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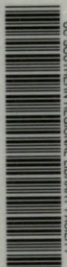
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# THE SPEECH

OF

MICHAEL THOMAS SADLER, ESQ., M.P.

IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS;

ON THE SECOND READING OF THE

ROMAN CATHOLIC RELIEF BILL,

MARCH 17, 1829.

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SIXTH EDITION.

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LONDON:

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

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



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## SPEECH, &amp;c.

“MR. SPEAKER,

“I RISE to address this House, labouring under feelings which would on any occasion be most embarrassing, but which are now painfully heightened by a sense of the unequalled importance of the subject now under discussion, as well as by the extraordinary circumstances with which it is connected. A consideration of these, together with others peculiar to myself, may, I apprehend, incapacitate me from addressing you at all. I must, however, attempt it. The cause which demands, and at this moment, all the efforts of the true friends of the existing Constitution, shall have mine, however humble, and at whatever sacrifice. I am willing, therefore, to expose myself in its service, though feelings for which the House will give me credit in first venturing to address it—feelings of proper diffidence, as well as pride, equally prompt me to be silent. I add my humble vote to that faithful band who have resigned the countenance of those whom they have hitherto respected so deeply, and to whom they have adhered so faithfully; who have surrendered, in the language of many, all pretensions to a share of common sense or of general information; who submit to be branded as a lessening class of intolerants and bigots, from which the Ministers themselves have just happily escaped; and, what is still more painful to generous minds, who are ranked amongst those that are as devoid of true liberality and benevolence, as they are of reason and intelligence. (*Hear, hear.*) Short as has been the time in which I have had the honour of a seat in this House, I have been here long enough to perceive the spirit by which a part of it, and, unhappily, too large a one, is actuated. The spirit of Popery, when dominant, (I beg pardon for any thing so obsolete and illiberal as an allusion to history,) dragged the objects of its resentment to the stake;—that spirit still survives;—its advocates at this moment would willingly inflict on its conscientious opponents a martyrdom still more grievous to generous minds, in aiming at the moral and intellectual character and attainments of those whom they mark out as their victims. All these things, however, move us not. In a cause like that of the Protestant Constitution of England, now placed, for the first time since its existence, in a situation of imminent peril, an humble part in its triumph would indeed give me a share of that immeasurable joy which its rescue would diffuse throughout the nation; but to be numbered as one of those who, faithful to the end, made a last, though ineffectual, struggle in its defence,

will afford a melancholy satisfaction which I would not exchange for all the pride, and power, and honours, which may await a contrary course. (*Cheers.*)

“Bear with me, Sir, in thus expressing my feelings; they are those of the vast mass of the British people;—not a besotted, ignorant, bigoted people, as some describe their countrymen to be; but an intelligent, a well principled, and a religious people—THE PEOPLE OF ENGLAND;—men who, intellectually, are as competent to entertain this question as those who attempt to stultify them; and who, morally speaking, are far better qualified to decide upon it than those who malign them, inasmuch as they bring to it the lights of common sense;—(*a laugh from the opposition;*)—and, what has lately become a far rarer quality, now also laughed at by many—disinterested principle, and, above all, religious feeling;—(*loud cheers;*)—and who, moreover, are far more removed from bitterness and intolerance in discussing it than those who are perpetually accusing them of being so actuated. (*Cheers.*) It is these views and feelings, Sir, which I would rather present to this House than weary it with any long and laboured arguments on the general question. But, before I attempt to do either, let me attend for a moment to what is made the apology for this fearful inroad on the Constitution; namely, the condition of Ireland. This, Sir, I have heard stated again and again as the sole reason for the meditated change; and it has been asked this night, and in a tone of triumph, what other remedy can be proposed? I deny, Sir, that the proposition is a remedy;—I deny that the reason is substantial. Protestant Ascendancy the source of the disorders of Ireland! • Why, Sir, any man who knows any thing of the history of that unhappy country,—and I speak in the hearing of many who will correct me if I err,—must be well aware that the state of things now sought to be remedied, and the turbulence and the misery which it occasions, existed, in a still greater degree, and produced far more lamentable consequences, before the Reformation, when consequently there was only one religion in the country,—than at present. (*Hear, hear.*) Need I go over its history, reign by reign, in proof of this? No, the fact is too notorious to admit contradiction. Again, if it should be said that the causes of discontent are now changed, I still deny the assertion; and, in so doing, I appeal to the authority of a late Right Honourable Secretary for Ireland, one who, though no longer in his Majesty’s Government, is friendly to the measure now before us; who, in a speech delivered in this House, and afterwards deliberately given to the public, said, immediately after a recent and sanguinary disturbance there, that ‘all the commotions which, for the last sixty years, have tormented and desolated Ireland have sprung’—from what? From Protestantism, from Protestant ascendancy? no;—‘immediately from local oppression’ (*Hear.*)

