

SPEECHES

OF THE LATE

Right Honourable

RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN.

(SEVERAL CORRECTED BY HIMSELF.)

EDITED BY

A CONSTITUTIONAL FRIEND.

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Sir, I deny this doctrine; I say there is a sovereignty in abeyance in the people; and if there is not, I contend that the present family on the throne are usurpers—the practice of the revolution clearly shows the force of the argument. When King James the Second abdicated the crown, the parliament did not proceed to do any act of itself for settling the crown, but expressly called a convention, which the Lord Mayor of London and fifty commoners were invited to attend. All the members who had sat in the parliament of Charles the Second were also summoned; and every step which could be taken in the then pressing exigency of affairs, was actually taken to shew that the appointment to the crown was in the people, and in them only. Mr. Sheridan urged his part of the argument with great force and ability in several points of view, which the lateness of the hour, abridged by the length of the former part of the debate, will not allow us to touch upon. He concluded by moving his hearty negative to the Speaker's leaving the chair. What we have already given is, indeed a mere abridged outline.

The house divided; for the Speaker's leaving the chair 149; against it 24.

FEBRUARY 11.

UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN WITH IRELAND.

Mr. Pitt moved the order of the day for the house going into a committee for the farther consideration of His Majesty's message, which being read, and the Speaker having moved that the same be taken into consideration,

Mr. SHERIDAN rose. He said, it was not his intention at present to oppose the Speaker's leaving the chair, for the purpose of preventing the house from resuming the consideration of His Majesty's message. He did, indeed, understand that an ho-

norable friend of his, now in the country, had an intention of coming down to the house for that purpose. The severity of the weather had, however, probably prevented him from executing that intention. Had that honorable friend been present, he should certainly have thought it incumbent upon him to give him all the support in his power; because, from every account that had come to his knowledge of the temper and proceedings of the people and parliament of Ireland since the subject of union had been first agitated, he felt a sincere conviction that the most beneficial service he could perform for both countries would be to throw every possible obstacle in the way of the resolutions which had been brought forward by the right honorable gentleman. But having already, on several occasions, argued at considerable length against the principle of the measure; it certainly was not his intention, in the absence of his honorable friend, to oppose the house going into a committee. He only rose at present to move an instruction to the committee, which he conceived to be strictly consistent with the object of His Majesty's message, and likely to accomplish that object in a more effectual mode than that of a union. He was apprized that it was in his power to suggest in the committee any other plan for consolidating the interest of the British empire, and healing the distractions of Ireland, than that which had been avowed by the minister; for, though the house had twice decided that the Speaker should leave the chair upon the question of going into the committee, the project of union had not yet been sanctioned by either the committee or the house. But it was on this very account that he chose the present time for bringing it forward, as it might have the effect of preventing the farther discussion of a project which every consideration of sound policy induced him to deprecate. As the right honorable gentleman, however, was, by the forms of the house, entitled to a pre-audience, he would not now

go into any detail of argument to prove that the instruction he intended to move was such as the house ought to adopt, but would merely state it as a proposition which was fairly entitled to the consideration of the committee. This proposition was no less than that all the advantages which were professed to be expected from a union, would be more certainly attained by the parliament of Great Britain setting the example of abolishing all civil incapacities on account of religious distinctions. He did not mean that any should be taken for that purpose, which should have the least appearance of trenching upon the independence of the Irish parliament; on the contrary, he had taken care to word his motion so, as to avoid any such construction. He intended that its operation should be left entirely to the force of example, which, aided by the stronger necessity that existed for its application in the unhappy circumstances of the sister kingdom, would, he had no doubt, speedily incline the independent legislature of that country to its spontaneous adoption. He did not conceive that the right honorable gentleman, upon an impartial view of all these circumstances, would contend that the time was improper for such a measure. Whether its fitness at the present crisis would or would not be disputed, it possessed this recommendation at least, that it was considered by His Majesty's ministers, in 1795, to be a measure of prudence, safety, and indispensable necessity. To anticipate any general objection that might be made to it, he would beg leave to quote the declaration of a noble Earl, as expressed in a passage or two of a publication which he had in his hand, and the whole contents of which that noble Earl offered to prove in the house of lords.— [Here Mr. Sheridan read an extract from Earl Fitzwilliam's letter to Lord Carlisle, stating the agreement of the Duke of Portland and Mr. Pitt in the opinion that the emancipation of the Catholics was necessary for the preservation of Ireland; and

that though it was thought more advisable to delay the measure until a period of greater tranquillity, yet that, if brought forward, he was authorized to give it a handsome support on the part of government.]—Thus the measure which he wished to be given in instruction to the committee was then considered by the gentlemen opposite to him to be consonant to the principles of sound policy and justice; and, if pressed by the Catholics, was to receive the handsome support of the government of Ireland. He would be glad to know, whether the events which had since happened in that distracted country, and all of which had been predicted by Earl Fitzwilliam, were not such as to induce the right honorable gentleman to regret, from the bottom of his heart, that he had not permitted the measure to be brought forward at that time. If he should say, after witnessing the melancholy and alarming consequences of the recal of that nobleman, that he still felt no regret at the proceeding of the British cabinet, the house and the whole country would certainly hear that avowal with astonishment. Considerations of much weightier importance than any that could arise from mere curiosity, required that the right honorable gentleman should explain the motives of that sudden change in his sentiments. If he could judge by his present gestures, indeed, he seemed to indicate that there had been no change. The natural inference then was, that when he appeared to countenance the scheme of emancipation, he never entertained any idea of carrying it into execution, and that he sent over Lord Fitzwilliam merely to dupe the Irish Catholics for a time, to suit his own purpose. To this conclusion, however, it was not very probable that the right honorable gentleman would accede, for it would incur a much stronger imputation on his character than an acknowledgment that he had changed his mind upon the question of emancipation, in consequence of unfitness of time, or change of circumstances. But

either he must submit to that imputation, or it would be incumbent on him to show very strong reasons for suddenly abandoning a measure, which, on the same noble authority, he was stated to have admitted to be of more service to the British empire than any thing that could happen short of union. This, by the way, was the first occasion upon which union was hinted at, as preferable to Catholic emancipation; and shewed how long the present project had been floating in his mind, though he had not till now found what he conceived to be a fit opportunity for urging it. Had the right honorable gentleman attempted to prove that all the efforts of the Irish parliament would be ineffectual to the extinction of religious feuds and political discontents; had he shown that the parliament itself was hostile to its proposal, or that the opposition to it among the Protestant classes of Ireland was so general, as, if it were persisted in, to produce those very evils which it was intended to prevent; then would it be thought no ways surprising that he had changed his opinion, nor would he have any reason to disavow the change. But it was not probable that he would use any such arguments as these, in opposition to the strong evidence of facts. The primary object of Lord Fitzwilliam's administration was, from the first moment of his landing in Ireland, avowed to be the complete emancipation of the Catholics. It was known by every member of the Irish Parliament, and to every man in the country; it was equally well known that it constituted the avowed ground of Lord Fitzwilliam's recall; and yet so far was it from exciting their displeasure, that there never was a Lord Lieutenant who left Ireland accompanied with testimonies of more general regret for his departure than Lord Fitzwilliam. The right honorable gentleman had broadly stated, that it was frivolous to assert that the settlement of 1782 was final, or to suppose that it was then intended that the connection between the two countries should

be entirely left upon that footing, that the evils which had since arisen could be no otherwise radically cured than by a union, and that this remedy, if not adopted now, might be put off *ad Græcas kalendas*. Was it to be inferred from this, that abandoning all idea of the necessity of the free consent of the Irish nation, and considering their representatives as worthy of being put in strait waistcoats, he would proceed at once to cram it down their throats? He had said, that he wished to wait for a moment of calm, when the irritation occasioned by the first view of the measure should subside, and its many advantages could be impartially considered: yet his conduct was in direct contradiction to this principle, for he loudly talked of the necessity of an immediate remedy. There was an opposition between his professions and proceedings which was apparently inexplicable. If the right honorable gentleman would avow that he designed to carry it by coercion, his anxiety to have his resolutions carried would then excite no surprise. But if it was his real intention to wait for the result of calm and temperate discussion in the Irish parliament, what security could he give that the adoption of it would not equally be put off *ad Græcas kalendas*? The remedy of an union was then contingent and precarious, if, indeed, there remained any hope of its being adopted. But that which his motion contained was of present use, and whether applied by the British parliament or the Irish parliament, in the first instance, would be productive of the most beneficial effects. The right honorable gentleman expressed a hope, that the Irish house of commons would resume the consideration of the measure, in a calm and dispassionate temper. He likewise entertained the same expectation. It was not very likely, indeed, that they would take it up again with much favor, when they reflected upon the strange terms that had been used in that house as applicable to their proceedings, such as intoxication,

wolves, &c. &c. But he hoped they would re-consider those prejudices which led them to reject the claims of the Catholics, and generously admit them to a share of the little they had it in their power to give. He hoped they would reflect, that Catholic exclusion was the cause of their own weakness, and had been made a reason of wresting from their independence. Such were his expectations from the fair and manly manner in which Mr. Barrington and several other members had confessed their former errors.—The right honorable gentleman might well seem surprised at this public confession of error; for certainly it could not be laid to his charge, that he had ever made any recantation in words, however frequently he had done so in deeds. He hoped the Irish parliament would reflect upon how little they could impart to the Catholic, which was no more than the power of sitting with themselves, and being admitted to a share of a few offices; and to this would join the reflection that Britain and Ireland were now almost the only countries in Europe where civil exclusion was still maintained on account of religious distinctions. They would reflect, that if the Irish Catholic acquired the possession of property, it must be through the medium of that industry which would civilize his habits, and fit him for becoming a peaceful and valuable member of the community. When they dispassionately viewed the effects that had arisen in many parts of the continent from the abolition of religious feuds; when they reflected, that in some of them the two great sects of Protestants and Catholics harmonised so far as to have a regular interchange of worship, and that in all questions of civil policy their interests were invariably united, he hoped they would cast off those absurd prejudices which induced them to consider their Catholic brethren as the advocates of foreign supremacy in their civil as well as religious concerns. They would particularly see the absurdity of entertaining any fears from what a

pope could do at this time of day. Wretched and abandoned as was the present situation of that old man, he was convinced, that if any person were to inform him that in any land in the Atlantic Ocean the dread of his authority had been made the pretext for excluding more than three millions of men from the most valuable privileges of civil existence, he would feel some consolation that the misery to which himself was now reduced deprived their oppressors of that argument. He had no doubt that they would re-consider the question, but he had as little doubt that the effect would not be favorable to a union. He had no doubt that they would see they were now brought to the alternative of sacrificing either their independence, or their prejudices, that they must make either a union of affection and interest with the Catholics, or enter into a false and hollow union with England. He hoped the time was now come when, forgetful of their party differences, the seeds of animosity would be for ever extirpated from the bosoms of both parties, and when the protestant would stretch forth the hand of reconciliation, dry up the tears, and pour balm into the wounds of his bleeding Catholic brother. He felt a firm conviction that a union like this, while it rang the departing knell of religious discord and religious broil, would at the same time, if cherished and matured by a wise co-operation, tend more to strengthen the connection between Great Britain and Ireland than any other that could be suggested. He would not trouble the house with any farther arguments, but would conclude with moving,

“ That it be an instruction to the committee to consider how far it would be consistent with justice and policy, and conducive to the general interests, and especially to the consolidation of the strength of the British empire, were civil incapacities, on account of religious distinction, to be done away throughout His Majesty’s dominions.”

