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THE SECOND SPEECH

OF

MICHAEL THOMAS SADLER, ESQ., M.P.

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

ON THE THIRD READING OF THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIEF BILL,

MARCH 30, 1829.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON :

PUBLISHED BY L. B. SEELEY AND SONS, 169, FLEET-STREET.

Price 3d., or 2s. per Dozen.

THE SECOND SERIES

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SPEECH, &c.

Mr. Sadler being loudly called for, rose at about two o'clock in the morning, and proposed that the House should adjourn.

“MR. SPEAKER,

I RISE for the purpose of moving an adjournment. (*No, no—Go on, go on.*) I appeal to the Right Hon. Gentlemen opposite, as to its propriety, its necessity. (*Go on, go on.*) Sir, we owe it to ourselves, to the character of this House, as a deliberative assembly—we owe it, as a representative body, to our constituents. The character, the dignity of the House, I repeat, is implicated in these precipitate proceedings. The anxiety of many honourable members to address this House; the unparalleled importance of the question, placed, as it were, for the last time, under its consideration—the intense anxiety of the public mind, as to its issue—dictate to every member, whatever may be the view he may take on this important matter, the decency, the necessity of more deliberation. (*Renewed cries of “No, no; Go on, go on.”*) Then, Sir, if adjournment is refused, I must, however reluctantly, proceed. The fatigue to which the House will be subjected, especially at this late hour, I much regret; but I hope, under these circumstances, it will not be imputed to me. (*Hear, hear; Go on, go on.*) I shall, therefore, venture to address this House, under circumstances which would, on any other occasion, have imposed silence upon me. Deeply sensible as I am of the indulgence I received on a former occasion, and aware of the circumstance to which it was owing, I would not have again trespassed so soon upon its attention, had the question been one of ordinary interest, or the period allowed for its determination sufficiently extended. The contrary, however, is in both particulars the fact. Never was there a measure of such vast and permanent importance brought before the Legislature of the country since the Protestant Constitution now

sought to be subverted was established: never one, of however confined and uninteresting a nature, attempted to be passed, under such strong opposition both within and without doors, with such unseemly haste. These circumstances, therefore, must form my excuse for again presenting myself to your notice. I feel it to be a duty which I owe to myself, and which I am sure my constituents will exact of me, to oppose this impolitic, unconstitutional, and ruinous measure, at every stage of its progress.

“Sir, the Right Hon. Secretary has remarked on the impropriety of discussing the provisions of the Bill at this stage of its progress, rather than arguing on its general merits; he has, however, fallen into a similar error himself, in his speech this night. I shall not in this respect imitate him. My objections are still levelled at its principle. Abhorring this as I did, I felt little disposed to attend to any discussions in the committee, as to its various details. My objections remain unaltered. I believe, Sir, that it affects in its very nature the Royal Title; that it is subversive of the British Constitution, or, in other words, of the rights and liberties of the people of England; that it is introduced on very insufficient, not to say fallacious, grounds; that its securities, whether meant as such or not, are mere delusions, are frivolous in their nature, and will be practically inoperative; that it will instantly introduce a confusion into our institutions which will perpetually increase till the whole be subverted; that, in establishing a principle of indifference as to the public profession of religion, it will assuredly generate a contempt for Christianity itself. I totally disbelieve that it will settle the disputes between Protestantism and Catholicism, which are in their very nature irreconcilable while either is sincerely believed; but I am persuaded it will, on the contrary, unsettle every thing that has been so long and so happily established amongst us; and finally, while I do not credit that the good which its promoters promise us from its operation will ever in the slightest degree be fulfilled, so, on the contrary, I am confident that the evils which they themselves prognosticate as its very possible consequences will be far more than realized, and at the expense of the country. In one word, I regard the measure to be as unnecessary, as unconstitutional, and as dangerous as those who are now bringing it forward pronounced much safer ones to be some few months ago, and whose tergiversations, both of principle and policy, are, to me at least, slight proofs of their past wisdom, and poor securities of their future stability. I say I shall avoid enlarging upon these topics; if the facts and reasons adduced by such men on former occasions have made so slight an impression on their own minds and consciences, and on those of the present majority of this House, how can I imagine that they will have any influence when more feebly echoed by myself?

