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AND
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ROMAN CATHOLIC PETITION.

The following is an authentic report of the Speech of the Bishop of Norwich, in the House of Lords on the 27th of May last, as it will be given in "Cobbett's Parliamentary Debates."

"My Lords—I rise, for the first time in my life, to address your Lordships, and I rise with unaffected reluctance; not because I entertain the smallest doubt, respecting either the expediency, the policy, or the justice of the measure now under consideration; but, because, to a person in my situation, it must be exceedingly painful, (however firmly persuaded he may be in his own mind) to find himself impelled by a sense of duty, to maintain an opinion, directly the reverse of which is supported by so many wise and good men who belong to the profession, and who sit upon the same bench with him. Important occasions however, sometimes arise, on which an individual may be called upon to avow his own sentiments explicitly and unequivocally, without any due deference to the judgment of others. Such an occasion I conceive the present to be, and shall without further apology trouble your lordships with a few remarks.—I have considered, with all the care and attention, of which I am capable, the various arguments which are urged against the petition, in favour of the Catholics of Ireland, which has, this day, for the second time, been presented and supported by the noble Baron on the other side of the house, with his usual abilities, and at the same time, with that well known regard for the real interest of the established church, for its peace, its security, its honor, and its prosperity, which forms, and has always formed so distinguished a part in the character of that noble lord. These objections, my lords, numerous as they are said to be, may all of them I think, be reduced under four heads. In the first place, it is asserted, or rather strongly insinuated, that the religious tenets of the Catholics, are of such a nature as, *per se*, to exclude those who hold them from the civil, and military situations, to which they aspire. It is next said, that if this were not the case, these situations are matters of favour, not of right, and therefore, the Catholics have no just cause to complain that they are excluded from them. In the third place, we are told, that if it were admitted, that the measure were, abstractedly considered, just and right; it would be highly inexpedient, to repeal statutes, which were passed with much deliberation; and are considered by many, as the bulwarks of the constitution, in church and state. And, lastly, there are some, who contend, that if there were no other objection, on the words of the Coronation Oath present an insuperable bar to the claims of the Catholics. I shall not detain your lordships long in the examination of these objections, because they have been repeatedly discussed, and, as it appears to me, very satisfactorily refuted, by far abler men, both in this house and out of it. With respect to the religious tenets of the Catholics of the present day, it is not a little singular, my lords, that we will not allow them to know what their own religious tenets really are. We call upon them for their creed, upon some very important points; and they give it to us without reserve; but, instead of believing what they say, we refer them, with an air of controversial triumph, to the Councils of Constantine, or Thoulouse, to the Fourth Lateran Council, or to the Council of Trent. In vain they most explicitly, and most solemnly aver, that they hold no tenet whatsoever, incompatible with their duties, either as men, or as subjects, or in any way hurtful to the government under which they live. In vain they publish declaration upon declaration, in all of which they most unequivocally disavow those highly exceptionable tenets which are imputed to them; and not only do they disavow, but they express their abhorrence of them. In vain they confirm these declarations by an oath—an oath, my lords, framed by ourselves, drawn up with all possible care, and caution, and couched in terms, as strong as language affords. In addition to these ample securities, for the principles and practice of this numerous and loyal class of our fellow-subjects and fellow-christians, a great statesman, now unhappily no more, caused to be transmitted a string of very important queries, to the principal Catholic universities abroad; for the purpose of ascertaining, with precision, the sentiments of the Catholic clergy, respecting the real nature and extent of the papal power, and some other weighty points. The answers returned to these queries, by those learned bodies, appeared to me at the time, as they do now, perfectly satisfactory, and in the same light they were considered by most dispassionate men. Notwithstanding all this, a concealed jealousy of Catholics still lurks about, by far, too many of us; a jealousy in my opinion, as unworthy of a frank and enlightened people,

