose; no man can deny that the parliament of Ireland coequal with our own in power, has that power, without denying at the same moment the whole of the authority of the parliament of Great Britain, and without insisting that the whole of its acts, that every thing that has been done in its name and by its authority; every thing that has ever been done that defers the name of an act of government; every thing that has been done by any public authority, how licit or licentious, or how beneficial to the public, is neither more nor less than an act of usurpation. I say that unless he is prepared to deny the power of the parliament of Great Britain to enter into a similar engagement, or indeed into any engagement, not only he must deny the validity of the union between England and Scotland, but he must also deny the authority under which we now sit; he must deny the authority of every law that has been enacted for the common security of both; he must deny the authority of every measure adopted by parliament. He must also call in question every measure adopted by parliament. He must also call in question every measure that has been in parliament which he has been the most forward to maintain. This point, sir, is of so much importance that I think I ought not to suffer the opportunity to pass without explaining what it is I mean upon it. If this principle of the incompetency of parliament to the decision of matter be allowed, or that parliament had no legitimate authority to discuss and determine the matter; you will be driven to the acknowledgment of a principle the most dangerous that ever was adopted in any state, I mean the principle that parliament cannot adopt any measure of great importance without recurring to its constituent and delegated authority for directions—that is to say, you can never determine on any great or important measure, without appealing to the people at large for their directions. That consequently you acted without any legitimate authority when you regulated the principality of Wales, or either of the counties palatine of England. That every law you ever made without making that appeal, (for if true in any, it is true in every case) is of no legal authority. This would annihilate the whole body politic of this country, for it would declare void every public measure on which has depended the safety of the British empire for upwards of a century. It will not apply merely to every law which has a general public object in view; but it will destroy the distinctions you have established upon the rights of various electors in this country. It will apply to the freeholder's qualification of forty shillings a year, as well as the various qualifications of electors, which you have established from time to time, and which have been acted upon throughout the whole of this country as well as of Ireland. In Ireland, indeed, the case will be still stronger than it is in England against the legitimacy of power, for it may be said that the protestants, who are comparatively only a few, have passed laws disposing of the property and determining upon the rights of Roman Catholics, who compose the great mass of the people of Ireland. God forbid I should blame any of those measures; I am only stating the principle that parliament has no authority to determine upon this question, to shew the extent to which it must necessarily lead if you admit it at all. The effects of admitting that the sovereignty is not in the hands of those who compose a legislature, but in the hands only of those who delegate it, may be dreadful. But here let me ask whether any man who chooses to allow that the acts which

the parliament of this country have done to disfranchise some and enfranchise others are legal, will say that the principle which makes them legal will not extend to a power of uniting them legal in point of principle can be successfully contended for, a single moment, nor should I find it necessary to dwell upon this point in the manner I do, if I were not convinced that it is connected with false arguments and the misrepresentations and perversions of all the principles on which all governments are legitimately founded. Such indeed is always the case when any one imagines that the sovereignty of a state resides any where but in the legislature. Such is always the case when any one imagines that there is a sovereignty as it were in absence, that is, in the people themselves, and ready to be called forth upon any occasion. There are the principles that have done so much mischief, that have caused such desolation over so many parts of the habitable globe. These principles are so well known by their practical effects, as hardly to have an enlightened disinterested advocate, when they are viewed in their own colors; and yet with all the horrors we have at the sight of the effects of these principles—with all the love we have for the constitution of this country, in which there is to be found no trace of such principles; we find many enlightened minds who abhor such principles when they see them clearly, still tainted by men of their opinion; and this is truly the very mistake that has produced such mighty evils in mankind within these few years—and give me leave to say, that this tincture of Jacobinism in the opinion of some leading men, that is to say, that the sovereignty is in the people upon certain important occasions, has done all the mischief we have witnessed, and this danger is the greatest when it is plainly urged, and accompanied by other arguments that are not disputed. When this principle is thus disguised, it is truly dangerous, because the poison, although deadly, is invisible to the mass of mankind, who are able to resist the attack when it is open. No society can exist long where this principle is cherished; supreme authority must lodge in some delegated manner or other. The question, whether the people shall resume that power or not, because it is alleged by some, and possibly believed by others, to have been abused by those who possess it, is, and always will be, a question of extreme responsibility upon those who bring it into agitation. It is also applicable to those who act upon it, as well as those who cause it; but in no chapter of human jurisprudence are we to find any provision for such a case, it can consist with the safety of no constitution upon earth, and whenever agitated, is dangerous to any. It can make no part of monarchy, because the first and leading feature of that form of government is confidence in the executive power; as little can it consist with an aristocracy, for that also implies that some persons are selected from others to manage public affairs. It could make no part of any government except that imaginary one which never yet existed, and which I believe never will exist—a pure democracy. If this principle is to disunite a quality as not to fit for admission into any government that may be, how much ought it to be shunned in that government, which from its being a compound of all good governments, has every thing that is excellent in all, without the defects of either? Shall that principle be cherished as the best which is admitted to be too bad for the worst of governments? Shall that principle be received in proportion as the very reason which ever made it necessary in any state at any time is unlikely to exist? Shall we say that the less occasion we have for so desperate a remedy, the more eager we ought to be to embrace it? Such questions must be all answered in the affirmative, before that principle can be adopted in the best government in this world. I feel that these points are of great importance, because they belong more or less to every government upon earth, and involve the happiness of all its inhabitants, and therefore I have said more upon them than otherwise I should. I say, therefore, that those who talk of the sovereignty of the people, are the enemies of their race, and that is chiefly owing to their doctrine, which the mass of mankind have not the means of duly examining, and therefore cannot thoroughly understand, that all the evils which have so much overrun the world of late, have had their effect. I therefore hope the Parliament of Ireland will in due season feel the force of this point, and feel the importance of the consequence to which it leads. I am sure the Parliament of England feels it already. The next head of objection refers to that which is not less prevalent than that which I have been explaining, and which is a thing depending chiefly upon a word, but which produces a very natural, and would be a very laudable feeling, provided the subject called for it, but I will here take the liberty to call it a mistaken notion; I mean that which is generally understood under the head of national pride. That is a feeling which I know is easily awakened in the most generous minds, and therefore as soon called forth in Ireland as any where else. This measure has been treated as if Ireland were called upon to surrender its national independence. I admit that nothing to a proud nation can be a compensation for such surrender; but before we conclude that this measure calls upon Ireland to do so, we may as well examine the assertion. If they mean to say that it is to be understood as a maxim, that any nation surrenders its independence when it unites to another—or in other words, that when two societies unite, and the one of them happens to be larger than the other, the lesser of the two must forfeit its independence by a union; if they mean to say that when two societies unite, and the one of them happens to enjoy more advantages than the other, the one that has the fewer advantages uniting with the other, and being allowed to participate advantages it never before enjoyed, must therefore be allowed to surrender its independence; if to be allowed to enjoy blessings it never felt before, be to surrender independence, I have