“I understand it would exceed the ordinary indulgence of the House were I to allude to arguments, or, as I felt them, accusations,

directed against me since I had the honour of addressing it. Some explanations I wished to have offered at the time, and rose more than once with the intention of so doing; but the eagerness of many Hon. Members to take a part in these important discussions (a feeling so proper and natural on every view of the subject) deprived me of the opportunity; and I learn that the time has now passed. I will therefore merely repeat what I previously asserted, and what I have not heard disproved,—namely, that the distresses and disturbances in Ireland, like those which prevailed in the manufacturing districts of England a very few years ago, originate in general indigence and distress; that they have been attributed in the one instance to the want of Parliamentary Reform, in the other to the want of Catholic Emancipation; that you spurned one class of petitioners, that you are about to surrender to the other; that you met the commotion in that case with punishment, and even bloodshed, in this, with open connivance, if not with approbation.

“But, Sir, I said not that I approved, or otherwise, of either policy; much less did I urge the transference of the severer course to Ireland. I was not the then Secretary at War, (looking at Lord Palmerston,) and consequently as I have no claim, so I have no wish, to share with him either the honour or the odium of this; to say the least of it, inconsistent course; much less did I then, or do I now, recommend, as has been imputed to me, civil war as a cure of its evils. On the contrary, Sir, the remedies I ventured to propose were to be found in ‘the fair delightful arts of peace’—in the encouragement and reward of industry—the relief of misery and sorrow—the diffusion of knowledge—the propagation of truth—the extension to a suffering race of the common rights of humanity—the return of their natural protectors to their several essential and important duties—in a word, the promotion of general prosperity amongst a nation ‘peel’d and trodden under foot.’ I leave the civil war, Sir, to those who cast the imputation upon me—theirs be the war against Protestant Ascendancy—against a moderated system of national relief—against a fancied redundancy of population, in a country pre-eminently fertile, not two-thirds of which is at present adequately cultivated; or, in other words, a war against true Religion, Charity, and Providence itself. No, Sir, the contest I recommended was against injustice in all its forms, and especially when abetted by wealth, and armed with power—against priestly domination—against laical desertion; evils of which the generous and long suffering people of Ireland have been for ages at once the dupes and the victims—evils which I firmly believe the present measures will go far to perpetuate. (*Hear, hear.*) I repeat, Sir, I recommended no blood-shedding—no civil war; and if any one, more conversant with such dreadful alternatives than myself, attributed in this time of agitation, and on this irritating topic, words to me which I never uttered, and imputations which I

abhor, the time, I say, is past when I could have replied. I leave such, therefore, to the severer reproofs of their own conscience. Sir, I will just state further in reference to Ireland—that I attributed the distresses and agitations of that country, which originated, I maintain, as did the celebrated Sir John Davies, (an authority since quoted against me,) long before the era of the Reformation, and which have continued for so many centuries, to that imperfect state of civilization, and to that oppression which has resulted as a necessary consequence from the desertion of their duty by many of the great proprietors of that country—to absenteeism, the main enemy of Ireland, as it has long been regarded, against which a series of laws have been enacted, commencing nearly five hundred years ago; laws which Lord Coke eulogises so highly, and which the real friends of that unfortunate country have so long earnestly wished to be rendered operative and efficient. In lieu of these measures, I, for one, am unwilling to adopt the suggestion of those who seem very ready to compromise for the omission of positive duties, and the consequent commission of inevitable injuries by a few orations in favour of what is called Emancipation. (*Hear, hear, hear.*) Sir, the Emancipation I would ask, in behalf of oppressed Ireland, does not affect the few whom this measure contemplates alone to serve, at the expense of the many whose political condition it evidently and intentionally degrades. It is not a sentimental emancipation, extending its privileges to the great Catholic proprietors and peers, the emancipation of the drawing-room and the saloon; it is an emancipation of the mass of the Irish people from the chains of superstition and tyranny—from cruelty and oppression; an emancipation from the devastations of unrelieved want—from the desolation of universal wretchedness. And, Sir, by means simple, obvious, and efficacious, which every good man would hail, and which even the bad would fear to oppose—namely, by encouraging and rewarding labour—by promoting and extending cultivation—by the reclamation of those bogs and wastes which now freckle over the face of that fair and fertile country—above, all, Sir, by the introduction of a moderated national charity—that sacred but much insulted system, which would descend upon that bruised and afflicted country, like an angel of mercy, with healing in its wings. It might indeed, to use the fashionable cant of the day, absorb some of those products which are now unfeelingly wrested from a suffering people; but in so doing it would fall like the kindly dews of heaven upon a parched and unwatered waste, renewing its beauty, and clothing it with fresh and unfailing verdure. Ireland would then, indeed, absorb what would restore her emaciated form to health, reinforce her wasted energies, and soothe her into peace; and the youngest sister of the union would then become one of the fairest and best beloved of all the branches of the British family.