as it is injurious and cruel towards those who are the objects of it: for surely, my lords, if there be one position more incontrovertibly true than another, it is this: If an individual, or a body of men, will give to the government under the government which they live such a security upon oath, as that government itself prescribes; if, moreover, they maintain no opinions destructive of moral obligation, or subversive of civil society; their speculative opinions of a religious nature, can never with justice or with reason, be urged as excluding them from civil and military situations. The Catholics, my lords, give this security; and having given it, the legislature itself has declared, that they ought to be considered "as good and loyal subjects; as such, therefore, in my view of the subject, they are unquestionably entitled to the privileges which they claim. When I speak of merely speculative opinions of religion, I wish to be understood as meaning such opinions as begin in the understanding, and rest there, and have no practical influence whatsoever upon our conduct in life. With this limitation, I am not sensible that there is any fallacy in the argument which I have made use of; if there be any, I shall be happy to have it pointed out; as I cannot possibly have any motive in view but from my heart, I believe to be the truth. Should any unfortunate and deep-rooted prejudice prevail so far, as to make us say, decidedly and openly, that we will not believe a Catholic even upon his oath, there is an end, my lords, of the discussion at once; but the argument, if argument it can be called, proves a great deal too much; and for this plain reason: no obligation more binding than that of an appeal to the Supreme Being by an oath, has hitherto been devised in civil society; he, therefore, who can justly be supposed capable of setting at naught such an obligation, upon any pretence whatsoever, is not only unworthy of the privileges here contended for, but he is unfit for all social intercourse of every kind—*Feabo sub iudem sit trahibus*—Harsh, and horrid, as the expression must sound in your lordships ears, he ought to be exterminated from the face of the earth; or at least he should be banished for life to Botany Bay; and even when arrived there he should be driven back into the sea; for there is no den of thieves, no gang of robbers, no banditti so thoroughly profligate, and at the same time so devoid of common understanding, as to admit that man a member of their community, upon whose fidelity to his engagements no reliance can be placed even for a single hour. I come now to the second objection; my answer to which will be very short. Civil and military appointments, are it seems, matters of favor, not of right, and therefore the Catholics have no just cause to complain that they are excluded from them. I can, hardly, my lords, conceive any man in earnest who regards this distinction as applicable to the present case, because no one pleads for an abstract right to these situations, but for a capacity of holding them: no one contends for the absolute possession of civil, and military offices, but for equal eligibility to them, and having endeavoured to prove that all men are equally eligible, who give to the government under which they live, such a security, upon oath, for their conduct as subjects, as that government itself prescribes, and who maintain no opinions destructive of moral obligation or subversive of civil society, I shall only add here, that they are considered to be, in almost all the governments of Europe and over the whole continent of America; and I should be sorry to see England the last to follow so good an example.

"But it is inexpedient," we are told, "to repeal statutes, which were passed with much deliberation, and are considered by many as the bulwarks of the constitution in church and state." How long, my lords, it may be thought expedient, or necessary, that the remaining part of these restrictive disqualifying statutes should be enforced against the Catholics, or at what precise period their operation shall end, is a question not for a divine, but for statesmen and lawyers to decide.

I may however be permitted to observe, that under any government, however free, though peculiar circumstances may perhaps call for statutes of a very strict, and even of a very severe nature, for any limited period of time, yet no wise statesman would, I imagine, wish those statutes to remain unrevoked, a moment after the circumstances which occasioned them cease to exist. Those who are acquainted with the history of the statutes here alluded to, and of the times in which they passed, will anticipate my application of this remark: the application of it is indeed, made for me by a very eminent lawyer, and a very cordial friend to the Ecclesiastical, as well as to the civil constitution of this realm. This able writer observes, more than once in his commentaries, that "whenever the pe-

riod shall arrive, when the power of the Pope is weak and insignificant, and there is no pretender to the throne, that then will be the time to grant full indulgence to the Catholics." That time, my lords, is now come; there is no pretender to the throne; and with respect to the Papal Power, not a single person present, apprehends, I am thoroughly persuaded, any danger from it; in truth that once gigantic power—*magni stat nominis umbra*—and nothing more. Where, then, can be the objection to granting the Petition of the Catholics of Ireland? A petition founded on the immutable principles of reason and of justice; a petition also which worldly policy loudly calls on us to accede to in the present very serious crisis—a crisis which demands the union of the wise and brave of every description and of every denomination; that cordial union, I mean, which is most assuredly the best support, and indeed the only secure bulwark of every government upon earth. It is unnecessary to add, that an union of this kind, can be obtained only by confidence and conciliation; but, if worldly policy did not thus loudly call upon us, a principle of gratitude should lead us to pay all the attention in our power to these numerous loyal and respectable petitioners, to whom we are in a great measure indebted, for the noblest monument of wisdom and beneficence combined, which modern times have seen: I mean the union of Ireland with England, an union, which without their cordial co-operation, could never have been effected. In reply to these observations, which appear to me to carry some weight with them; there are who maintain, that if there were no other objection the words of the Coronation Oath present an insuperable bar to the claims of the Catholics of Ireland. Of all the arguments, my lords, which either principle or prejudice has suggested, or which imagination has started, there is not one, which appears to me to rest upon so weak a foundation, as that which is built upon the Coronation Oath. This oath, as your lordships well know, underwent some alteration at the period of the revolution in 1688, at which period, that great Prince, William the Third, entered into the following solemn engagement when he ascended the throne of this kingdom:—"I will maintain the laws of God, the true profession of the gospel, and the reformed protestant church established by law; and I will preserve to the bishops and clergy of this realm, and to the churches committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges, as by law do or shall appertain unto them, or to any of them." If, my lords, even intelligent and honest men, were not sometimes disposed to adopt any mode of reasoning, however weak, which coincides with their preconceived ideas upon a subject, it would be no easy matter to find out, upon what principle of fair construction, the words which I have just repeated from the Coronation Oath, can be thought to militate against the Catholics of Ireland. It will not, I trust, be said, for I am sure it cannot be proved, that it is either repugnant to the "laws of God," or to the unconfined and benevolent tendency of the gospel, or to those liberal and enlightened principles, upon which the reformation was founded; to admit to situations of honor, or of profit in the state, men of talents and of virtue, to whom no objection can possibly be made, but their speculative opinions of merely a religious nature; nor can I conceive in what manner "the rights, and privileges of the bishops and clergy of this realm, or of the churches committed to their charge," can be affected by granting civil and military appointments, to men, cordially devoted to the civil constitution, and who have solemnly declared upon oath, that it is neither their intention, nor their wish, to injure or disturb the ecclesiastical. For my own part, my lords, as an individual clergyman of the church of England, sincerely attached to the established church and proud of the situation which I hold in it, I should be exceedingly sorry, if I could think for a moment, that I possessed any rights, or privileges, incompatible with the just claims of so many excellent subjects and conscientious fellow christians. Be it however admitted, my lords, that the words of the Coronation Oath, will bear the construction which has been put upon them, I wish to ask, where was the objection drawn from this oath, when, in 1782, so many indulgencies were wisely and justly granted to the Catholics of Ireland? Indulgencies precisely of the same kind, though differing in degree, from those which are now petitioned for. But, I forbear to push this argument any further; various considerations restrain me; and perhaps enough has been said, to prove, that the words of the Coronation Oath, have been unadvisedly brought forward, during the discussion of that important question, which has engaged the attention of the public for more than three years. I will now detain your lordships no longer; indeed, I should not have presumed to intrude