“Sir, the mischief regarding Ireland is this: Ireland, as it respects its connexion with England, was a conquered country;—that was



her misfortune; but it has been our crime that she has continued to be treated as such. Her lands have been wrested from the inhabitants and given away from time to time to strangers, on condition that they should reside in the country, and plant and support the Protestant religion, and they have deserted both;—absentees, who, owning much of the surface of the island, cruelly desert the people by whom they live, and persecute and oppress them by proxy; but who, many of them, think to make atonement for their turpitude by a few cheap votes and declarations, sincere or otherwise, in favour of Catholic Emancipation. Of all the delusions which have been so much descanted upon on the opposite side of the House, can any equal this? They consign a population to poverty and idleness, where, to the disgrace of humanity, civilization, and Christianity, there is no provision whatever for the wretched victims of poverty. Into this subject I am prepared to go whenever it shall gain the attention of this House. In the mean time I assert, and will repeat again and again, that the miseries of Ireland, aye, and its turbulence, do not spring from its Protestant Constitution. Why, it is only a few years ago, since the manufacturing and labouring classes of this country wanted employment and bread; and Demagogues told them to seek relief in parliamentary reform. In Ireland there is equal distress, and Agitators tell the people that what they want is Catholic Emancipation.—These assertions are untrue. The people in both instances wanted, I repeat, employment and bread; and, wrought upon by designing men, they fiercely attributed their distresses to causes, the removal of which, it is my honest conviction, would only perpetuate them. The difference has been that, in one instance, you put the Agitators down even with blood shedding, in the other, you have connived at, if not secretly supported, them. (*Loud cheers.*) But, Sir, I see in Catholic Emancipation nothing whatever proposed in favour of the mass of the Irish community,—that brave, that generous, that long-suffering race, who have been alike the dupes of the mere politicians in both countries. On the contrary, I see a proposition, unblushingly made, to rob the cottage of its long-exercised privilege, in order to add new splendour to the Catholic coronet; and this, forsooth, is to calm the country at present, and ensure its future tranquillity! It would do irreparable mischief if it were to effect this. That country never will, never ought to be calm till the blessings of civilization, and the rights of humanity are extended and secured to the lowest ranks of its society. What are you to do with Ireland? Legislate on her behalf, in the spirit of philanthropy; take with you to the task the lights of wisdom and experience;—develop her immense internal resources,—hitherto unexplored and almost untouched;—introduce in behalf of her distressed population a moderated system of poor laws, the machinery of which the very attempt would create;—diffuse, in spite of priestly domination, the benefits of Christian tuition;—employ the starving people, who are and must be fed, but whose labours you now lose, and whose cha-

acters you destroy by consigning them to involuntary idleness and mendicancy;—and finally, while you legislate about and against the poor, dare to touch the culpable and heartless rich, the deserters and enemies of their country; and if they are dead to other and worthier motives, compel them by pecuniary mulets to repay some of their duties to that society to which they owe their all;—duties which they are disposed to pay by words only. (*Cheers.*) Let them thus afford employment and bread to a population never adequately employed, always suffering from want, and pushed to the utmost verge of human endurance. These, Sir, are the means, obvious and practicable, though ridiculed by theoretic folly, (*hear, hear,*) and resisted by inveterate selfishness, which would, and in no long time, regenerate Ireland, and repay the wrongs of many generations. But, Sir, Ireland—degraded, deserted, oppressed, pillaged—is turbulent; and you listen to the selfish recommendations of her Agitators. You seek not to know, or, knowing, you wilfully neglect, her real distresses. If you can calm the agitated surface of society there, you heed not that fathomless depth of misery, sorrow, and distress, whose troubled waves may still heave and swell unseen and disregarded. And this forsooth is patriotism! Ireland asks of you a fish, and you give her a serpent; she sues for employment, for bread—you proffer her Catholic Emancipation. This, Sir, I presume, is construed to be the taking into our consideration the whole situation of Ireland. (*Loud cheering.*)

“Turning, then, at present, from the subject of Ireland, where the sacrifice of Protestantism would be a curse instead of a remedy, let us see what is the nature of the proposition, and what would be its effects, as it regards the empire at large. It amounts, Sir, to this,—an inroad on the Constitution of the country, and a preparatory movement towards its final destruction. Were the claims in question matter of justice, I would concede them and abide all consequences, abhorring, as I do, the principle of mere expediency, as well in politics, as in morals;—sciences which, I regret to say, are rarely identified. But as, amongst all the advocates of the Catholics, no man worth attending to has attempted to argue a conventional and conditional, into an abstract and inherent right; so I shall not detain the House by offering a word in answer to those who would present the question in such a form. All the rights the Constitution creates are conditional; if this imply disabilities and exclusions, the Constitution of England is founded upon them. But they are such as are imposed for the general good, and they have hitherto promoted and secured it. The meditated alteration militates against the letter, and destroys the spirit, of that Constitution. It demands qualifications, or, if you please, imposes disabilities, of a twofold nature, on all whom it calls to serve the public in the legislative or judicial functions, or allows to be qualified for that service. And, first, it demands a pecuniary qualification; and that not for the purpose of stigmatising poverty,—no! this our Protestant ancestors made it their business to solace and relieve, establishing amongst their most cherished