“ Sir, I make no apology for thus recalling to the House the

subjects to which I previously alluded, nor for pressing them, again and again, on its most serious attention. On the contrary, I believe myself, while so doing, to be fulfilling, to the very letter, the Royal recommendation, and taking into my consideration, as far as I am able, 'the whole condition of Ireland.' How far, I would ask any man in this House, has that admonition been observed? What inquiry has been yet heard of? None; and the information on which his Majesty's Government affects to form an opinion of the necessity of violating the Constitution is most of it anonymous, or of very questionable authority; at all events, it is secret and unauthenticated, as it respects this House. In taking these views I would not, in relation to that unhappy portion of the empire, disappoint those expectations of general relief which must have been excited. I would not 'keep the word of promise to the ear, and break it to the sense.'

"It was my intention, on this occasion, to have fortified the view I previously took of the real principle of the British Constitution as demanding, and for the most important of all possible reasons, a moral qualification from those who have to make or administer our laws, by appeals to the highest authorities that have ever adorned this country. To present these to the House would, however, consume too much of its time; and it is, moreover, rendered, I think, unnecessary by the feebleness with which that principle of our Constitution has been attacked. I mean not the Constitution as altered in 1828, nor yet as it is about to be further revolutionized in 1829, but the Constitution of the 1st of William the Third, preserved entire, at least as it regards England, till the last of George III. What emotions does that venerated name kindle in our hearts, and especially on this important occasion! Some of these authorities, Sir, I have selected, and hold in my hand, but I will not now fatigue your attention by reading them, especially at so protracted a period of the discussion, however much my argument may suffer by the omission. I had meant also to have instituted a short contrast between the doctrines of Protestantism and Catholicism, as to their necessary effects on public morals, liberty, and happiness; subjects inseparably connected with a due consideration of the question before us. I will, however, only remark as to Popery, that the peculiar nature of its tenets is such as naturally to produce those melancholy effects, which have invariably accompanied it whenever dominant. Its exclusive and intolerant character, which dictated such atrocious cruelties when in the plenitude of its power, still remains; and however much repressed at present, or however interpreted, is still highly prejudicial to the best feelings and truest interests of society, by disrupting that bond of charity which ought to unite in mutual affection the whole Christian community. Its ridiculous miracles, including that standing one, transubstantiation,