Mr. Pitt replied.—The Speaker observed, that if the house were of opinion, that the tenor of His Majesty's message did not warrant the introduction of the motion, to discuss it at present was certainly irregular. If on the other hand it did come within the power of the committee, it was not regular as at present worded. It was necessary that some such words as, "that it be an instruction to the committee in the first instance," &c.

Mr. Sheridan said, he had not the least objection to withdraw his motion for the present, but he would assent to the proposed amendment, for the purpose of having it in his power to make some comments on what had fallen from the right honorable gentleman opposite. He thought it very strange language to tell a member of that house, that he was not serious in the arguments which he pressed upon its attention. But probably the right honorable gentleman only ascribed to him what he felt to be too much the habit of his own mind, and what he thought to be more general than he would find upon candid examination. Nothing could be more silly than to say that he attacked the independence of the Irish parliament. This was a very strange comment upon his motion, by a man who had himself brought forward resolutions tending to procure a total surrender of that independence. He had argued that it was unsafe to grant Catholic emancipation without union. He would then ask, why he had authorized Lord Fitzwilliam to promise it—why he had raised that expectation in the minds of the Catholics, of the fallacy of which he had since endeavored to convince them by a system of cruel massacre and torture of every denomination?—(Here a cry of "hear! hear!")—He would repeat it, that he considered the right honorable gentleman, and those who had supported him with a mercenary confidence, as the authors of all the calamities which had befallen that unhappy country.—("Hear! hear!")—The house in adopting his motion would only repeat the sentiments of His Majesty's ministers in 1795, and give greater effect to the pledge which they had then given. He concluded

with saying, that it was not his intention at present to take the sense of the house upon the subject, though he should think it incumbent upon him to bring it forward in some other way.

Mr. Sheridan's motion was put and negatived without a division.

Mr. Pitt next moved, that the Speaker leave the chair.—A debate ensued.

Mr. Sheridan said, he was surpris'd to see so much pains employ'd to prove that there existed a pledge to do something farther in consequence of the adjustment of 1782, as he could not discover that ministers could derive any aid to their argument by fixing such a pledge on the parliament of either country. It appeared to him rather to be a disadvantage to the argument they maintained, as parliament would not be so free to act as if there had been no pledge. This house had recognised Ireland to be independent by an act as solemn as the bill of rights; the Irish address entered upon the Journals of the house, declared, that their separate legislature was essential to their liberties; and was it consistent then to enter on the journals a set of resolutions directly contrary to the privileges which the Irish parliament, in its former resolution, declares its determination to maintain. It appeared, that ministers themselves had not thought any thing of the kind now represented as necessary to be done. When an unforeseen case did occur in a cause in the Court of King's Bench, for which provision was made, and the bill brought in for the purpose, shewed the understanding on the subject, for it was a bill to settle such points as have arisen or may arise to points of legislation and judicature, why did not the right honorable gentleman say then that he thought so much necessary to complete what was done in 1782? In 1785, when the commercial propositions were brought forward, nothing was represented as necessary but commercial regulations. When told that the fourth proposition did affect the independence of Ireland, he denied that such was

its nature, and even added, that it could be liable to such a construction, he rather would abandon the plan and its advantages than raise a doubt upon that subject. Now, however, he had discovered a necessity for something more, which for sixteen years he had overlooked, though repeated occasions had occurred to draw forth his opinions. He found now, indeed, that Ireland was in his power, and the time favorable for his scheme. Notwithstanding the fine words of the right honorable gentleman, the time chosen for the attempt, justified the comparison which had been made to the proceedings of France. The right honorable gentleman, indeed, had found out, that those who opposed him laboured under a charge which had never before been deemed serious. Those who differed from him were disreputable for the mere circumstance of being out of office. It seems they ought to throw a veil over every part of life but that which had been spent in office. The right honorable gentleman, and his friends about him, would no doubt approach their latter end with complacency in the recollection of a well-spent life, in which there were so few blots and stains of opposition ; but they ought to be content to enjoy this happiness without reproaching others with their misfortune in being excluded from the satisfaction of an official career. The right honorable gentleman was offended with the comparison to the conduct of France with regard to Switzerland ; but in the odium of that comparison, he begged leave to share with his honorable friend, for in principle the conduct of the right honorable gentleman was the same as the most jacobinical proceedings of the Directory. He was not awed by the foundling eloquence of the right honorable gentleman, as he had so often found, that in proportion as his argument was weak, he endeavored to cover its defects by lofty words. What was the case? Were a French declaimer, with an hundredth part of the right honorable gentleman's

powers, to review the history of Ireland, might he not plausibly represent, that after two hundred years oppression the independence of Ireland is at last recognised in 1782 ; that under the advice of British ministers its affairs has been so conducted, that in sixteen years it was left in such a condition as to be unable, as was represented, to protect itself either against foreign force or domestic disaffection ; the minister then sends 40,000 troops to her aid, which she receives with gratitude, till at last Ireland is told that she must incorporate with Great Britain ! Would not this be represented as a fraud to abuse the weakness of Ireland for the destruction of her independence ? It was said, indeed, that no force was to be used ; that her free consent would be required. This country, however, was to claim the privilege of judging when Ireland was free to judge for herself ; she was to be considered as mad and intoxicated till she acceded to the proposition which we resolve it necessary for her interests. In principle, this was the same as the conduct of France, so much reprobated. It was nothing to say that it was for the good of Ireland, if that good was thrust upon her by compulsion—intimidation of every kind was used to effect the object. Every placeman who dared to vote according to his own judgment was deprived of his place, and degraded still farther, as the right honorable gentleman represented, by being turned out of office. When such motives were addressed to men's minds to induce them to submit to the views of the minister, it was a mockery to say that no corruption and intimidation were used. An honorable gentleman took offence at the supposition of a mercenary support ; but without ascribing motives to the conduct of members of parliament, it so happened, that many of those who joined the minister for the support of the war, had got their job, their place, or pension. He did not say that these were the motives, they might be the consequences of a conduct ; but it might have been

better if many had not given such suspicion of their sincerity when they spoke so much of the magnitude of the crisis, and the disinterestedness of their support of the minister. The case of Mr. Burke losing his election for Bristol, in consequence of voting for allowing certain commercial advantages to Ireland, was represented by an honorable gentleman (Mr. Ryder) as a proof of the liberality of the parliament of this country, because the advantages in question were granted by a British parliament; but when the circumstances of the times, and the conduct of the volunteers of Ireland were considered, perhaps there would not be so much reason to extol the generosity of this country on that occasion. In reply to what was said of the mischievous consequences of retracting the pledge given to the Catholics in Ireland, allusion had been made to the confessions of the conspirators in that country, and of a person in particular, described as his (Mr. Sheridan's) friend, and a reference to the testimonies at Maidstone. This was a subject, the discussion of which he was desirous rather to take up than avoid. He had seen many attempts made out of doors, at least to implicate those who gave evidence at Maidstone in the guilt of Mr. O'Connor. Had those, who are supposed to influence the ministerial press in this country, been distinguished by the least candor, they would have drawn a quite different inference from that occurrence from that which they had laboured to enforce. It was evident from the very paper, a connection with which was the guilt imputed to Mr. O'Connor at Maidstone, that the persons who gave evidence to his character, were those least likely to favor the designs of France, and who had the least to expect had their projects succeeded. It proved, that there was one spirit and one feeling in the country to resist the attempts of the enemy. Such was the comment which that event naturally suggested; but a quite different construction had been studiously

given to it. He should confine himself to the evidence he himself had given on O'Connor's trial. He did not retract that evidence, and he called upon a learned gentleman who had been present at the trial, to point out any inconsistency in his conduct. He knew that Mr. O'Connor always spoke in strong terms of any interference of foreign force in the affairs of England, and his mind seemed so much impressed with the superior grievances of Ireland, that he would not admit that on the comparison England had any cause whatever to complain. He might have differed from Mr. O'Connor respecting the remedy that was to be applied to the situation of Ireland; but upon that point he was not called upon to say any thing. The learned gentlemen, the Attorney and Solicitor General, both as lawyers and as gentlemen, had forbore to put to him any question respecting that point, because it had nothing to do with the particular charge at Maidstone, and because they were not disposed to perplex him by any irrelevant question. Mr. O'Connor never had made him his confidant. He knew too well his opinion respecting foreign interference to give any reason to suppose that it was a thing which he (Mr. O'Connor) could encourage. With respect to the provocation of Ireland to pursue any particular mode of resistance, he should say nothing; it was enough to say, that he never could permit Ireland to be seized on as a post from which this country could be attacked. He might pity the hardships of Ireland, but as an Englishman he could never suffer the enemy to obtain such a favourable point from which to direct their attack against our existence as a nation. Such was his answer to the insinuations thrown out, and which, from the manner and tone, he had reason to suppose, were in a particular manner levelled against himself. To return to the subject then—to the fatal policy which dictated the recal of Earl Fitzwilliam, was to be attributed the calamities by which Ireland

had been distracted. It was a matter of no light importance. Those who advised that fatal step were responsible for its consequences. The retraction of that concession which Earl Fitzwilliam was authorised to support, had prepared the Catholics for the share they had taken in the late disturbances. Ministers had been challenged by the noble Earl to deny that the point was arranged, and that he went over with conciliation to the Catholics as a leading object of his policy. But, it was said, that the emancipation of the Catholics was not the object of the conspiracy; but could it be denied that the discontents of the Catholics was the instrument by which the conspirators promoted their own purposes? The conspirators had shewn, that they feared concession as likely to frustrate their hopes, and rejoiced in the irritation which the disappointment had produced. They were apprehensive of the return of Earl Fitzwilliam, as calculated to give that satisfaction to the Catholics as would disappoint their views. He concluded with urging the danger of continuing the agitation of the question at the present moment.