institutions a system of national and universal charity. But still, from the freeholders of England who elect,—from the members of parliament who are elected,—from the legislature who make our laws,—from our magistrates who administer them, and even from our juries who finally arbitrate concerning their application, it demands a pecuniary qualification; and it does so, as I conceive, on very intelligible grounds, because it appeared expedient to identify the authorities of the country with its permanent interests; and again, and more emphatically, because the possession of property was deemed the most general, though certainly not the infallible, evidence of that information and knowledge which are so essential to the due discharge of those important functions which exist only for the benefit of all. It is thus our Constitution seeks to embody, not the ignorance and passions, but the wisdom and intelligence, of the community. Political radicals seek to do away with this pecuniary qualification, and for reasons which will acquire tenfold force if the measure before us is suffered to pass. For, Sir, the Constitution of England assumes a still more sacred character in demanding, secondly, and, hitherto, with far greater certainty and scrupulosity, a moral qualification from all who make or administer, in the higher functions of the state, the laws of this realm. It has not only made Christianity part and parcel of the law of the land, but it has constituted its pure and reformed profession an essential ingredient in the established government; and as long as I am permitted to think that principles are the springs of practice,—that Christianity is better than infidelity,—that its purest and most liberal form is preferable to its most bigoted and corrupt one,—so long, in spite of the liberalism of the day, which is only another term for that spirit which strikes at the root of Christianity, aye, and in a neighbouring country soon hewed down the tree,—I presume to think it has done so most wisely. I am aware, Sir, of the hacknied assertion first put forth by Mr. Paine, that we have nothing to do with religion as a matter between man and his God, and I subscribe to it. But that we have nothing to do with religion as between man and man, I utterly deny. To do otherwise would be to disclaim the doctrines of the Scripture, the dictates of common sense, the experience of the Christian world, the utility of any religion whatsoever. If, Sir, the profession of Christianity in its purest form be the best guarantee for the faithful discharge of the private and social duties, it is much more so in respect to those high and important functions on which the character and happiness of millions depend; and it was thus our ancestors judged and acted in founding and establishing our Constitution. Nor was it with a view merely to secure to the country the full advantage of Protestantism, the best and most efficient form of Christianity upon earth; but to exclude Popery,—undoubtedly the worst,—that they thus decided; identifying the latter, as they had abundant reason to do, with cruelty, tyranny, and arbitrary power; believing it to be detrimental to the interest and morals of the community, and

having had full experience as to its tendency greatly to weaken, if not to withdraw, that allegiance which is due to the sovereign power of this Protestant empire. But the moral qualification, now termed 'disabilities,' is, it seems, to be sacrificed. And yet lawyers and statesmen without number, tell us this is in perfect accordance with the spirit of the Constitution. I have already said that our political radicals seek to do away with the pecuniary qualification; our religious radicals, for such they are, whatever they denominate themselves, wish to destroy the moral one. They allege that the superior light and information which have dawned upon the Romish faith have changed its character and made it a fitting alliance for a Protestant King and Parliament. But has not the same amelioration been asserted, and far more truly, regarding the unrepresented part of the British community, and yet they were dispersed and put down; their Agitators were never listened to; they were, on the contrary, forcibly apprehended, tried, and punished. Sir, the Popish Agitators were tolerated in infinitely more seditious practices, if not actually encouraged, by those who had the power to put them down, in order, as many think, thereby to make out a case for putting down the Constitution. But, Sir, the very principle that our ancestors thus happily established, and which has produced such inestimable benefits to this hitherto prosperous country, is now, it seems, to be annihilated,—all our securities are to be destroyed

'At one fell swoop!'

“The time is come, we are told, when the question must be adjusted. Sir, the adjustment of a disputed question generally terminates in some mutual concessions, some reciprocal advantages: but here the reciprocity is clearly all on one side. Will the authors of the measure point out the equivalents actually given in the Bill before the House? There are none, unless their promises and professions may be regarded as such, which some of us have learnt now to estimate at their just value. The Protestant faith surrenders every thing—receives nothing. Even the securities, so much talked of, vanish at last into mere shallows. The measure, we are told, is satisfactory; but to whom? To the most zealous and devoted of the adherents of the Popish cause, in all the pride of its growing demands and insatiable pretensions: and it is moreover accepted as the certain presage of better things to come. But securities! The Lord-lieutenancy, an office of pageantry, is, it seems, to be continued Protestant. But what Protestant cares an iota about that, surrounded as the individual holding it will certainly be by Popish advisers. The office of Lord Chancellor is similarly reserved; but a Roman Catholic may be first Lord of the Treasury, exercising, therefore, far greater patronage. The place of the King, as a learned Lord expresses it, must, it appears, still remain Protestant; but some bigoted devotee of Rome may conquer his way to the Royal Presence, be his Prime Minister, and become 'Viceroy over him.' But, Sir, this last reservation, I confess, heightens the objection I have to the measure into abhorrence and disgust. What! Sir, after hav-