(‘damnable,’ as to its consequences, whatever may be said as to its nature,) disparage the proofs on which the truth of Christianity itself is mainly founded, and prepare the way for that infidelity which invariably spreads wherever Romanism prevails. Its dogmas, touching indulgences, auricular confession, absolution, &c., committing, as they apparently do, the jurisdiction of the Deity to ignorant and mercenary man, are hostile to morality; but, above all, its belief in the efficacy of masses for the dead, appears to be most injurious; a notion which invests the priest with a power to arbitrate, in reference to the departed,—those who have ‘shuffled off this mortal coil,’—between the justice and mercy of the Eternal; making his attributes therefore matters of bargain and sale; putting up as to an auction the mercy of the Almighty,—an auction at which the living may bid and barter for the remission of the sins of the dead; and consequently doing away as much as possible with the effect of a doctrine the most essential of all others to the well-being of society; a doctrine which reason itself indicated, and which revelation was instituted to bring to light; the doctrine of future and irreversible rewards and punishments. A religion this, therefore, which not only trades with the sins of the living, but with the offences of the dead, to the constant peril, and often to the destruction of the primary principles of morality. Can any man, then, who believes in any religion, save that, conceive it to be a proper ingredient in the Protestant Constitution of this Empire? As to the political effects of Catholicism, those, as Archbishop Tillotson has observed, are rendered sufficiently plain by a reference to the history of our country for a succession of generations. They may be yet more obvious ere long. (*Hear, hear.*)

“But, Sir, I understood his Majesty’s Solicitor-General to argue, in the very perspicuous speech he delivered this evening, in favour of throwing the Protestant religious establishment more entirely upon its naked merits, as the surest way of securing and extending its influence. At all events this is the great argument of many who profess a warm regard for Protestantism and its interests, and still advocate this measure; they assert that the restoration of Popery to power and influence is the surest way to injure its cause; and, on the contrary, that to divest Protestantism of its privileges is the best and most infallible method of serving it. I disbelieve both declarations, however fashionable they may be amongst certain theologians as well as politicians. Power, Sir, is the food on which Popery has lived, and could this have destroyed it, it would have been defunct many generations ago; while, on the other hand, Protestantism was first planted in this favoured land by the hand of Government; and though I am sure that it enjoys the smile and approbation of Heaven, still the age of miracles having ceased, I am not enthusiast enough to believe that Providence works without means and agents, and I feel persuaded that of these the most powerful and efficient

is that real protection, now, for the first time since its establishment, about to be withdrawn. All, however, that the Protestant Church has done and suffered in behalf of the liberties and the monarchy of England—all that her implacable enemy has perpetrated against them—are alike to be obliterated—the meekness and tolerance of the one, the cruel insolence of the other, during their respective reigns, are to be forgotten. In the glorious amnesty about to be proclaimed all principles of gratitude or justice are to be buried in a happy and everlasting oblivion. Hitherto the Church has been the true spouse, the faithful helpmate of the State,—has followed all its fortunes; now it is proposed to admit into the domestic establishment its meretricious rival; and this, forsooth, under the assurance that such an association will heal all quarrels, and produce uninterrupted peace. The proposition is folly as well as injustice. Its very absurdity heightens the insult, and aggravates the injury now meditated. No, Sir! rather than let that Church go forth, and sit ‘solitary as a widow,’—still surrounded by her faithful sons, and await a happier day, and different treatment than she now experiences from those who, while they are divesting her of her rights, are still loading her with their compliments,—who are betraying her with a kiss.

“Nothing, Sir, in this measure appears to me satisfactory; and least of all the reasons which have been advanced for attempting it. A few anonymous letters relating to outrages which I could pledge myself to prove, if required, have existed ever since Ireland was connected with this country, and which would continue and increase after this unfortunate Bill should have come into operation, are, I think, very insufficient grounds for such a course. If Mr. A. B.’s potatoe-garden could not be got in, in consequence of the inefficient protection extended to the Protestant population; it hardly amounts, I think, to a sufficient reason that the Constitution of the Empire, in the purchase of which our ancestors counted life itself as cheaply sacrificed, should be surrendered, in order to facilitate that event. But, Sir, let this bill pass,—and tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, of A. B.’s will find it impossible any longer to reap the harvests, or breathe the air of their native country. The Right Hon. Secretary read the other evening a letter from some anonymous clergyman, who, if we knew his name, would be found ere long amongst those who are wise in their generation, stating something, I forget what,—I however hold in my hand a statement, not anonymous, but subscribed by individuals distinguished by character, piety, and learning, men, who would give value to any document which they thus verified,—from those, too, whose hostility to Popery, as Presbyterians, cannot be generated by feelings of bigoted attachment to a church to which they do not belong. I will not trouble the House, at this very late hour, with reading this just and earnest remonstrance. From this and other documents which I have here of unquestionable authenticity, but which