The house divided; for the Speaker leaving the chair 131; against it 19.

FEBRUARY 12.

UNION BETWEEN IRELAND AND GREAT
BRITAIN.

The order of the day for the house to go into a committee upon His Majesty's message respecting the Union with Ireland.

Mr. SHERIDAN.—Sir, I certainly do not rise for the purpose of detaining the house any length of time, but I cannot agree with the honorable baronet that there was an understanding on the part of gentlemen on this side of the house, that they were not at full liberty to oppose your leaving the chair. There was, indeed, an exhortation from the right honor-

and in all probability the noble lord was equally unaware of this circumstance, that the counsel for the petitioners did not go any circuit, while those retained on his part did. But of this the petitioners were fully apprised, and they would fain urge him to trial without the advantage of his counsel. It might be asked, why he did not make this proposition of postponement somewhat sooner. He would candidly answer, because, as he stated before, when this subject was under consideration, he really did not think the petition would be persisted in, but from what he had heard of their proceedings within the last few weeks, he was led to believe that his opponents were much more sanguine, even than he suspected, and that they were resolved to persevere. Upon the whole, however, the right honorable gentleman could not persuade himself to suppose that that house would call on any gentleman to enter upon such an important investigation stripped of the aid of his counsel; and he could not help observing that the attempt to take advantage of him in this instance, was not a very liberal return for the manner in which he gave way to the noble lord's motion upon a former occasion. But his manner of acting towards the noble lord and his friends in this transaction was, that which perhaps few men would be ready to imitate.

Ayes 162; noes 12.

MARCH 17.

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY.

Lord Percy moved for leave to bring in a bill for the gradual abolition of slavery in the West Indies.

Mr. SHERIDAN having anxiously expected that the bill passed the preceding night was the preamble of the ultimate measure of emancipation, thought that he should be guilty of the grossest inconsistency in giving a silent vote on the present question. With these sentiments he need scarcely say, that

the noble earl had his thanks for having directed the attention of the house to this important subject, even at that early period. The noble earl's statement had been misrepresented. He had never proposed to enfranchise the living negroes; his measure, as he understood him, was to commence with infants born after a period, which would remain a matter of future parliamentary discussion. The planters were entitled to fair dealing on this subject. If the house meant to say, that by abolishing the slave trade they had done all that duty demanded, and that they would leave the emancipation of the slaves to the hazard of fortuitous circumstances, let them be explicit, and say so; but if there lurked in any man's mind a secret desire to proceed in that business, a secret conviction that more ought to be done than had been done, it was unmanly, it was dishonorable, not to speak out. For one he would boldly declare that he had further views; he hoped that the young nobleman who had done his feelings so much credit, by the proposition which he had that evening made, would stand to his ground. If he persevered in the pursuit of his object with the same zeal as his right honorable friend opposite had done, he had no doubt that he would meet with the same success. An honorable baronet had talked of a cloven foot; he pleaded guilty to the cloven foot, but he would say that of the man who expressed pleasure at the hope of seeing so large a portion of the human race freed from the shackles of tyranny; it ought rather to be said, that he had displayed the pennon of an angel than the cloven foot of a demon. It was true no immediate connection existed between the abolition of the slave trade and the abolition of slavery, but the same feelings must be roused by the consideration of both questions; and he who detested the one practice must also detest the other. He did not like to hear the term property applied to the subjects of a free country. Could man become the property of man?

A colony emancipating from the free constitution of England must carry with it the principles of that constitution, and could no more shake off its well known allegiance to the constitution than it could shake off its allegiance to the sovereign. He trusted that the planters might be induced to lead the way on the subject of emancipation; but he cautioned the house against being too sanguine on this subject. Were the planters themselves always resident on the islands, he should have greater hopes; but it was not probable that because cargoes of human misery were no longer to be landed on their shores, that because their eyes were to be no longer glutted with the sight of human suffering, or their ears pierced with the cries of human distraction in any further importation of negroes, that the slave-drivers would soon forget their fixed habits of brutality, and learn to treat the unhappy wretches in their charge with clemency and compassion. Slavery would not wear itself out; it would become more rigid, unless the legislature became more vigilant, and reminded the planters of the new duty that had fallen upon them, of rearing the young slaves in such a manner, that they might be worthy of freedom. Adverting to the quotation from Gibbon, he contended, that the slavery of the West Indies was unlike any other slavery; it was peculiarly unlike the slavery of antient days, when the slaves frequently attained to the highest dignities; Esop, Terence, and Seneca were slaves. Was there a possibility that any of the unfortunate negroes now in the West Indies should emulate such men? It might be dangerous to give freedom to the slaves in a mass, but that it was not dangerous to give it to them in detail, was sufficiently proved by a little pamphlet that had been put into his hands the preceding night, in which it was stated, that a Mr. David Barclay, to his eternal honor be it spoken, who had himself been a slave-owner in Jamaica, and who, regretting that he had been so, on a bequest of slaves

being made to him, emancipated them, caused them to be conveyed to Pennsylvania, where they were properly instructed, and where their subsequent exemplary conduct was the general theme of admiration. With this fact before him, should he be told that he must give up all hope of abolishing slavery ! No, he would never give it up. He would exclaim with the poet, in the words of the motto of the pamphlet which he had mentioned,

“ I would not have a slave to till my ground,
 “ To fan me when I sleep, and tremble when
 “ I wake, for all that human sinews bought
 “ And sold, have ever earn'd.”

Sir C. Polc moved that the house be counted, and only 35 members being present it was adjourned.

MARCH 18.

WESTMINSTER ELECTION.

Lord H. Petty moved, that the Westminster Petition be now taken into consideration.

MR. SHERIDAN rose and said, that he was aware that standing in the situation he did, he was entitled to comment, to remark on, and to sum up, all the evidence that had been adduced in support of the allegations contained in the petition now before the house ; he should, however wave that right, the evidence was in the hands of every member of that house, and he was not anxious, if he could do so, to add to the impression testimony of such a nature must have already produced ; he would content himself with one remark which was, that that evidence, weak and futile as it was, did not say more to its own confusion than would have been proved by witnesses unimpeachable, which he, (Mr. Sheridan) had the house thought it necessary, was ready to bring forward. As an instance, he should mention merely Mr. Weatherhead himself. When an inquiry was made as to his services in the navy, he

confessed himself not quite satisfied with the return of the navy office. A noble lord (Folkestone), was equally dissatisfied, but upon different grounds. The noble lord seemed to think that this Mr. Weatherhead had been calumniated, and accordingly the noble lord moved for a return at once more exact and comprehensive. What had been the issue of this attempt to rescue the character of this Mr. Weatherhead from this supposed slander? Why, in truth, no more than this: that he, Mr. Weatherhead, had not served in one ship only, but in twelve or thirteen, that he had continued in one a year, in another ship three months, in a third a month, in a fourth three weeks, and in a fifth *five days*; running, as it were, the gauntlet of the British navy; for it appeared that he had been actually guilty of desertion from each ship, though in the first return it appeared that he had deserted but once. But it was not more difficult to fix the station of this naval officer to a certain ship, than to fix his birth to a certain place; he had the singular good fortune to be born at a number of different places (*A laugh*); he was *first* at Newcastle, he was born at Morpeth, and after some other birth he was *brought forth* in London (*A loud laugh*). But there was another slight ground of objection to the character of this witness; in the month of September, 1803, he petitioned to be examined for a lieutenancy, and to the commendatory certificate of the different captains under whom he served, there was but one objection, namely, that they were all discovered to be *forges*. He was not anxious to press upon the house the gross and flagrant contradictions and absurdities in the evidence they had heard; he did not wish to expose the miserable wretches to the just rigor of the honest indignation they had so universally excited; but he would put it to the feelings of that house, whether it was not necessary to inquire how far those wretches had been the tools of a conspiracy; how far it was the duty of any agent or agents

to inquire into the nature of the testimony and the *character* of the witnesses, more especially in a case where this evidence went directly to affect the seat of a member of parliament, to mention nothing of the danger or propagating groundless slander against a privy counsellor. It was for the house to consider how far the agents are responsible for employing wretches as substantial evidence, whose character they might have learned (had they been ignorant of it) in the neighbourhood of Bow-street, Hatton-garden, and Newgate; but he should abstain, he would keep his word with the house and not enter into any remark upon the evidence. He had an idea of submitting some motion for the purpose of investigating the charge of conspiracy; he should, however, in compliance with the suggestions of those right honorable friends, whose superior judgment was with him decisive, give way, and should now through a sense of delicacy retire, leaving his cause with confidence to the house, assured as he was, that the house would with becoming dignity assert its own character and honor, in doing so, preserve his.

Mr. Sheridan immediately withdrew.

AUGUST 7, 1807.