ing established by a solemn act the doctrine, that conscience ought to be left free and unrestrained,—that disabilities of the nature sought to be removed inflict a disgrace upon the feelings of those whom they affect intolerable to good and generous minds,—worse than persecution, nay, than death itself—how do you apply it? Why, Sir, you propose to sear this brand high upon the forehead, deep into the heart of your Prince,—and to render the sear more visible, the insult more poignant,—by making him the solitary individual whose hereditary rank must be so held and transmitted, Freedom of conscience to all subjects, but none to your King! Throw open wide the portals of the legislature, that a Duke of Norfolk may take his seat in your senate, but hurl from his loftier seat there, the throne of this realm, a Duke of Lancaster, if he exercise the same privilege,—if he presume to have a conscience! Hitherto, Sir, the British Constitution is uniform, fair, equal: it demands the same moral qualification, as I have already observed, from us all. The Liberal School have long complained that these essential securities imply slavery; and the Ministers, who have adopted their political creed, nevertheless, are content, nay propose, that the King should be the only proclaimed slave in his dominions.—But if the Bill should pass, which God avert! if no other and fitter individual should stand up in favour of the then insulted feelings of his Sovereign, I will: Whether the exception is introduced to blind the eyes of some, under the guise of a security, or however intended, I will propose, that, amidst this general Emancipation, the King shall not be bound,—that in the very *acmé* of liberal legislation the King should not receive a marked insult,—that his future religious profession shall be delivered from the taint of this solitary dictation;—that his conscience shall be free. I will move, Sir, an amendment omitting that clause. It may be said that the Monarch will still have a choice. Certainly. And have those, in whose favour you are about to throw down the ramparts of the Constitution,—have they at present less?

“But, Sir, this measure does not merely affect the feelings and the character,—I say it touches the title of the King! Reverse the attainder upon Popery, and the natural consequences are obvious. Proclaim the equal right and eligibility of all religions to all offices of state amongst us, ye Emancipators, and remind us of those millions of subjects who demand the declaration and concession; and allude to the scores of millions who back their demand elsewhere, and, the moment the King shall sign a Bill to that effect, in what position will you have placed him! While the Constitution of the country stands as our revered and not hitherto rivalled ancestors framed it and transmitted it down to us, namely, strictly Protestant, excluding from power (and from power only) the devoted adherents of a cruel, tyrannous, and superstitious church, nothing can be more clear, consistent, and indisputable than the Royal Title;—take away that Protestant character, nothing less so. The privileges of Protestantism, as hitherto maintained, constitute the

Royal Title-Deeds of his august family, that which became the actual transfer of the estate which he holds in Parliament and in the country; and in what attitude do his legal and constitutional advisers place themselves who recommend their surrender? No surrender! Who dares urge him to sign an instrument to that effect? It was this very ascendancy, now a by-word of abuse, and which I observe Mr. O'Connell exults in saying is gone for ever,—it was this very ascendancy, I say, which first introduced into these realms the illustrious and patriotic line which now governs us;—which still forms at once the pillar and foundation of the throne;—which combines its title with the very elements of our Constitution;—which identifies it with our liberties;—which consecrates it with the sanctities of our religion;—in a word, which proclaims, by the unanimous suffrages of all our institutions as well as in all our hearts, George IV. as the rightful King of the first Protestant empire upon earth. (*Hear, hear.*) It is true that the Act of Settlement is yet, I believe, to remain;—an Act which was with difficulty passed, and passed at last, I think, by a majority of one only; by a Parliament exclusively Protestant; but it will be, of course, more zealously supported, both as to its letter and spirit, by one partly Papist.

“ But, Sir, I am averse, for my own part, as a matter of taste as well as of principle, from resting the Royal Title, which has hitherto been placed upon the broad foundation of national principle, and supported by all the analogies of the Constitution, upon a mere Act of Parliament, or rather upon a reservation in that Act,—upon “inky blots and rotten parchment bonds,”—instead of the firm foundation of our Protestant Constitution. I am therefore persuaded, that, whatever becomes of the legal, the proposed measure touches the moral, title of the King. I feel confident, circumstanced as the succession is in reference to other heirs, whose claims the celebrated Mr. Butler has so plainly traced, that he whom the Bill would chiefly affect would feel his generous heart wounded by the situation in which he would then find himself placed, in reference to rights that must morally revive, however weakly they might be maintained and enforced. For these reasons I will, as an humble individual, resist the present measure to the last. I am aware that it is said, that there is no danger where the population is, generally speaking, Protestant. I disside in this assurance, inasmuch as *I am certain that this House no longer attends to the voice of the people on this important point*; but, danger or none, Sir, I am adverse from insulting a high-minded and generous Prince, by practically showing him that the principle which seated him on the throne is unjustifiable, and no longer worthy of preservation;—is worthy of remembrance only as an obsolete and ridiculous piece of past bigotry; though we will condescend, nevertheless, to support him now he is there. I protest, Sir, against this change. Instead of resting the title of the Sovereign upon the universal spirit of the Constitution, and folding



his Royal Robe round the Throne and the Altar, you propose to hang it on the peg of a solitary legal exception or two,—insulting in themselves, and dangerous in their consequences. Such, Sir, is the nature of your principal securities; the Right Honourable Secretary has indeed said that the petitions poured into this House, numerous and respectable beyond all former example since there was a House to receive them, afford the best security on this occasion. But he has heard his new friends, night after night, scrutinize those petitions as emanating from poverty, folly, ignorance, and bigotry. Liberal conduct! Where, then, will be this security, when this national feeling shall have been successfully insulted, damped, cried down; when it shall therefore expire in disgust at the manner in which it has been disregarded, deserted, and betrayed?