nothing to say. But if you examine the history of all the nations of Europe, even the most proud of its independence, you will find there is not one of them that has not given this sort of test to a surrender of independence—there is not one of them can be said to be independent. Our forefathers knew not how to support the true dignity of their country, if this is the true mode of judging. But I say on the contrary that they acted wisely, for they frequently by union put an end to the warfare of petty states. Will any man tell me that the different districts that have from time to time been incorporated into our empire, resigned their independence by that incorporation? Will any man tell me that after these incorporations the inhabitants incorporated had less room for their exertions than before? If this doctrine be true, what has become of the rights of the different countries of England, for many of their distinctions have from time to time been done away for the general advantage of the whole kingdom? Indeed if you indulge this sort of chimera, you will work the utter destruction of all independence in a nation in the present state of society all over the earth; and then, to enjoy your independence you must go back again into a state of nature. I say, therefore, that the arguments that have been urged against the measure upon this topic are vague and delusive; and that they refer to nothing that is real in human life. But what need have we to indulge any vague theory upon the subject, when we have obvious principles to guide us. If a country contains sufficient means of credit to support its trade and commerce with other powers, and has the protection of that trade within itself; if within itself it has all due means of military and naval force to secure its rights, and preserve its honours; if it has the means to secure the due industry of its inhabitants; if, in addition to all this, it possesses a free constitution, and equal to any other upon earth, or what is pretty nearly the same thing, has acquired the habit of thinking so; then indeed I should think that such a country forfeited its independence; or at least diminished it unwisely by uniting with any other nation; and that it need not join any one to make a larger empire, for it would be large enough for all the purposes of practicable happiness in this world. But if instead of this, there be a kingdom threatened with danger, from without and within; if it has not the means, but by the aid of another, of protecting itself in any of these advantages, and that other be a neighbouring nation, using the same language; ruled by laws of the same kind, but of superior correctness; used to customs of the same kind, but some of them of more force and practical advantage; possessing more trade and superior means of acquiring wealth; possessing also a Constitution which is the admiration and envy of the rest of the world, and of which the Constitution of the other is an inadequate resemblance, and that it is only the complaint that the resemblance is not perfect. I say all these points united, I would ask if it be inconsistent with the true principles or rational sense of dignity and honour for a State thus inferior to another to unite with that other? In other words, would it be unwise in such an inferior State to unite with the superior? I ask whether Ireland be not in that situation? and whether this be not the view which Ireland ought to have of the question? I am mistaken if there be not fair and rational grounds and principles, fit for the decision of those who council the affairs of States, and an answer to all true national pride which has of late been so much attempted to guide the minds of Irishmen. With a view of the enjoyment of liberty as far as it is consistent with good order; with the encouragement of industry; with protection to property; with the progress of civilization; with the increase of trade and commerce; with safety to the land-holder; with care to the manufacturer; with comfort to the peasant; with that circulation of contentment and invigorating principle which runs through the whole frame of social life; for the increase of laudable ambition for the display of those talents of which Irishmen have as great a share as any nation upon earth. With these views, and for these purposes compare the present situation of Ireland with that which may become its situation, and then let any man tell me whether the real dignity of Ireland is likely to suffer by an Union with Great Britain? If I do not much misunderstand the thing, Ireland will consult her honour as well as her interest by according to this measure. In short it will be only giving to the people of Ireland more of that for which they have an attachment than they possess already, and giving them only what they feel to want. Will any man tell me it is making Ireland subject to a foreign yoke, when it is only the voluntary association of two countries by the equality of laws, whose wishes are so nearly allied, and who ought to differ in nothing, who can differ in nothing without injuring their mutual interests, who want nothing but Union to make them invulnerable.

(To be continued.)

For Edenton, N. C.
THE SLOOP
L. A. R. K.,
FOR Freight, enquire at No. 135, Market Street,
April 11 6t
NANKENS,
Hyson,
Hyson Skin, and } T. E. A. S.,
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