from the lateness of the hour I shall not now read, I am prepared to prove that the people of Ireland are in large bodies making arrangements, at this moment, to expatriate themselves to foreign shores, and abandon for ever the home of their fathers. (*Hear.*) Nor do they hesitate to charge all their danger on the promoters of these inconsistent and mischievous measures; and reproach them as the authors of their disasters, in having violated the very principle of incorporation and protection, on the faith of which their ancestors had been originally induced to settle in Ireland. (*Hear, hear.*)

“But, Sir, the singular character of this measure is this—its promoters themselves foresee the danger and difficulty which will ultimately attend even their own policy. They, themselves, are fully aware that futurity is big with danger as to its final consequences; but still, with a political cowardice which has seldom been exemplified in the annals of our country, (and which has always met its just recompense of punishment and shame whenever it has,) it is proposed to transmit the momentary difficulties, which might be dissipated by dealing with them with a firm, but kind hand, to another day—to postpone the conflict to your children, whom you are at this moment disarming of their constitutional rights, and sending to the struggle which awaits them with a foe whose powers you are now thus increasing. You are surrendering the vantage ground—dispossessing them of the position in which our ancestors placed us in anticipation of this perpetual conflict with the enemy of our existing institutions. (*Hear.*)

“What then is the apology for this strange course, in which cowardice and apostasy are the avowed guides? It is Expediency! Sir, I shall dwell a moment on this new dogma, which I already perceive is the alpha and omega of the modern school, and which I have been rebuked again and again for repudiating from the science of politics. I glory, Sir, in the rebuke, in the quarter from which it comes, in the cause on behalf of which it is given. Expediency, the arbiter as to the future religious character of our Constitution!—Expediency, illumined by religion, and fortified by principle, is, indeed, a safe adviser; but what is it when it purposely divests itself of both? Expediency then, Sir, is the ready apology of the practiced intriguer; the excuse of the ambitious slave; the justification of the inexorable tyrant! In a word, the lip defence of the most unprincipled policy, of the most heinous crimes that have ever disgraced or desolated the earth. And is this principle, Sir, to supplant, and in this hitherto Christian country, that safe, that necessary, that universal guide of human beings in the most exalted, as in the humblest walk of existence, the rule of right; a rule as inflexible as its Author, and which, like all his ordinations, however shrouded for a moment by doubts and difficulties, will ultimately resolve itself into benevolence, justice, and truth? (*Hear, hear.*)

“But, Sir, it may be thought I am dogmatizing in morals instead

of addressing myself to policy, when thus speaking of expediency. I will therefore remove the argument in order to place it on the foundation of human experience. Sir, history opens at every page on instances, inscribed in the most appalling characters, of the just punishment which has ever awaited individuals, or bodies of men, or nations, following so selfish and tortuous a path. I will not speak, Sir, of the pecuniary injuries it has perpetrated, the individual spoiliations of property, or the degradation of rank it has occasioned; I will present a more general view of its effects on society at large. Take an instance or two. What, Sir, did this expediency do for France, when, at the commencement of a state of things, upon which I fear we are now entering ourselves, it was adopted as the rule of public men—when the benevolent Louis, after having established a free constitution in behalf of a beloved, but fickle and ungrateful, people, was surrounded by a knot of expediency-mongers, who, whether sincere cowards, ambitious knaves, or hypocritical traitors, advised the surrender of one principle and prerogative after another, till Christianity itself was extinguished, and the taper of expediency glimmered in the moral darkness which then fell upon that desolated country, when all that was venerable or just was swept away, and the life of the monarch himself was the last sacrifice upon the altar of this expediency? (*Hear, hear, hear.*)