“Other reasons, powerful as I think in themselves, and most important in reference to their results, press for utterance. But I will not trespass on the patience of the House by adducing them. I would rather recall to its memory those which have been delivered by the Right Honourable Secretary of State, accompanied by the consequences with which he so often and so ably connected them—delivered, I say, from his place, which he still keeps, I regret to add, much more tenaciously than his principles. Those arguments, however, have not lost their weight in the country, and he has now the hard task of answering them, of answering—himself! No talents inferior to his own, I speak it sincerely, would be competent to such a task. He can, however, like Hudibras, ‘Confute, change sides, and still confute’; and his new friends assure him that this is the true, dignified, consistent, and patriotic course.

“But, if I waive any further arguments on this important subject, I will nevertheless make a solitary remark upon the extraordinary nature of those reasonings which are urged in defence and support of the present fatal measure. As those arguments evidently spring from the most opposite views and motives, so are they of the most contradictory description. Yet still they are all allowed to carry weight, though, if they were pressed from one and the same quarter, they would plainly balance and negative each other. It is thus that, in this most extraordinary argument, contradiction itself is allowed to cumulate the demonstration. Thus, one party asserts, and is heard and believed, that Popery has lost its power,—that it has become quite nerveless, despicable, and inert, and *may*, therefore, be trusted. Another, on the contrary, says, that its adherents are now so formidable in numbers, and so overwhelming in power, that its claims *must* be yielded. And these assertions, also, have full credit. One maintains that the spirit of Popery is changed and ameliorated; another, and one far more likely to understand the subject, for it is composed of its adherents, that it is unchanged and unchangeable. One, that the conduct of its professors is so excellent, peaceable, and loyal, that they merit to be admitted into power; another, that they are so united, turbulent, and factious, that it is unsafe to keep them out, and both opinions also are gospel. One

assures us that the admission of Popery into the citadel of the Constitution will strengthen the Established Church; another (and it is far stronger than it chooses to avow itself at present) hopes that such admission will lead to that union with other bodies unfriendly to it, which will effect its final downfall. One would think, I say, that arguments so opposite would neutralize each other. But, no! so long as they are urged from different mouths, they are all held irrefragable. In this general attack, the arrows may be shot from different, and indeed opposite, quarters, but while they are all aimed at one central mark,—Protestantism,—they are the more certain to take effect and bring down their victim; the more varied the positions from whence they are discharged. Into these contradictory arguments, I say, I shall not enter at present; one, however, distinct from them all, and most degrading to the character of the country and the feelings of Englishmen, I shall just allude to. It is this; that England ought to take her lessons of liberality from the surrounding nations. In none of those countries, I not only assert, but am prepared to prove, is liberty so well understood or so largely exercised, as in this happy country; and yet England, the birth-place of freedom, its asserter, its defender, and its avenger,—the model of all the free institutions upon earth,—and where as abundant a degree of liberty is experienced as is at all consistent with its perpetuity,—I say England is by these gentlemen sent abroad on a sort of Ulyssean tour to learn the rudiments and imbibe the spirit of freedom; a political mendicant, to pick up the crumbs of liberality which fall from the tables where tyranny and superstition have been feasting for generations. (*Hear, hear.*) But I will not dwell on this degrading consideration, but proceed to observe, that if we object to this change in the Constitution of our country in itself, we resist it yet more strenuously in consideration of its certain consequences; consequences which are already but ill disguised by not a few of those who zealously support this measure. That the real liberties of the people will be put in jeopardy, I feel confident; that the United Church of England and Ireland will be placed in peril the moment this Bill is passed is quite certain; as has been proved over and over again, by the very men who now support the proposition; it will and must lead to those measures, as sure as consequences result from causes, which will complete its fall. This individual Act may, indeed, recognise its rights; what may the next do, when you have reinforced the ranks of legislation by a number of its implacable and conscientious enemies? The real object of attack, Sir, as has been often asserted here, is the Establishment, or rather its privileges and immunities. The war is commenced, and it is commenced in this place. The first parallel is nearly completed,—it may point diagonally,—another will be marked out in an opposite direction, till the whole will be completed,—till the gates of the Constitution will have been approached, the breach effected, and its ancient ramparts levelled with the dust; and the final triumph will be over



the most tolerant, the most learned, and the most efficient religious establishment that any country has ever yet been blessed with. (*Hear, hear.*) And, Sir, can any man flatter himself, that even when this is destroyed, the long and uninterrupted reign of quietness and peace promised to us by our political soothsayers is to ensue? No! When this victim has been hunted down, the same pack, which are now upon her haunches, will scent fresh game, and the cry against our remaining institutions will be renewed with redoubled vigour, till nothing be left worth either attack or defence, (if indeed any thing will, after this fatal measure is carried,) till all be liberalized. I see, indeed, an oath is to be taken which verbally forbids Roman Catholics who take it from overturning the Establishment; but they must be more or less than men to be enabled to keep such an oath. 'Totally inefficient as a security, it is immoral in its nature; it establishes a war between words and principles, between oaths and conscience; and which will finally prevail, needs no explanation.