THIRD READING OF IRISH ARMS BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN declared it was a matter of astonishment to hear the question called for by something like a general voice. He had noticed the motion of his honorable friend, and the ability with which he had supported it, and he had noticed most attentively the eloquent and unanswerable arguments of his honorable and learned friend (Sir A. Pigot), and many other honorable gentlemen; he certainly did think, that something would have been said in answer to them; he certainly did think that something like an answer would have been at-

tempted; he certainly did think that gentlemen on the other side would have condescended to have said something in favor of their own measure, after it had been overwhelmed almost with such a torrent of argument. But if ever Ireland was at once injured and insulted, it was that night; he conceived the silence of ministers on this occasion to be an injustice to the measure itself, whilst it evinced a total disregard of the gentlemen who spoke upon the subject, and through them insulted and outraged the feelings of the people of Ireland. 'The gentlemen who spoke upon the subject, pleaded the cause of the injured constitution of Ireland. They pleaded that cause in the most moderate and persuasive terms, and yet the most sullen silence prevailed throughout the whole body of His Majesty's ministers; they gave a blank instead of argument. Even on the introduction of the bill, when it was unavoidable to say something in support of the measure, the Attorney-General did not pretend to say, that he knew any thing of the existence of any facts, the existence of which was necessary to justify the adoption of such a measure; no, but he had heard something by rumor somewhere, about the existence of some such circumstances. 'The Chancellor of the Exchequer was equally ignorant, but he had also heard of something that he believed had a strong tendency to resemble insurrection. 'Then, with respect to the bill itself, when he looked at it, compared it with that which had lately passed the house, he must say that if the former seemed odious in its form and substance, this was ten thousand times more so, it was really most abominable. But at the same time, as if it were meant to make the measure both odious and ridiculous, it was so constructed, as that it would plunder the people of their arms, and put down the trade of a blacksmith. Nothing like a blacksmith was to exist in Ireland, lest he might possibly form something like a pike. If ever there was an instance in which the liberties of a loyal peo-

ple were taken from them, and they were thereby tempted to become disloyal, it was the present. Indeed, from the general spirit with which the bill was framed, he thought there was something still wanting, and he should propose to add a clause by way of rider to this bill, making it high treason for any man to communicate either of these bills to Napoleon Buonaparte, Emperor of the French, lest he should conceive them to be direct invitations to him to visit that part of his Majesty's empire. He had already noticed the silence of the gentlemen opposite him; but if they should now think proper to drop a word or two, when he considered the high political character, the extraordinary virtue, and the vastly extensive powers of argument of those gentlemen, he should think himself highly honored indeed, if they should design to take the most trifling notice of any thing that fell from him. He now happened to recollect what was said by a right honorable gentleman, to whose opinions they all deferred (Mr. Grattan), that notwithstanding he voted for the present measure with all its defects, rather than lose it altogether, yet that gentleman said, that he hoped to secure the reversionary interest of the constitution to Ireland. But when we saw that the constitution was suspended from the year 1796 to the present period, and that it was now likely to be continued for three years longer, the danger was that we might lose the interest altogether; when we were mortgaged for such a length of time, at last a foreclosure might take place. But what had been done for the protection of Ireland? an experienced military officer, the Secretary of State for that country, had been sent up the Baltic. (The Chancellor of the Exchequer said, across the table, no, secretary to the lord lieutenant.) Mr. Sheridan then said, he felt himself highly honored indeed by that correction of a supposed error. If the right honorable gentlemen meant to say, that the worthy baronet (Sir A. Wellesley) was too insignificant, he would

defend the honorable baronet against the imputation of that right honorable gentleman. The baronet was secretary to the representative of His Majesty, and a military man; he was sent up the Baltic, and you garrisoned Ireland with two arbitrary acts of Parliament.

AUGUST 8.

PUBLICANS' BILL.

Mr. SHERIDAN moved the second reading of this bill. He could adduce, he said, instances of the most atrocious oppression practised by the magistrates on individuals of this trade; he did not say designedly, but from carelessness and inattention. All that he wished was, that, when a publican was charged with an act which was to be esteemed sufficient to deprive him of his license, he should be informed of the nature of the crime imputed to him, and should be heard in his defence; not that he and his family should be deprived of their livelihood by a whisper. This, he maintained, was not a situation in which an Englishman should be placed. It had, he believed, been objected against him (Mr. Sheridan), that this was the mode he had taken of canvassing Westminster. How truly this was alleged might be gathered from this simple fact, that one of the first measures moved by him in parliament was of a similar nature. Shortly after the riots in 1780, he himself originated a measure against the Westminster justices, in which he had the satisfaction of being supported by a most respectable minority. Shortly after this, the late Duke of Northumberland put an additional number of gentlemen into the commission of the peace, among the rest himself (Mr. Sheridan). General Fitzpatrick, Lord R. Spencer, and other gentlemen on that side of the house, finding, during the immediately succeeding election for Westminster, that

the publicans, through fear of the magistrates, all of whom were in the interest of government, could not be induced to open any houses in favor of Mr. Fox, though they had not previously been qualified themselves as magistrates, they resolved to do so, and immediately advertised, promising their protection to such publicans as should act impartially by opening their houses for the independent candidate. In this determination they could only find one of the existing magistrates who would join them, and add his name to their corps—(*a laugh from the ministerial benches.*) Gentlemen, Mr. Sheridan remarked, might, if they pleased, think it a subject of congratulation, and that it conferred honor and respectability on the magistracy of Westminster, that not more than one man could be found among them to add his name to a resolution expressive of their determination to act fairly and impartially. He had only stated this, however, to shew that the present was not an idea which he had now taken up for the first time. He had prepared a bill on the subject while he was treasurer of the navy; and so far was it from being an election trick on his part, that he did not mention the subject during the last election till the 12th day of the poll, whereas, had he meant it as a theme through which to court popularity, he would have set out with it from beginning. If it was desired, he should be ready in the committee to go into a string of cases, the substantiating of any one of which he was convinced, must render it impossible for gentlemen of honor, feeling, or humanity, to doubt on the propriety of what he proposed. He proceeded to state the case of a woman, whose father and mother had been for sixty years in one house, in which they had uniformly maintained an unblemished character. She had succeeded to her parents, and supported in it, with the same propriety, a family of seven children, five of whom were entirely dependent on her industry. Being summoned before the magistrates, and informed that they could not

new her licence; on her attempting to remonstrate, the only satisfaction she could procure was "woman, you have had your answer." Her licence was accordingly withdrawn, and she and her family were now reduced to a state of extreme poverty and distress. This case was not unknown to, and had attracted the commiseration of a noble lord and right honorable gentleman; but he (Mr. Sheridan) denied that it was consistent with the constitution of this country that any man, in any profession, was to be told, that at the discretion of any one man, he and his family were to be deprived of their livelihood, and reduced to misery. He had, he declared, thirty instances of a similar kind, which he should, if required, bring forward in the committee. He had several instances too, of persons having been deprived of their licences for voting for Sir Francis Burdett, for Middlesex: they had even been told that this was the reason; and, he would ask, were publicans at the will of a magistrate, to be deprived of the free exercise of the elective franchise more than the other inhabitants of this country? He alluded to another case which had occurred at Fulham, where a house, remarkable for the usual decorum of its keeper, had been deprived of the licence, merely because on one occasion, a few Welsh girls returning to their own country, had been indulged with a fiddle and a hobble. These were arbitrary powers, which, he submitted, were not fit to rest with one or two individuals, without the person accused being acquainted with the charge against him, and allowed to defend himself. Neither, he maintained, was it even then fit that they should exist without appeal. All he asked was, that every person so accused should have the charge against him furnished to him in writing, and that he should be heard in his defence; and, afterwards, that he should have it in his power to appeal to the quarter sessions. He could not think it possible but that the magistrates themselves must be pleased that an

appeal lay from their decision. If not actuated by personal motives, the knowledge of such appeal must be consolatory to their feelings: all he wished at present was, that the bill should extend to Middlesex and Surrey. He confessed that he had received letters which would do more than cover the table, containing similar complaints from every part of the country, so that he might be fortified in maintaining that the alteration should extend throughout. But still, high as was the respect in which he held Mr. Graham, and one or two others of the Westminster and Middlesex magistrates, he could not so far shut his eyes as to put them on a level with the independant country magistrates. The former held their places, for which they received an emolument, at the will and pleasure of His Majesty's Ministers; while the latter exercised a gratuitous and burdensome duty. There was another subject, which he had alluded to elsewhere, and before an auditory far more numerous than that which he had now the honor to address, namely, the power exercised by brewers over publicans, by being proprietors of public houses, &c. With all the regard which he felt for many gentlemen connected in the brewing business, this was a practice which he was aware, ought to be checked, if not abolished. Nothing was more clear than this, that brewers might meet together, agree that they would not interfere with the houses which were held under the dominion of each; and in the manner they had it in their power to impose whatever trash they pleased on the poor—an expression which he did not like in the acceptation in which it was frequently received—more properly, on the laborious part of the community. What they had after labor was of as much consequence to their health, and to their existence, as food. It was, therefore, an object well deserving the interference of the legislature, to see that improper means were not resorted to, to disappoint them of it. The period of the session, however, would

not allow time for so extensive a regulation. All that he now desired was to provide that a man, merely because he was a publican, should not be ruined, and his family turned on the parish, without having an opportunity of knowing what was charged against him. He concluded by moving, that the bill be now read a second time.

Mr. Moore recommended, as more enquiry seemed necessary, that the bill should be withdrawn, rather than let it go to a division.

Mr. Sheridan professed his disposition to yield to whatever appeared to be the general wish of the house, and therefore he should comply with the request of his honorable friend (Mr. Moore) to any suggestion from whom he should be always happy to attend. At the same time he could not help noticing the surprise expressed by the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), that he should have brought forward this bill at so late a period of the session. What, said Mr. Sheridan, the right honorable gentleman, who has surprised the house and the country so much himself; he who has surprised the house at a late period of the session with his plan of government for Ireland; who has surprised it with his new military project; who has surprised it by proposing to suspend that highly laudable and universally praised system, the plan of enlisting for a limited time. And yet, that after all the right honorable gentleman should talk to me of surprising the house. But among all his surprises there was one surprise which he could not produce, namely, that of surprising him (Mr. S.) by opposing this bill; for he suspected it.

The right honorable gentleman proceeded to state the manner in which he had acted with a view to produce a satisfactory bill. First, he drew up a bill such as some gentlemen now professed to wish for, combining the case of brewers owning public houses with that before the house respectively; but then objections arose, to which he yielded, in proposing to make those the objects of separate bills.