“ But an appeal to a neighbouring nation, whose past events, I fear, are already casting their dark shadows upon the pages of our own fate, and adumbrating the course we are infatuated enough to pursue, may not be admitted, especially by the vindicators of its revolution. Let us then turn to the experience of our own country, and see the inevitable consequences of following, in the hour of real difficulty, such a guide. Let, Sir, the appropriate appeal be to the previous downfall of your own Church and Monarchy. It was at that period that this very House thought it expedient to mark out a noble victim, not indeed either as a human being or a patriot perhaps without his failings, but who bore towards his King and country a faithful and a loving heart—I mean the great Strafford—(whose noble descendant* I regret to see opposed to me on this occasion, and whose rebuke, touching this very expediency, I have received.)—it was expedient, Sir, that he should be sent to his trial—it was expedient that those by whom he was tried should pronounce him guilty; lastly, it was expedient that his Sovereign should sign the warrant that surrendered the most faithful of his adherents to death, to calm and tranquillize, as it was then pretended, the public mind; all animosities, it was promised, should be buried in the grave of the victim, over which a long and perpetual friendship between Sovereign and subject was to be compacted and proclaimed. All this was promised, and by ‘large and triumphant majorities.’ How well that assurance was justified by the result,

* Here the honourable member was understood to allude to Lord Milton.

all who hear me know;—how far the grave of the murdered minister was apart from the grave of the murdered Monarch. (*Cheers.*) The *denouement* of this tragedy, of which Expediency was again the prompter throughout, was exhibited in the front of that edifice which I see you are now repairing: Expediency destroyed the Church—murdered the King! (*Continued cheers.*)

“ But where might we end these appeals? One more shall be made; and as the matter and cause at issue are, in spite of all assertions to the contrary, plainly sacred, a most appropriate one. It was when a temporizing minister of an ancient people was anticipating the difficulties of their situation, and making, in those days, his ‘choice of evils,’ and appealing to the dangers to be apprehended from the interference of foreign power, as do the advocates of the present measure, that he determined [an unexampled sacrifice was to be made ‘lest the Romans should come and take away their place and nation.’ ‘It is **EXPEDIENT,**’ says he, ‘that this man should perish—that this sacrifice should be made.’ Sir, the present occasion is only less important than that. Protestant Ascendancy is now the victim—Expediency still the priest. (*Hear.*) That sacred principle for which our fathers struggled so doubtfully and long, and which they deemed cheaply purchased at the expense of life,—peace and immortal glory rest upon their memory!—that principle which has planted liberty, civil as well as religious, of the press as well as of conscience, in this happy country, and which has watered the sacred plant so profusely with its best blood; which has diffused its lights abroad till it has rendered this country the preceptor of mankind; which has nerved its arm and manned its heart in the hour of danger, and constituted it the champion as well as the exemplar of freedom—that principle which has fostered the learning, liberated the genius, warmed the charities, purified the morals of this great Protestant nation; I say this sacred principle, the noblest, as the great Chatham exclaimed, for which ever Monarch drew his sword, or subject shed his blood, is about to be surrendered from a cowardly apprehension of dangers, which, however, the advocates of this measure do not pretend that it will dissipate, but only change,—not remove, but, perhaps, postpone. (*Hear, hear.*) It is about to be surrendered to expediency! In a choice of evils, it is asserted that this ‘breaking in upon the Constitution’ would be the lesser one.

“ Sir, the measure ought not thus to be presented; it is a choice of evil in preference to good. Banish, Sir, this crooked policy; this disgraceful guide, and the choice will be good; present and permanent good. In the ancient path in which your ancestors so nobly trod, there may indeed be difficulties interposed, obstacles to be overcome, as there ever have been; but meet them nobly and they will but heighten your glory, and increase its reward. Pre-

serve your Constitution ; defend your establishments ; become the true friend, the real benefactors of Ireland ; succour and save her by safer, kinder, surer methods than those now proposed ; and the patriot attempt will have the approbation of your own consciences, the gratitude of your country, and the applauses of posterity. (*Cheers.*)