“When a number of Roman Catholics, then, shall have become seated in this House, that they shall not feel disposed to lessen the influence of, and finally to destroy, a church which they conscientiously abhor, is absurd. That they should not make common cause for a similar purpose with other parties, inspired by similar views and feelings, is impossible; and though I have heard honourable members inveigh strongly against the supposition, the sure operation of adequate motives will bring about this union, and will direct its energies and its efforts against the common object of its hostility,—the Establishment. Much, indeed, has been said about the weakness of such a party in point of numbers; but a party acting invariably in unison on this point will, as has been well urged, ultimately carry it, and, with it, all others of vital importance. They will form the nucleus of a growing party, to whom the measures of the Crown must always be rendered palatable, and who, consequently, will so far dictate the future policy of the country. Such has been the case in past times; the most important events that have ever occurred in our history have been carried by far smaller majorities than these could form, acting together, and, consequently, holding the balance between the other different parties in the State;—need I instance the Revolution and the Act of Settlement,—deliverances, which, if they could have been accomplished at all, could have been secured only by wading to the liberties of England through seas of blood, had not Popery been expelled from the Legislature of the country. (*Hear, hear.*)

“But some apologies are made, some reasons given, for these portentous changes, which I shall briefly notice. And, first, it is said the time is come when this question ought to be adjusted. This the time! Of all the times in which this measure has been proposed this is undeniably the worst, because it is the latest. On many former occasions, Sir, when the present Ministers opposed this measure, the concession would have been accepted as a boon; it will be

now sullenly taken as the recovery of a just but long-disputed debt ; one insultingly withheld and at last reluctantly discharged. Then it would have dissolved millions into gratitude, and made a deep, if not lasting, impression on their hearts ; now it is regarded as an extorted right, conceded as a choice of evils, and will be estimated accordingly. It will, I know, be accepted, but it will derive its chief value from being the certain means of extorting fresh concessions, all of which might now be named, and none of them, I am persuaded, will be long withheld, notwithstanding the new pledges of those who have so nobly redeemed their old ones. I say, Sir, the present is the worst of all the times in which the measure has been hitherto proposed, for granting this Bill of Relief, as it is called. If it be a measure just in itself, and safe in its consequences, it ought to have been granted from the first ; and, I repeat, Ministers are deeply responsible for not conceding sooner, if they meant to surrender at all.

“Aye, but we are now told that there was previously a divided cabinet on this particular measure, and that it could not, therefore, be carried. Here, however, the reply is still plainer and more forcible. Never was there so superficial an excuse put forth. Divided cabinet!—Who were they that caused the division in the preceding cabinet but those who now complain of it, and who, as it appears, will suffer none to serve their King or Country, but such as approve their altered plans, and change at the word of command ! And is it for the present Ministers to talk to us about the Government being previously divided upon this question as the only previous obstacle to its adjustment ; those who, less than two short years ago, were so strictly and conscientiously devoted to the cause for which I now humbly contend, as to refuse to serve with one even favourable to Emancipation, and who therefore deserted the King in a body, painful as it no doubt was to them, rather than do so. But, Sir, are all the long and laboured explanations by which this fact is attempted to be concealed or evaded worth a straw ? Long-winded orations,—‘ passages, which lead to nothing,’ can never set this matter in an honest light before the people of England. They can comprehend it as little as the question of Emancipation on which they are declared to be so ignorant and besotted. They were, however, beguiled by these explanations. I was one of them. I thought the conduct of the Noble and Right Honourable individuals concerned a sacrifice to principle and consistency ;—what it was, it is not now worth while to inquire, since it was any thing rather than that. It is now too late to rectify the error ; all that remains is to regret most deeply, that, faithfully following those who have so secretly, suddenly, and unceremoniously deserted us, we were taught to regard a highly gifted individual, unhappily now no more, as one who ought not to serve his King and country as the head of the government, because he was favourable to the measure now so indecently forced upon the country. I do heartily repent of my



share in the too successful attempt of hunting down so noble a victim;—a man whom England and the world could not fail to recognise as the ornament of his age; whose eloquence was, in these days at least, unrivalled;—the energies of whose capacious mind, stored with knowledge and elevated by genius, were devoted to the service of his country. As to the qualities of his generous heart, let those speak to them who felt the warmth of his friendship, which, I believe, could only be equalled by its stability. Had I had the honour of a seat in this House at that time, and could I have anticipated present events, I should have conscientiously opposed him on this vital question it is true; but with feelings very different from those with which I now approach it. This was the man with whom the present Ministers could not act,—and for a reason which vitiates their present doings. Coupling, therefore, that transaction with the present, if the annals of our country furnish so disgraceful a page, I have very imperfectly consulted them. But peace to his memory! My humble tribute is paid when it can be no longer heard or regarded,—when it is drowned by the voice of interested adulation poured only into the ears of the living. He fell; but his character is rescued,—it rises and triumphs over that of his surviving . . . . . What shall I call them? Let their own consciences supply the hiatus. (*Hear, hear.*)

“One thing, Sir, I cannot but deeply regret, as the inevitable consequence of these strange changes, however they may terminate, namely, the degradation of the character of public men in the estimation of the people of England. Nothing can equal the astonishment with which these sudden changes have been regarded, but the disgust they have occasioned; nay, even where they have been hailed as accessions of strength, they have, nevertheless, been accompanied by feelings of secret contempt. Much has been said as to the question having been so long before the people of England as to render delay unnecessary. Had it been a much shorter time before the consideration of the present Ministers when they rejected it? So sudden, total, and unanimous a change in a matter so long considered seems not a little singular and suspicious. These simultaneous conversions are really disgusting,—they argue not so much a change of principle as a total want of principle. I have nothing to do with the motives of men;—their actions however are open to animadversion; and I think I speak the language of plain English honesty when I say, that no power, however formidable,—no promises, however alluring,—no rewards, however great,—should tempt me to such a course. Were I to accept a proffered robe of Nobility under any such inducements, I would take a hint from the Church whose interests I should then have to espouse, and wear, in the way of penance, a shirt of hair next my recreant skin for the remainder of my life. (*Laughter.*) There is, I admit, such a thing as a conscientious conversion, and I honour it. It is, however, of very rare occurrence, where opinions have been previously well weighed, and long and perseveringly maintained.