Again he proposed to make the bill general; but to this very great difficulties were suggested; he found many men, and magistrates particularly, who were willing to let him do what he pleased with Middlesex and Surrey, provided he let the remainder of the county alone. He therefore endeavored to make a beginning of that reform in those counties, which so many gentleman have professed to desire to extend to all England. But a committee of inquiry was required previous to the introduction of such a bill as this. He, however, would beg those who desired such a committee, to reflect upon the expense and trouble that must attend such a committee; to consider if witnesses were to be summoned from all parts of England and Wales, what time such a committee must last, and when it was likely to end? Each case would, in fact, be a suit before the committee, for he should propose to do that with regard to the magistrates, which they, under the existing law, declined to do towards the publicans; that is, he should have the magistrates apprized of any ground of complaint urged against them, and afforded the opportunity of vindicating themselves. What time, then, would such an investigation occupy? As to the cases he had adverted to upon this occasion, the right honorable gentleman stated, that they were but a few out of a large mass, and while gentlemen called for deliberation and delay, he could assure them and the house, that many persons were starving in jail in consequence of the law which he proposed to correct. There was one case in particular into which he believed a right honorable gentleman (Mr. Rose) had made inquiry, and which he knew was peculiarly oppressive, namely, that of Mrs. Unthank. The case of Mr. John Morris, a respectable man, who had a shop over the way in King Street, furnished the strongest grounds of complaint. This Mr. Morris, for whom, from his own knowledge of him, he could not hesitate to avow the

utmost respect, was deprived of his licence by the magistrates, merely because his house was to be taken down in order to make some coxcomical improvement about Westminster Abbey ; to shew that building to the members as they came down to the house. But he had communicated the case of Mr. Morris to the Treasury, and he hoped for redress. There was also one with regard to a Mr. Bignall, of the Broadway, Westminster, whose license was withdrawn by the magistrates, upon grounds which they would not explain, and the poor man finding every effort to procure redress unavailing, absolutely died of a broken heart about a fortnight since, leaving a helpless family to deplore his fate. With such facts before him, he did not think it too much to propose this temperate measure. However, as the opinion was so strongly expressed, that if such a bill was necessary, it should be made general, he should acquiesce in the wish for time to inquire into the subject. He hoped and trusted, that by the next session petitions would pour in from all quarters, praying the removal of the existing grievances, and that such petitions would be presented by the highest authority, by that of the county representatives of the respective petitioners. For himself, he should for the present only say, that which was only a repetition of what he had said before, that while he had a seat in that house, he should ever be found an advocate of the weak against the strong, and of the helpless against those who had the power, and he was sorry to say too often the will, to oppress them.

The bill was withdrawn.

AUGUST 13.

STATE OF IRELAND.

MR. SHERIDAN rose to make his promised motion, and spoke in substance as follows: I rise, Sir,

under some degree of apprehension that from the lateness of the hour, and the quantity of less important business which the house has already gone through, I may be felt to trespass on your attention; but it was, I assure you, not less my intention this night, than it was on Monday, to address you at a much earlier hour of the evening, had other business permitted. The lateness of the hour on Monday was indeed one of the causes which induced me to postpone my motion until this evening; and I cannot but regret that on this, the last day, nay the last hour of the session, it should become necessary for me to arrest your attention; because I know that at such a time to delay your sitting cannot be agreeable to your feelings or to your habits. I am aware that it must have somewhat of an ungracious appearance to postpone your separation at such a season; and believe me I am as willing to enjoy the benefits of that separation as any one among you; but I am too strongly impelled by a call of imperious duty to yield to any desire of accommodation. The necessity which gave rise to that call was not created by me; nor was the postponement of the proposition I am about to submit, from Monday to this late period, by any means my fault. The propriety of adopting it is to my conviction rendered perfectly obvious by the circumstances of the two bills which you have recently passed with regard to Ireland. When you have determined to suspend the constitution and laws of Ireland, is it not reasonable to propose to you some inquiry into the causes alleged for such suspension, and how far such causes are removeable; is it not wise, when you are sending such acts to Ireland, to communicate at the same time such assurances of your resolution to take the state of that country into your consideration? I am confident that such conduct would be at once consistent with policy and humanity, and that much of the apprehension and irritation which those acts of parliament may be naturally expected to produce,

would be mitigated if accompanied by the adoption of a motion of the nature of that which I hold in my hand.

With regard to the intentions entertained by the last administration, to propose two acts similar to those I allude to, or to the character of the persons to whom the execution of the extraordinary powers which these acts confer, might be intrusted by either the late or the present government, it is my intention to say very little indeed. Because I do not wish to touch upon any topic of irritation, I will not enter much into comparisons. My hope and desire is to obtain an unanimous assent to the motion, as unanimity is necessary to give it complete effect. I shall abstain cautiously from any thing that resembles invidious distinction. I know that to no set of men could power have been more safely confided than to the members of the late administration. I am sure that in the hands of none would power have been less liable to abuse; and whatever my disinclination to comparison may be, to them cannot be denied this just distinction, that power might have been granted to them with the less reluctance, as they manifested a disposition to accompany its existence by every means of concession and conciliation. When I reflect in whom the power of these acts was to have been invested in Ireland; when I consider that it was to have been exercised by the Duke of Bedford, who was not likely to call it into action, unless the necessity was irresistible, and who was in no case likely to abuse it, I must feel that he was peculiarly entitled to confidence. The character of that nobleman formed a guarantee against the apprehension of abused authority. But I have great respect for his successor also (the Duke of Richmond). I know that nobleman well enough, to be certain that he has no disposition to cruelty, that he has no malignant passion to gratify, and that he is above being affected by that gloomy suspicion, or party rancor, which might unnecessarily call for the

execution, and materially embitter the operation of such power as these acts ordain. I have no doubt that this nobleman will follow the wise example, will be actuated by the same liberal principles, which served to render his illustrious predecessor so much the object of panegyric and attachment. I should not, therefore, be very materially influenced as to a comparison of persons in power, as to my opinion of the manners and unconstitutional powers which characterise these bills. I am adverse to the principle of such measures, and could never be persuaded to accede to them, unless the necessity were strong and glaring indeed. Upon Monday last I had an opportunity of shewing my motion to several gentlemen on both sides of the house, and had the satisfaction of observing a general disposition to concur in its principle and object. But some gentlemen expressing a wish for time to consider its structure and tendency, I was therefore for postponing the motion until this day, influenced by the request of those who required such a time, in the hope that consideration would serve to remove their doubts and secure their support. In this opinion at least, I acquiesced in the proposed delay, that the effect of it would be to produce the proposition perhaps of some remedy for any defect in the motion, but that delay and deliberation must determine every man in favor of its main object. Retaining still a little of that hope and opinion I do not think it necessary to take up so much of your time, by entering into a detail of the reasons which have induced me to bring forward the motion, and which should urge you to adopt it. Indeed I cannot conceive a ground upon which the rejection of such a motion can be justified, and I am not bound to conjure up objections or anticipate arguments, upon the strength of which no reasoning man can rely. It is impossible that any thinking man should seriously insist upon as an objection to any motion, that which I have heard on other occasions, namely, that danger

was to be apprehended from the discussion of such affairs in this house; that it is a topic which ought to be touched as little and as seldom as possible. But I deprecate such a ground of opposition, as full of error and mischief. You conceive that until we get completely rid of the folly and fallacy of such an objection, it will be quite impossible for us to apply a remedy to the disorders of that country, and for this obvious reason, that we cannot know the nature of their disorders. What! that we should go on legislating for Ireland in the dark: that we should reject light and information upon a subject to which we are called upon to apply the law, and that law too most penal and severe in its character!

When I hear the ministers of the crown declaring without shame, that they know nothing of the state of Ireland;—when I hear the same declaration from the law officers;—when, in fact, no man can speak decisively upon the subject, is it possible, I would ask, to devise a stronger argument than such declared ignorance suggests, to urge the united parliament: to an investigation of this important question? It is not consistent with even the decent appearance of respect for the rights, interests, and liberties of the people of Ireland, to legislate for that country in such total ignorance, or at least, such inconsistent contradictory information as we have before us. We have heard one set of gentlemen assert that Ireland is perfectly tranquil, loyal, and united, and this assertion is corroborated by the authority of a noble lord (Hawkesbury) in the other house of parliament (*A cry of order from the chair*), then by a noble lord in another place; and with such authority before us, is it right that the constitution of Ireland should be suspended? But further in support of the allegation that Ireland is undisturbed, and requires not such an act. I find that in a very populous county, where disaffection was supposed to exist, I mean Tipperary, Judge Fox at the late assizes congratulated the people upon the

state of the calendar, upon the acknowledged tranquillity of the district, and upon the general good order of the county. I find that not a single charge of disloyalty, sedition, or treason, was to be seen on the calendar throughout the county. I find at Kilkenny the public resolutions of the grand jury, testifying, not only the peaceable disposition of the county, but a general and cordial harmony between protestants and catholics, with a strong declaration from a body of the former in favor of the claims of the latter. All these testimonies appear on the one side; on the other, to be sure, I hear a very high authority, an authority certainly of the highest character in my estimation, I mean the member for Dublin (Mr. Grattan.) I hold his authority high, because I respect, not only his talents and information, but his integrity; and I feel towards him as warmly as any resident of Ireland, the gratitude to which he is so eminently entitled, for obligations he has rendered to my country. Ministers, I perceive, are willing to ground their proceedings upon the authority of my right honorable friend: under his great name they would shelter the creation of enormous powers, for which there may be no necessity. At all events, with the information I have received both from public and private sources, I must contend that no necessity appears. Why, then, should we not enquire? My object is to awake the house to what I conceive, with deference, to be a just sense of its duty; to procure from it a pledge that an enquiry will be instituted, and thus to hold out to the people of Ireland some prospect of redress; some assurance of the friendly disposition of the legislature. That enquiry is necessary, no man can deny; and without full information, I must say, that it is not becoming in us to take such serious measures with regard to Ireland. We have, in fact, been legislating for that country upon hearsay and authority alone, and mark, with much more of hearsay and authority against, than for the cause you