so long upon your patience, had I not thought it incumbent upon me, to assign the best reasons in my power, for differing so widely from those around me, whose judgment I respect, though I cannot implicitly bow to it, against the clearest conviction of my understanding and the best feelings of my heart."

Mr. Whitbread's Letter to Lord Holland.

Mr. Whitbread has published a letter to Lord Holland on the present situation of Spain. The sentiments of this gentleman, in relation to a subject the most interesting that has come before the world, cannot but be deemed of considerable importance; and we therefore give them as far as we are able, that degree of publicity which they deserve.

"Since that period," (that is, since the passing of the appropriation act) "however short the interval, the face of affairs has greatly changed. News has arrived as cheering to the heart of man as ever was announced to an admiring world.—Every part of Spain, not absolutely occupied by the French troops, has separately, and without any possibility of concert, and yet, as if by common consent, declared itself against the injustice, cruelty, and oppression of the French Emperor, and for the Prince of Austria, under the title of Ferdinand VII. The nation, in the absence of its government, without breaking forth into those furious excesses of sanguinary licentiousness which have disgraced the good cause of other countries, and bro't the name of liberty into disrepute, is now committed against the power of France. The public discussion of the passing events can no longer be injurious, by fanning a flame which might have been kindled to the fruitless destruction of the virtuous and the brave; and cannot now render abortive the plans adopted for their success.

"After the communication made by Lord Castlereagh to the Lord Mayor, I firmly expected some application to parliament for an additional vote of credit; or at least some message from the crown. When such proceedings were out of the question, on the day of the prorogation itself, I expressed myself shortly on the subject, in my place—but the momentary expectation of interruption prevented my saying all that I wished upon any of the topics, and from entering upon some of them altogether.—From what then passed, I found I had been before misunderstood. Upon such a subject I cannot endure misrepresentation, the consequence of misunderstanding, and therefore I address myself through you to the public.

"The whole undivided heart of Great-Britain, and of Ireland, nay of France itself, and of the world, must be with Spain. Would to God the whole undivided strength of the world could be combined at this moment against the armies of her oppressor, in Spain!—Ministers had declared that no mixed interests should interfere; that all the exertions should be for Spain, and Spain alone; & I am happy to acknowledge that the part of the King's speech, which relates to Spain, bears out the professions which had been before made. It has my unqualified approbation. The policy is sound, and the expressions could not have been better chosen.

"Arms, ammunition, money, let them be poured in with a hand as liberal as can be conceived.—All they ask for! and nothing they do not ask for. If an army should hereafter be required, let no consideration of rank or favor interfere in the selection of the officer to command it. The stake is too precious to be risked in the inadequate hands. The country has a high opinion of military talents. May the appointment of a general for any larger force be equally judicious, and equally acceptable to the public.—Thus shall we render ourselves worthy of being the supporters of Spanish valor, and Spanish virtue. Thus shall we render the most effectual services to this empire and to the world.—This cause is indeed the cause of justice and humanity. If it prospers—stupendously glorious will be the victory. If it fails, their conqueror will have obtained any thing rather than honor; but the Spaniards of this day will be recorded to the latest posterity as a people deserving of better fate, and they will have afforded a noble example for the imitation of the inhabitants of these Islands, when their battle, the last battle, the last battle of the European world, shall be fought.

"I come to the other topic, on which I did not touch on Monday for fear of interruption, and on which I must explain myself. At the conclusion of my speech on the act of appropriation, I declared that I still adhered to the opinions I laid down on the 29th of February last, when I moved as a resolution in the house of commons, 'that there is nothing in the present state of the war which ought to preclude his Majesty from embracing any fair opportunity of acceding to, or commencing a negotiation with the enemy, on a footing of equality, for the termination of hostilities on terms of equality and honor; I main