But there is, Sir, a much more common thing,—apostasy! (*Hear.*) And can the people of England forbear to suspect this to be the case, when they view, with dismay, these infectious conversions, and behold whole ranks of men face about as at the word of command? They will, I am persuaded, look no more to the summits of society for their guides on these sacred matters,—to the gilded weathercocks who may face to-day the pole-star of truth and consistency, and turn their backs upon it to-morrow. No! they will now learn to respect themselves,—to know and to feel that true, consistent, conscientious principle is not to be looked for at the summit, but in the solid base of the social structure, which stands unshaken and unmoved; and keeps its just front facing all the cardinal virtues of existence. Such, taking their principles, as all true Protestants do, from a translated Bible, are not very likely to be shaken, and are immovable amidst those infectious political conversions, which are the scandal of the age and the disgrace of the country. As an instance how deeply these political tergiversations have offended the honest principles of the people, and shaken their confidence in public men, I will just mention what occurred to me during my recent contested election. I solicited one, whose principles I learned were precisely the same as my own, and especially on this vital point. My surprise was great when he peremptorily refused me his vote, and with some heat. He declared, indeed, his warm devotion to the Protestant interest, which I assumed as a fair ground for his support, and I expressed my principles accordingly, and my determination to adhere to them. But he cut me short. ‘I have done,’ said he, ‘with the pledges, or principles, or promises of public men: they have apostatised,—so will you. I will give no vote. David said in his haste,—I say deliberately,—“all men are liars.”’ (*Loud laughter, and cries of ‘Hear, hear, hear.’*)

“But, Sir, it is these sudden conversions, apostasies,—call them what you will,—which have made up this so much boasted majority, influenced by every variety of motive, and formed of the most discordant materials. The new accessions to Ministers may perhaps, however, ultimately embarrass them, otherwise those coalitions must ensue, which, notwithstanding their luminous apologists, Englishmen instinctively abhor; and they feel rightly in so doing. Meantime nothing can be more ludicrous than the figure some cut in this political *melée*. ‘Misery,’ says Shakspeare, ‘makes men acquainted with strange bed-fellows,’ so does political delinquency. (*Loud laughter and cheers.*) Who, for instance, would have thought the Hon. Member for Somersetshire and his late ‘talented’ and astute opponent, Mr. Henry Hunt, would have been so soon yoke-fellows in the glorious cause of Catholic Emancipation,—and so of the rest. They, however, do agree; and I may add, in the words of Sheridan’s *Critic*, ‘when they do agree, their unanimity is wonderful.’ I make no personal allusions here; the leaders in this wheeling phalanx, I have no doubt, are honourable men;—so are they all, ‘all honourable men.’ One thing I am,



however, bound to admit,—those who have long, consistently, and conscientiously supported this question, however mistakenly as I judge, them I cannot but respect ;—the triumph at this moment is all their own. They have evidently been the leaders, and far in advance, in this march of intellect ;—they it is who have taught the late converts, like one of Moliere's characters, their political vowels at forty. I arraign neither the principles, nor the consistency of the opposition: it is to the new, sudden, and simultaneous converts that I allude, who, moreover, have the warmth of all new converts, and their hatred of all those who remain unchanged. Their zeal, indeed, is of so agitating and intense a nature that, like the ingredients of a boiling cauldron, it is perpetually overflowing, and scalding all within its reach. (*Hear, hear.*)

“ I am perhaps presenting principles and feelings, rather than arguments, to this House. I meant, I promised, so to do when I was sent hither, and I have kept, and mean to keep, my word. (*Hear.*) I know how dear this sacred, this deserted cause is to the hearts and to the understandings of Englishmen. The principle may be indeed weak in this house, but abroad it marches in more than all its wonted might, headed, in spite of the aspersions of its enemies, by the intelligence, the religion, the loyalty of the country ; and if the honest zeal, and even the cherished prejudices of the people swell its train, thank God for the accession. Nay, Sir, if poverty, whose intermeddling with this question we have again heard insultingly rebuked this night, adds its affecting suffrages to the cause of religion and of God, I glory in its alliance. Poverty ‘ nothing to do with this religious question ! ’—it has as much to do with it as have any of us who are deliberating concerning it ; it has more ; its religion is its all ! But, Sir, it is an united, it is an universal cause ! Here, Sir, that cause may be, like those wasting tapers, melting away ; there it burns inextinguishably. It lives abroad, though this House may be now preparing its grave ! (*Hear, hear.*) To their representatives the people of England committed their *dearest birthright*, the Protestant Constitution. *They* have not deserted it, whoever have. If it must perish then, I call God to witness, that the people are guiltless ! Their voices are heard in their numerous and earnest petitions, calling aloud, as it were, for water, to wash their hands from the stain of all participation in this foul transaction !. If it is to expire, I say, let it be on this spot,—the place of its birth, the scene of its long triumphs ;—betrayed, deserted, in the house of its pretended friends, who, while they smile, are still preparing to smite ;—let it here, while it receives blow after blow from those who have hitherto been its associates and supporters, fold itself up in its mantle, and, hiding its sorrow and disgrace, fall when it feels the last vital stab at its heart from the hand of one whom it had armed in its defence, and advanced to its highest honours. (*Cheers.*)