have pursued. All this too while you have had the means of ample enquiry within your reach. Upon what grounds, then, do you shrink from that enquiry? It is preposterous to pretend that you fly from it because you apprehend danger from discussing the affairs of that country. The fact is, that no topic requires or deserves more of your discussion or investigation: so far from avoiding knowledge upon such a subject, it is highly culpable not to seek it. I profess myself as much in want of knowledge as other persons, and I take some blame to myself on that account; but I shall endeavor by all means in my power to obtain information, and it is with a view to remove my own defect upon this head, as well as the defects of others, that I wish for enquiry: I wish for enquiry because it is essential, as well in respect to our own character, as in justice to the people of Ireland. It is our duty to enquire upon such an occasion, and we should not shrink from that duty through any objection to the trouble that might attend it, or through any idle fear of danger; but least of all, through a timid apprehension of the truth. With regard to the motives that have urged me to stand forward upon this occasion, I have been prompted to it by duty and by feeling. My object is, to serve the cause of justice and my country, without exciting any passion, or flattering any prejudice. I hope I may take credit for being as little inclined as any man to the use of inflammatory language; as little disposed to promote sedition, or mutiny, or disaffection. For this I think I am entitled to take credit. There is not, perhaps, a man more strongly convinced than I am, that the very existence of the two islands depends upon the continuance of their connection. I am quite assured, that if there be any party in Ireland of any denomination, which would advocate an opposite principle, that party is decidedly hostile to the interests of that country; and should call forth the vigilance and vigour of the law. But I must say, that all

appearances are against the belief of any such disaffection, much less of organized treason: indeed, if I could imagine an observer totally free from prejudice upon the subject, his inference would, I am persuaded, be of quite an opposite tendency. If I could imagine a foreigner well disposed to Great Britain; if I could believe such a foreigner to exist, I am satisfied he would be forward rather to congratulate Great Britain upon the present state of Ireland. There are four symptoms of loyalty and attachment to Great Britain visible in Ireland, which would naturally attract the attention of this foreigner. Having heard that the Duke of Bedford was applied to by some rash individuals to proclaim a county, at the time of the insurrection of the thrashers, that noble duke rejected the application, and trusting to the ordinary operation of the law, put down the insurrection; the foreigner would, in the first instance, consider this a very good symptom of the disposition of Ireland. Well, in the second place, he would be told that there had been no disturbances whatever in that country, since the Duke of Bedford had put down the insurrection alluded to, and that the disposition of the people had been particularly proved by the rejection of the catholic bill. A short description of the nature of that measure would readily satisfy his mind, that the laying it aside, after it was promised, was very likely to have an irritating effect in Ireland: but instead of irritation, he would witness the most perfect good order, although all the ingredients of insurrection were flung among the people, under the wrapper of a proclamation for dissolving parliament. The third object of the foreigner's attention would be Judge Fox's address of congratulation to the people of Tipperary, upon the peaceful state of the county; together with that judge's expression of surprise, that it should be otherwise described by any person; and the fourth symptom would more than all satisfy his mind, that no apprehension whatever could be entertained of disorders or insurrec-

tion in Ireland. For he would see the army taken away; he would see that formidable body, the German Legion, which was sent to Ireland to save it from sedition, embarked for the continent. Now, if this foreigner were to state these sentiments to the minister, and express his surprise that any suspicion could any where be entertained of the loyalty and tranquillity of the people of Ireland; what would the right honorable gentleman say to him? Perhaps the right honorable gentleman would tell him that the Duke of Bedford acted injudiciously in refusing to proclaim a county under martial law, and restoring the peace by means of the common law of the land; that the circumstances of Ireland being understood for some time back, was mere matter of accident; that Judge Fox knew nothing at all about the state of the country. But would not the foreigner be apt to ask, why, if Ireland were in such a state of disaffection, the military force should be taken away from it, and two oppressive and arbitrary bills sent there, still more to irritate that disaffection? Perhaps the right honorable gentleman might say, that he relied more upon these bills for preserving Ireland, than he did upon a military force; and when he marched out an army, he would march in an act of parliament; and when he withdrew a legion, he would substitute a law. But above all, what was the foreigner likely to say to the right honorable gentleman, when he found, that while every endeavor was using to arm the English, the Irish were disarming? With such a remarkable contrast before him, would not the foreigner, would not any man interested for Great Britain, or possessing common sense, be disposed, particularly at a crisis when the invasion of a powerful enemy was to be apprehended, to put this plain question to the minister—If you take away the arms of the Irish, what are they to fight with? and if you take away their constitution, what are they to fight for? It has been said, that there exists a French

party in Ireland; but when was it that such a party did not exist in that country? Since the days of Elizabeth, from the very commencement of those foul and tyrannous measures which originated in national jealousy, political prejudice, or religious dissension, but particularly the latter, which drove catholics of high spirit from their native country, numbers of such exiles found an asylum in France, and hence a correspondence between them and their relatives in Ireland, which naturally led to the creation of a French party in Ireland, and an Irish party in France. But the existence of such a party cannot for a moment be insisted upon as a justification for the oppressive laws it was quoted to support. For what policy could be more mischievous and inhuman, than a perseverance in the same persecuting measures which originally created that party? Let the state of Ireland be enquired into; let persecution and injustice be put an end to, and the French party will soon cease to exist. But I cannot admit the danger of such a party in a political point of view. The correspondence of family connection may exist altogether independent of national attachments and prejudices, and perhaps this talked-of French party may consist solely of mere family connection, abstracted from all political views. At all events there is no evidence upon the subject to direct the judgment of this house. There is, I must observe, a principle contained in the argument which the alleged existence of this party was adduced to support, that bears a most fearful character for Ireland indeed: for the Irish exiles having found an asylum in America, in Denmark, and other states, it would follow from the use made of this principle, that whenever Great Britain should be at war with either of these states, Ireland would be liable to have her constitution suspended, there being to be found an American and a Danish party in Ireland, as well as a French, and all arising from the same cause, which cause it is the tendency of

the bills I have objected to, to continue and increase. The cause of emigration and exile from Ireland has been considerably diminished under the auspices of our present most gracious sovereign; but still a great deal remains to be done to reconcile to their country the great body of the Irish. What has been done was no doubt calculated to do much good, but yet it is to be recollected, that there is a great deal in the manner of doing a thing: there is such a case as conferring a favor without obtaining any acknowledgment; of rendering a service without exciting any gratitude; and such a case may be as making concessions when it is too late. I recommend these considerations to the reflection of ministers. When they and others complain of the discontents of the Irish, they never appear to consider the cause. When they express their surprise that the Irish are not contented, while, according to their observation, that people have so much reason to be happy; they betray a total ignorance of their actual circumstances. The fact is, that the tyranny practised upon the Irish has been throughout unremitting. There has been no change but in the manner of inflicting it. They have had nothing but variety in oppression extending to all ranks and degrees of a certain description of the people. If you would know what this varied oppression consisted in, I refer you to the penal statutes you have repealed, and to some of those which still exist. There you will see the high and the low equally subjected to the lash of persecution; and still some effect to be astonished at the discontents of the Irish. But with all my reluctance to introduce any thing ludicrous upon so serious an occasion, I cannot help referring to a little story which those very astonished persons call to my mind. It was with respect to an Irish drummer, who was employed to inflict punishment upon a soldier. When the boy struck high, the poor soldier exclaimed: "Lower, bless you," with which the boy complied.

But soon after the soldier exclaimed: "Higher, if you please." But again he called out, "A little lower," upon which the accommodating boy addressed him—"Now, upon my conscience, I see you are a discontented man; for, strike where I may, there's no pleasing you." Now your complaint of the discontents of the Irish appears to me quite as rational, while you continue to strike, only altering the place of attack. As to the conduct which ought to be pursued with respect to Ireland, don't let it be imagined that I should not desire to have a strong armed force in that country. I would have such a force stationed there, much as I rely on the loyalty of the people. But this force should be the protectors and advocates of the people. It should not be placed there to act as executioners, but as a guard of honor upon the constitution, the liberty, and the property of the people. I should not wish to have the fate of Ireland entrusted to an inadequate force, particularly at a period when no one can tell the hour at which the enemy may arrive. I would wish to have such a force in Ireland as in every other quarter of the empire, as should assure our foreign enemy of the impossibility of success; and at the same time serve to discourage the operations of domestic enemies, by convincing them that it is in vain to hope; that his prospects and calculations were vain. With this view and object, I would have a large army in Ireland; and such an army would serve still more to render the bills I have referred to quite unnecessary. Because, if invasion or rebellion should take place, the peace of the country would be vested in the army. For it is a prerogative of the crown in such cases, to put the country under martial law, and in such cases only can martial law be necessary, particularly if you keep a large force in the country. The prerogative of the crown, then, is fully competent to meet any real danger, without these bills, which are, in fact, nothing but martial law in masquerade. As to the

plan of arming the people at large, which, it seems, is to be extended to Ireland; although the principle is so perfectly congenial with the spirit of the British constitution, for it is a part of the king's prerogative to compel the people to arm in case of invasion or rebellion. I contend that the policy of disarming the Irish is bad, even for the purpose that measure professes to have in view. For a people that are armed are generally, or almost always, more peaceable and less discontented, than those who are left defenceless and disarmed. If the king should, under his prerogative, call out the people of Ireland, or the sheriff were to summon the *posse comitatus*, in what state, I would ask, are that people likely to be found after the operation of those acts of parliament? It is, however, pretended that these acts are only to continue for a certain time; that they only involve a suspension of the constitution, in which the people have a reversionary interest. But I do not know when the suspension is to cease. It began in 1795, and since that it has continued without interruption, and the lease has just been renewed for three years longer. I am of opinion, that the people who can submit so long to such a measure, must be tolerably well prepared for slavery. Indeed it cannot be difficult to reconcile them to the loss of freedom. In renewing the loan to government of the Irish constitution, I remember that ministers would not attend to the advice of my right honorable friend (Mr. Grattan) as to the duration of the lease. No, where his authority suited their view, they adopted it, and took shelter under it, but where that authority was against them, they rejected it. But the right honorable gentleman (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), has promised that the constitution shall be restored to Ireland. I should like to see a receipt and promise of return for a free constitution, from the hands of the right honorable gentleman. I dare say as a lawyer, a financier, and a statesman, it would be a curious production, run-