“ I must beg leave to offer another argument, and, as I have hitherto done with the preceding ones, I will, as much as possible, condense it. If there is one question which, beyond all others, ought to be removed from the consideration of expediency, it is this which concerns the religious feelings and privileges of the people. I ventured, on a previous occasion, to declare that no Parliament, constituted as the present is, has a right to rob the people of England of the Protestant Constitution. (*Hear, hear.*) I repeat that assertion. We are convened by our Sovereign—we are sent by our constituents, for no such purpose. We are interdicted by the solemn oaths we have taken at that table from pursuing such a course. We have abjured it. I know that I have been rebuked, and by a legal authority—(*Cheers*)—for denying the omnipotence of parliament ; but I persist in it. Majorities, Sir, cannot render that true which is evidently false—just which is manifestly otherwise. I appeal to the literary father of English liberty on this point, Locke,—whose reasonings, in the conclusion of his celebrated treatise, are manifestly with me. I appeal to a greater than Locke ; one whose warm patriotism, inflexible honesty, inviolate honour, have never been exceeded, rarely equalled—one whose wisdom, genius, eloquence, have never been approached,—I mean the immortal Chatham. His name, Sir, it may be hoped in these days of mutual appeal, of reciprocal compliment, of unprincipled concession, of coaxing oratory, will still have some weight here, as it has every where else. His judgment is recorded on this solemn question. Upon the Quebec Bill, as it is called,—affecting, therefore, only a distant colony of the Crown, one recently annexed to the British dominions, and almost exclusively peopled by Roman Catholics,—still this was his deliberate judgment, in regard to the admission of Popery to power. Even then, he said ‘ this Act of the 1st of Elizabeth,’ as relating to the oath of supremacy, and substituting a common oath of allegiance in its place—‘ this Act of Elizabeth had always been looked upon as one that the Legislature had no more right to repeal than the Great Charter or the Bill of Rights.’ (*Hear, hear.*) He deduced the whole series of laws, from the supremacy, first re-vindicated under Henry VIII., down to this day, as fundamentals, constituting a clear compact that all establishments by law are to be Protestant ; which compact ought not to be altered, but by consent of the COLLECTIVE BODY OF THE PEOPLE. He further maintained that the dangerous innovations of that Bill were at variance with all the safeguards and barriers against the return of Popery and of popish

influence, so wisely provided against by all the oaths of office and of trust, from the constable up to the members of both Houses, and even to the Sovereign in his coronation oath, and concluded by pathetically expressing his fears that it might shake the affections of his Majesty's Protestant subjects in England and Ireland. (*Hear, hear, hear!*)

"Such, Sir, was the judgment of this great statesman concerning the admission of Popery to power, even in the wilds of North America. What would have been his indignation had he witnessed the attempt to introduce it into the very heart of the empire? Happy would it have been for England if she had ever listened to her Chatham; happy will it still be for her if his voice, which I have awoke, as it were, from the slumbers of his immortality, might now be listened to! But the authority of Chatham, will of course, like all other authorities at the present time, be 'cast to the moles and to the bats.' (*A cry of 'Question,'* from one or two members.) Sir, after having received the almost unanimous call of the House to proceed, and having, as must be evident, very much curtailed my arguments, I really think I am unfairly dealt with in being thus interrupted. (*Loud cries of hear, hear.*) I am willing to admit that I argue the question with warmth,—perhaps with more of my heart in it than of my understanding,—still, as this is the last opportunity I may have of speaking on the subject, I beg that for a few moments I may not be again interrupted. (*Hear, hear.*)