“ Sir, I am misconstrued if my last expressions imply any thing but regret in reference to the illustrious individual to whom I

have alluded. None ever admired, none still admire, the hero of his country more than I do. My heart partook of his first glories, and my humble adherence accompanied him in every subsequent period of his career, even when those who now profess to adulate him heaped upon him the coarsest insults. To triumph over him, were it in my power, would inflict upon my feelings a pang which could only be exceeded by the downfall of the Constitution of a country, whose fame he has so gloriously augmented, and whose greatness, if not existence, he has so nobly achieved. (*Hear, hear, hear.*) But, Sir, the name of that Constitution again raises my mind far above all personal considerations, and I will waive them. I will detain the House but a few moments longer, but I cannot help adding, that, of all the circumstances attending this momentous measure, nothing has so strongly roused the resentment of the people, especially of that large and loyal part of them who have hitherto supported Government, as the studied concealment, not to say intentional misleading, with which it has been attended throughout. This may, and doubtless is, the proper policy when a general has to manœuvre upon an army of enemies; when, however, a great measure has to be carried with the concurrence of the friends of their country, it strikes me that openness, candour, and confidence will always be found the better and more creditable policy. (*Hear, hear.*)

“But the last and most important consideration I shall present to this House affects its competency to entertain this question. This House, I say, has no right to proceed in this work of counter-revolution—(*disapprobation from the opposition*)—no right, I say, to proceed without consulting the people. Send back, then, the question to them, and ourselves with it, and allow them to decide. (*Hear.*) In preceding elections, the results of which have been most fallaciously appealed to by the Right Honourable Secretary; the question has, as by common consent, been kept from their particular consideration, since to have mentioned it would have been stigmatized the ‘No-Popery’ cry; and, moreover, they confided, in this particular, in the express declarations of his Majesty’s Government, and determined their choice, therefore, by other grounds of political or local preference. The Protestant Constitution, now endangered, was first established in a Convention, called for that special purpose; and without as full an appeal, and without equal formality, the people have no right to be robbed of it. (*Hear, hear, hear.*) I am fully aware of the legal fiction that Parliament is omnipotent, but it is nevertheless a fiction. *The Parliament is neither called for the purpose, nor is it competent to the task, of altering the original frame-work, of the Constitution.* Supposing, for instance, this House, in conjunction with the other branches of the Legislature, were to enact that our seats should be perpetual, and not only for life, but hereditary,—where is the man that will assert that we have a right or a power given to us so to legislate? (*Hear, hear.*) *Suppose we were to*



agree to abolish the Representative System altogether, or take away Trial by Jury? (Hear, hear, hear.) I repeat the question, Where is the man that dares assert that the power of Parliament extends thus far? Where are the patriots, who are the lawyers, who challenge for us this right? (Loud cheers.) But as to the Protestant character of the Constitution, it is certain that our powers to change this in any degree are still more clearly and intentionally limited. We take no oaths, make no declaration, not to abrogate Trial by Jury; none not to alter, suspend, or destroy the Representative System. But we do take oaths, we do make declarations, not to allow Popery an entrance into the Legislature. My oath—(a laugh from the Opposition)—I hear a laugh: that laugh at the very mention of an oath is the just interpretation of the value of the security which the advocates of the measure now propose. (Hear, hear, hear.) My oath, too plain to be misinterpreted, has been taken *too lately to be forgotten*, however that of others may be. Under these circumstances, neither the established Constitution of the country, nor the oaths and declarations taken by us, permit us to assume the right which is now so eagerly sought to be exercised, namely, the right of throwing open the doors of this House to the admission of Popery, to the scandal, disgrace, and danger of the Protestant Establishment in Church and State. Sir, we have no lawful power for doing this; the people of England sent us not hither for any such purpose;—they interdicted us by solemn oaths and declarations from daring to attempt such a course. (Cheers.) I am persuaded they will resent it deeply and permanently if we proceed. (Hear, hear.) Let the House, then, beware! (Cheers.) Sir, I have but a word more—I should be sorry if it went abroad that I am hostile to the Roman Catholics. I respect the talents, I revere the virtues, I honour the courage, of my Roman Catholic fellow-subjects; and I would not injure the humblest individual amongst them: but still I will protect the character of the Protestant Constitution. Such, Sir, are my feelings, and I am sure they are those of its steadfast and conscientious advocates.”

*The Hon. Gentleman concluded by thanking the House for the attention with which he had been heard, and sat down amid loud and universal cheering.*











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