ning, perhaps, in these terms: "Whereas it has been deemed expedient for the peace and good of Ireland, for good and valuable considerations, to take the constitution of that country into the keeping of the crown. I, on the part of the crown, do promise and declare, that it shall be returned when it is deemed expedient." But suppose a project formed to withhold this constitution altogether; suppose it was resolved to establish absolute despotism, such as would justify the resistance of a free people; how is that resistance to be made, after the arms of the people have been taken away? What ministers ultimately mean to do with respect to Ireland, it is really difficult to divine. They promise, to be sure, to restore the constitution, and do many other things: but the people of Ireland know by whom the promise is made. They remember those who promised so much at the time of the union, and never kept their word in any one point; no, not one: indeed their conduct towards Ireland in this respect, puts me in mind of the promises made to children. The parent presents a favor to the view of the child; but declines to give it: no, no, the child would spoil it, and the parent keeps it for fear he should. Thus precisely are the people of Ireland trifled with as to promises; and thus are those promises fulfilled. How have they acted upon the subject of the catholic question? I am not now going into the discussion of that question; but was not the grant of that measure held out as one of the first consequences of the union? Such was to be collected from the words of several of the principal advocates of that measure, and, among others, even Dr. Duigenan. Mr. Pitt and the noble lord (Castlereagh) held out a hope, upon their retirement from office in 1801, that their return to office might be deemed the signal for catholic emancipation. But yet they returned to office, and no such grant was proposed. Was not the frequent disappointment of the catholic body, their hopes deferred, one

of the principle causes of the Irish discontents?— Here Mr. Sheridan entered into a review of the conduct of the several members of the present cabinet with respect to the catholic question, and contrasted those who formerly promised so much to the catholics, with those who had lately endeavored to put an eternal bar to their hope, and who raised the abominable yell of No Popery. There were some of the latter who were, no doubt, actuated by conscientious motives. He was most sincerely disposed to do credit to the motives of his Majesty, and had no doubt he was actuated by the purest precepts of conscience. In his honorable mind he was confident there existed as much abhorrence of the authors of any kind which could disunite and distract his subjects as any man in the nation could feel. He had no hesitation in saying, that those men who would raise any thing like eternal obstacles to the views of the catholics, must act disagreeably to him whose scruples upon the subject might be removed by time and consideration. The right honorable gentleman concluded this part of the subject by referring to the conduct of the last administration, whose promptitude in dropping the bill respecting the catholics he approved, perhaps much more than he did of their original introduction of it. I think, said Mr. S. they began at the wrong end. They should have commenced the measure of redress in Ireland at the cottage, instead of at the park and the mansion. To have gone first to the higher orders of the catholics; to have sought to make them judges, and peers, and commoners; I do not know that such a proceeding, had it taken place, would not rather have served to aggravate discontent, as it might have been construed into a design to divide the interests of the catholics. Sure I am, that with a view to serve or to conciliate the catholic population, I mean the poor, the peasantry, its effect would be nothing; indeed it would be quite a mockery. It would be like dressing or de-

corating the top masts of a ship when there were ten feet water in the hold, or putting a laced hat on a man who had not a shoe to his foot. The place to set out to in Ireland for the relief of the people, is the cottage. The distressed state of the peasantry must be first considered, and above all the tythes. I should hope that every man of good sense or good heart, would be forward to devote some part of his attention to this important question. A great deal of information with respect to the state of the Irish peasantry, and the best means of relieving them, may be collected from private sources. I have had many communications on the subject, and I have looked into several valuable books and pamphlets respecting the Irish peasantry, but have been particularly interested by Mr. Bell's treatise upon them. It would not require much reading after this book to make gentlemen fully acquainted with the state, habits, and character of these poor peasantry, whose sufferings have so long and forcibly appealed to the humanity and justice of the legislature. I have heard it said, and I have been always shocked at the assertion, that the Irish peasantry might be comfortable if they chose to be industrious; and that it is idle to attempt any improvement of their condition. It is abominable to hear blame laid on providence instead of laying it on man. Can any set of men, I would ask, be found, who manifest so much of the qualities of which these cruel calumniators would deprive them as the Irish peasantry? But they are only calumniated by those men who would degrade them below the level of the human creation, in order to palliate their own inhumanity towards them. We were told in England, that the unhappy Africans were insensible to the ordinary feelings of humanity, in order to render us indifferent to their sufferings, and to the custom of the slave-trade. On similar motives the character of the Irish peasantry is so foully misrepresented by some men in this country and in Ireland also. But what palpable

evidence do the Irish peasants, wherever you meet them, afford of the falsehood of their slanderers!— Can any men exhibit more of enterprize than those peasants, in coming to this country in search of employment, or more of affection for country and family, in returning home with the pittance they earn here? Is it not manifest to every one of you, that the charge of indisposition to industry cannot apply to those poor men, who, in fact, do all the hard work of this metropolis? When then the Irish exhibit such a character in this country, it is impossible that such a difference at home as some gentlemen assert to exist, can proceed from any other than gross misrule. If I were proposing this inquiry in time of profound peace, I should expect your acquiescence in it; but in the difficulties which now surround the country, the claim is, in my mind, irresistible. I know it has been the long hackneyed cant, that such and such is the most perilous period the country has ever known. But without any such cant, without any exaggeration whatever, I defy any man to shew me a a period in our history so full of peril; and where shall we look for aid? I am sick of continental alliances, of hearing about the magnanimous Alexander, &c. &c. When, however, I look at the conduct of that sovereign, triumphing at Petersburg upon acquisitions of territory plundered from Prussia, his ally, to whom, were he really magnanimous, he ought rather to have given territory, I cannot endure the idea of turning to the continent for any thing to confide in for our existence. When I look at France, not as Mr. Burke described it a blank in the map of Europe; but when I see nothing almost but France; when I look to the state of the East Indies, and to that of the West also, I find, indeed, that on Monday you pledged yourself to inquire into the state of property in those islands, and very properly too. But when you thus pledge yourselves to inquire as to the property of the West India planters, is it too much

for me to propose a pledge that you will take into your consideration, not the property of the Irish, but their allegiance, liberty, and right? When I look at America—but in mentioning that country I should be sorry if understood at all to speak in terms ill calculated to encourage a disposition to surrender that privilege which we cannot surrender, without abandoning our maritime power and importance. When I have thus reviewed the state of our colonies, connections, and allies, and find the appearance so gloomy, is it unreasonable that I should ask you to look at your statute-book, and to study the means of conciliating the alliance of your own subjects? While such menacing danger hangs over us, I cannot, without serious pain, reflect upon the manner in which you employ yourselves; one party charging the other, and *vice versa*; “You did that job,” “No, but you did worse;” “My plan required more recruits than your’s,” “No, but it did not.” As if men were recruiting for a wager, and the only object of debate was to criminate each other. I cannot think patiently of such petty squabbles, while Buonaparte is grasping the nations; while he is surrounding France, not with that iron frontier, for which the wish and childish ambition of Louis XIV. was so eager, but with kingdoms of his own creation; securing the gratitude of higher minds as the hostage, and the fears of others as pledges for his safety. His are no ordinary fortifications. His martello towers are thrones; sceptres tipped with crowns are the palisades of his entrenchments, and kings are his centinels. In such a state of the world then, and with such an enemy, viewing this country as the only remaining object of his ambition to destroy, surely the policy of looking to all the means of strengthening yourselves is too obvious to require comment. Let me then exhort you to consider the means of rendering that country really serviceable to you. I have heard of subsidies. Your subsidies to Prussia were considerable in amount, and yet

quite unproductive in effect. Why don't you subsidize Ireland? And all the subsidies I ask for her is your confidence, affection, and justice to her people. These I call upon you to grant before it be too late. If you refuse to see the danger that menaces, and will not consider in due time about the means which I propose to you for providing against it, it is a bad symptom. The first character of courage is to look at danger with a dauntless eye, and the next to combat it with a dauntless heart. If, with this resolution, we front our dangers, history will do justice to our feelings and character, whatever may be the exertions or the success of the formidable tyrant who would destroy us, or of those who succeed to his power and views. The honest historian will not fail to yield a just tribute to our reputation. If faithful to ourselves, if united, we shall, in these two little islands, to which, as to an altar, Freedom has flown for refuge, be able to fight with all the valorous fury of men defending a violated sanctuary.

The right honorable gentleman concluded with an animated exhortation to the house, to aim a blow at the fellest foe to British greatness and security, namely, internal discontent, by acceding to his motion. Then the right honorable gentleman read his motion, which was as follows :

“ That the house will, immediately on the meeting of the ensuing session of parliament, proceed to take into their most serious and solemn consideration, the state and condition of Ireland, in the anxious hope, that such measures and remedies may be safely adopted in regard to the discontents alleged to exist in that country, as may render unnecessary the continuance of those provisions which the legislature of the United Kingdom has deemed it expedient reluctantly to adopt at the close of the present session, and the permanence of which would be a violation of the rights of the people of Ireland, and

a subversion of the spirit and practice of our free constitution.”

After he had read his motion, the right honorable gentleman expressed his readiness to acquiesce in any amendment, which should leave its main object untouched. It did not matter to him by whom the object was taken up. His desire was to have the thing done; and if any gentleman on any side of the house, would follow it up, he would be entitled to the gratitude of Ireland, and he should have his warmest thanks.

Towards the close of the debate,

Mr. Sheridan rose amidst cries of “*question,*” and expressed his hope that the house would indulge him with the privilege usually granted to persons who brought forward a motion, and hear his reply to such arguments as seemed to him peculiarly to call for attention. Of this privilege he would not avail himself at any length. First, then, he would have no objection whatever to alter his motion in the manner proposed by his right honorable friend (Mr. Windham) near him; and, indeed, to any alteration that did not destroy the substance of his motion, he had already pledged himself to agree.

[The Speaker here interrupted the right honorable gentleman, and informed him, that consistently with the resolution of 1778, and the usages of the house, there could be no alteration in the motion after the previous question had been put.]