"I shall only urge one more argument against the measure, it is composed both of expediency and right. When appealed to heretofore, it has always been considered irresistible, and, when not listened to, troublesome and dangerous consequences have often ensued. The argument I now appeal to is founded on the voice of the people. Mr. Pitt asserted, over and over again, that, against the voice of the people, this measure ought never to be attempted. Mr. Canning very recently asserted, that the mass of the people of England were opposed to it,—I think the Right Hon. gentleman's exact phrase was 'the inert mass.' Sir, on this question the people are no longer inert. If they were previously so, it was because they reposed confidence in the declarations, assertions, and, if I may make use of a word so obsolete as to be now without a known meaning, the principles, of Ministers,—(*hear*) aye, the *principles* of Ministers. (*Laughter.*) The distrust, however, of the people of England is now fully awakened; their fears are roused; hence the anxious and indecent haste in the passing of this Bill—that their voice may be stifled and intercepted. The measure is hurried through the House, as I understand from many honourable members, long practised in the usages of Parliament; with a haste totally unprecedented. The people of England are not to be trusted with its consideration even, till after the conclusion of the ensuing Christian holidays.

It must be passed through the Legislature, we are told, before Easter. (*Hear.*) The people of England, at least the petitioning part of them,—those whom any, even the most momentous occasion would draw forth, who therefore represent the opinions, and embody the strength and resolution, of the community,—these, Sir, are at your bar. How are they to be treated? On not a remote, but unhappy occasion, when your Sovereign was seeking redress from a grievance insufferable to any private gentleman in England, then, Sir, a mere handful of petitioners, compared with those who stand forth on the present solemn occasion, were to be listened to. Such was the doctrine of many who were then heaping on our gracious Sovereign the coarsest and most malignant invectives, but who are now sudden converts to a warm, wordy, but suspicious loyalty; a change, which amongst all the strange conversions that have marked the present period will, if it endure, be the most miraculous. What, Sir, is the treatment the present petitioners experience? Why, Sir, it has not been enough to refuse and plead against their earnest prayer. (*Hear.*) Their intelligence is denied—their motives are calumniated—their numbers disregarded; they are represented as inspired by religious bigotry and intolerance,—feelings which those who make the charge know do not disgrace this great Protestant community,—as being under the influence of an order which their accusers are aware has not the power, even had it the will, to dominate over public opinion; an order, nevertheless, to whose loyalty, learning, and piety, the monarchy and people of England are under immeasurable obligation, but which has been subjected to a series of insidious comparisons and studied insults in this House, which have met with but very slight ministerial reproof—I mean, Sir, the Protestant clergy of the empire. Sir, the people of England want no incentives to come forward in defence of the altar and the throne, the cause of their fathers and of their God.

“ Sir, the abettors of this measure say triumphantly that the Bill will pass; the triumph is over their former selves, as well as over their present countrymen. Sir, we will contend to the last. In this moral battle we stand at the Thermopylæ of Protestantism, secure of immortality even in the article of defeat; nor would it be a defeat but that some recreant Mœlian leads the enemies of the institutions of his country through secret passes to their melancholy and disgraceful triumph. Exult, then, over the still faithful band who remain true to their principles and professions! Boast in your majority! Carry up your Bill to the other branch of the legislature as in a triumphal procession! Tell us of the honours, the wealth, the influence, you muster in its train! These, Sir, may be there. But I tell you who will not, Sir. The people of England will not be there! They will not assist you to carry up this nefarious Bill; they stand aloof, and, despised and insulted, they pursue it through every stage of its progress with curses not loud but deep—but with

courses that may still deepen and wax louder, till they break forth in thunders, as they once did on a like occasion, when they shook the very pillars and foundation of the throne. This Bill you will take up; but it will be received by a noble race, which have hitherto sent their heroes to the defence of the cause of England; and by sacred order, who have gone to prison and to death for it. We fix our hopes on them; but even they, Sir, are not our last hope. We trust in our monarch and our God! (*Hear, hear.*)

"Sir, I have done. I am aware my feeble voice can have no influence. I am told none would, however powerful, against the phalanx united in hostility to the Protestant cause. Cemented and influenced as that phalanx is, reason, entreaty, remonstrance, are unavailing. (*Hear.*) All I can do is done. I have laid this offering upon the altar of my country, humble as it is. My life should be added could the sacrifice be availing!—A feeling which I partake with millions! (*Cheers.*)





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