Mr. Sheridan, in continuation, observed, that in that case, he had no doubt, the right honorable gentleman opposite would withdraw his motion, in compliance with the general wish of the house. He wished to have his answer. [*No answer.*] Well, the time for answering was not yet come perhaps. However, nothing in the world had been more misunderstood in this respect than the motion which he had submitted. Gentlemen seemed to suppose that he had censured the passing of the late bills, and

thereby called upon the house to censure its own acts. He never had such intention, nor could his motion, by any one who took the trouble to attend to it, be supposed to carry any such meaning. He had distinctly declared in his speech, that he had now no such intention. But it might be said, that though not in his speech, it might be in his motion. What, then, was his motion? "That the house should take such measures as would render the provisions of the bills, lately with reluctance passed unnecessary." What did his right honorable friend (Mr. Windham), and his honorable friend (Mr. Herbert) over the way, object to? They could not surely object to the word "reluctantly." His right honorable friend over the way said, that he would join with him if he would strike out the latter part of his motion. What was that? Why, that the permanency of such measures would totally destroy the constitution. Did any one object to this? Then he would be glad to see the man who would stand up in his place, and say that such enactments ought to be permanent; or that, if permanent, they do not completely overturn the constitution. These acts were to be in force for three years; and, under these circumstances, there was at least a reversion of the constitution. But if you thought the permanency of such acts did not infringe the constitution, then you ought to make them permanent at once, for in that case where was the use of hesitation? Such enactments could not be considered in any other light, than as an infringement of the constitution; and, therefore, it was the duty of every man to limit their duration, as much as the necessity of the case would allow.

He felt it necessary to make some observations on what had fallen from the honorable gentleman on the bench below him. With all the respect he had for that gentleman's (Mr. Lockhart's) abilities; with all his deference to his means of information, and to the authority which he appeared to have with some,

yet, not being intimately acquainted with the honorable gentleman, and not having an opportunity of observing those talents and information that had been ascribed to him by those who knew him better, he was perfectly excusable in not giving him that entire confidence that had been given by others. That honorable gentleman had said, that he had listened with great anxiety to his speech, because he expected that he (Mr. S.) would have first stated the evil, and then the remedy. The honorable gentleman might have listened to his speech with anxiety, but he had certainly done so with more anxiety than attention. He said, that he (Mr. S.) ought to have pointed out the grievance. Certainly not. He never thought that he was bound specifically to do that in the present instance. When ministers came to him, asking him to give his assent to such regulations as these, the *onus probandi* lay on them. They were to shew what grievances called for such measures, and that too before the measure was passed. "But no," said the honorable gentleman, "pass your bills first, and then let us hear of grievances." Inquiry ought to precede the passing of these enactments, and the necessity for them ought to have been proved. However, the house had passed the bills, and all he wanted now was, that they should give a pledge to inquire whether they had passed them on good grounds or not. This was all he asked. His object was to keep this subject perpetually before the house. If the bills had been enacted only for a year, there would have been less cause for his motion. But as the period of their duration extended to three years, his object was, and he hoped the result of an inquiry would be unnecessary, to continue them for more than one year. This he was, for his own part, persuaded, would turn out to be the case, unless gentlemen chose to continue in ignorance, and rejected the means of acquiring information. But the honorable gentleman dwelt a good deal upon general

doctrine, and said that a boon ought not to be granted till you were strong, and had enabled yourselves to crush your petitioners if you chose! He (Mr. Sheridan) had really thought that men could distinguish between good and bad treatment, and that the one produced gratitude and attachment as naturally as the other revenge and hatred! "But no," said the honorable gentleman, "make them fear you first, that they may love you afterwards!" Then the honorable gentleman accused him of having said that Ireland had been used worse than a conquered country. Certainly, he had said that England had adopted a more ignorant and barbarous system of management with respect to Ireland, than ever any one nation with any pretensions to civilization, had adopted with respect to another. The honorable gentleman said, that he was taken *aback* with regard to his statement, when he allowed that concessions had been made in the present reign, and consequently the system changed. This, he supposed, was meant, for he did not pretend to understand the phrase "*taken aback*," not being a naval man, as the honorable gentleman probably was. That the concessions had been made with a very ill grace, he had certainly said. He did not wish, as he said before, to produce any irritation whatever; but if the times and circumstances when these concessions were made were considered, it would be found that they had been wrung from most unwilling minds, rather than conferred in an open, liberal, and generous manner. He (Mr. S.) deprecated waiting for such terms and circumstances. He was conferring favors, when they might be ascribed to a sense of generosity and justice, and not for waiting till they could be demanded, when you would not dare to refuse them. Now his right honorable friend (Mr. Grattan) on the bench near him, had a more able speech in favor of his motion than he himself could possibly do.— That speech was characteristic of his wonted genius

and eloquence, and every thing must be full of genius, animation, and eloquence that came from him. This very speech was one great instance of the benefits to be derived from the motion now submitted to the house ; for his right honorable friend had in the course of it thrown out more information respecting the state of Ireland, than ever had been communicated by any other member, or at any period for some time past. But another member accused him of libelling the legislation of this country, and our cosmopolitan and philanthropic parliament ! But what had our most philanthropic parliament done for Ireland ? Why, they legislated without inquiry for that country ; but if his motion had been proposed and agreed to two or three years ago, parliament would have been better able to have legislated for Ireland. For the proof of this he would only refer to the speech of his right honorable friend, who had exposed the abuses with respect to tythes, the non-residence of the clergy, and state of the Protestant schools. The honorable gentleman seemed to be mightily offended at his saying that government had not been attentive to Ireland. For a proof of this too, he referred to the speech of his right honorable friend (Grattan) who had stated that 10,000 acres of land only supported eighteen Protestant schools ; and yet with all this before them, some gentleman pretended that the government had paid the requisite attention to the state of Ireland. He hoped, however, that an attention of a different sort would be given it. Ireland expected this ; England expected it ; and the result he had no doubt would be beneficial to both countries. His right honorable friend had adverted to the state of tythes in Ireland, and from the ill-constructed method of collecting and managing these, had deducted a great part of the evils under which Ireland labored. The “ hearts of steel,” the “ white boys,” the “ bright boys,” and “ thrashers,” all arose from the tythes, which appeared the most cruel of the burthens under

which the lower ranks of people in Ireland groaned. Why then, did not this sufficiently account for the disaffection in Ireland, without having recourse to the idea of a French faction? His right honorable friend admitted the general loyalty of the people of Ireland; but still said there was a French party in Ireland: a French party; but contemptible; a miserable faction, destitute of talents and energy, and of trifling numbers. What he wanted then was, to have the nature of this danger ascertained, to see in what it consisted, to find out the strength of this French faction, and if so contemptible as his right honorable friend had said, to apply a remedy equal to the disease, and not to overturn the whole constitution of the country on account of a wretched faction. His right honorable friend had compared the general loyalty of Ireland and her French faction, to a beauty with a pimple on her face; a very gallant illustration, and one that must certainly be admired by Irishmen. But if he (Mr. S.) were to give his advice to this beauty, he would say to her, "my lovely charmer, put a patch on that pimple, but do not cover your whole face with a mask." Apply this to Ireland. Were the whole of the loyal Irish to be deprived of their liberties, because there existed a contemptible French faction? Let the remedy meet the evil, but no more; let not the foul mask of despotism cover the land, but let liberty bloom in all her beauty, where there existed a soil in which she was capable of flourishing. It had been said, that now, in this difficult crisis, was the time for the Catholics to show their loyalty and attachment to the constitution, and their worthiness to enjoy its benefits! But this was beginning at the wrong end. If you want the attachment of the Irish, begin by giving them some reason to love you. If you want them to fight your battles, give them something to fight for. But the other way, to deprive them of their constitution in the mean time, was

"Propter vitam, vitæ perdere causas."

You asked them for bravery, and took away the motives to it. You asked for loyalty, and bid them contend for their laws and liberties, and at the same time deprived them of the benefits of the constitution. But his right honorable friend said, that they were only deprived of this for a time, and that they would have their liberties again after they had achieved some acts that would show their zeal and loyalty. He had a different view of this subject. He wished to give them the motives to act, before he sent them to action. But what was this proof required of the Irish Catholics? Had they not already given it? Where, by sea or by land, had they failed to do their duty? When had they shrunk in the moment of invasion? When had they been deficient in expressions of loyalty and attachment to the constitution? And when have their words been falsified by their actions? Yet his honorable friend seemed to think, that proofs of their loyalty and zeal for the constitution were wanting! You must, however, trust the Catholics; you must have them in your Irish militia. Why then suspect them, and subject them to penalties without cause? He might be wrong in this; but if that was so let it be proved. His right honorable friend close by him (Mr. Windham), had said, that he seemed to hold the concessions to the Roman Catholics cheap. He certainly had never done so, and his right honorable friend was mistaken. He had said, that if what was called Catholic emancipation was granted without some other measures in favour of the poorer classes, it might excite envy and jealousy in them. The benefits to them they would consider as not running *pari passu* with those to their superiors, and certainly without some caution what was intended to promote harmony, might become the excitement to contention. But what did the bill proposed by the late administration in favor of the Catholics do? It certainly did a great deal indeed, when it proposed to abolish the restrictions on the Roman Catholic

officer, when he came to a certain rank ; an officer who stood in this singular situation, that he rose till he had an opportunity of doing some act worthy of preferment ; and however great the services he might perform, there he stopped, and the disabilities under which he labored damped his ardor, and rendered him less fit or disposed for enterprize and exertion. The unfortunate Catholic officer might therefore be said to rise to his degradation. The removal of such restrictions were doing much, and the best effects would certainly have followed from the adoption of such a measure. Was it not better to put confidence in the Irish than to bind them down by restrictions? The enemy might hope to break their chains, but they could not expect to turn towards them those hearts that had been conciliated by kindness and confidence. Instead, therefore, of putting them on trial, his wish certainly would be, to give them the benefits of the constitution before they mustered in the field. Instead of the yoke of slavery, he would hang the privilege of the constitution about their necks, and arm them with their rights. Without this, it was impossible to expect that the Irish Catholics should be so cordial in their loyalty and attachment to the constitution as they would otherwise be. He had heard nothing more that appeared to him to require any particular observation. But he again repeated, that if no other good effect should result from this motion, than an acknowledgment on the part of parliament, of the importance of the subject, the motion ought to be adopted. Charles the First, asked Selden, “ what was the best way to put down a rebellion ? ” to which Selden answered, “ remove the cause.” He begged of the government to apply this answer to Ireland, and put an end to the disaffection there, by removing the cause. He would keep his word, and trespass no longer on the indulgence that had been granted him.

The house divided ; for the motion 33 ; against it 76.