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COBBETT IN IRELAND

A
WARNING TO ENGLAND

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LAWRENCE AND WISHART
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am half afraid, that these noble and respectable persons are so *sincerely* attached! The Dissenters mean, however, I perceive, to put this attachment *to the test*; to the test in *England*. Why, therefore, such a fright at the possibility of the oversetting of the Church of Ireland by a Catholic Parliament?

At any rate, the worst that they anticipate from the dissolution of the union, and a Catholic Parliament; the very worst that they can anticipate, is an oversetting, a total oversetting, of this Church in Ireland; and the choice of England is this: pay three millions a year for an army and a police, to uphold that church; or let that church be overset. This is the alternative, and the only alternative. That church has kept Ireland in a state of servile-rebellion for three hundred years, or thereabouts; a repeal of the union would put an end to it; and this brings me to my third proposition.

3. *It would save England the expense of thirty thousand troops, besides a Bourbon-like police, now found necessary to keep the people of that country in subjection.*

The annual cost of army and police, to say nothing about contingent expenses and secret-service money, amounts to more than FOUR MILLIONS A YEAR, sweated out of the industry of the people. The poor-rates, as far as go to the relief of the poor in all England and Wales, do not amount to *five millions a year*; and here are four millions a year expended to support this church in Ireland only! One wonders how the aristocracy can be so mad as to waste the money in this sort of way. Ah, faith! But there is something more than the bit of the church in Ireland; and the aristocracy knows surprisingly well, that a total repeal of the church in Ireland would soon take from them that much fatter thing, the Church of England, which my readers must now all understand, is the property of the aristocracy, who have the sense to perceive that lay-tithes never could exist, if clerical tithes were all abolished; and who must know, or, at least, verily believe, that the abbey-lands, which are held by precisely the same tenure as the lay-tithes, would be the next object to attract the attention of an over-burdened, a harassed, and a ruined people.

These are the reasons for opposing the repeal of the union; and these are amongst the reasons which would have made me

vote for that repeal. However, as a matter of arithmetic, the plain question for England is, will you have a repeal of the union; or, will you continue to pay four millions a year to maintain an army and police to hold the Irish people in subjection? This the people of England should deliberate well upon. If they have no generosity; if they have no justice, they, at least, understand something of their interests; and, if they do not, time and sorrow will teach it them.

4. *It would, of necessity, prevent the misery, the famine, the human degradation which now mark that fertile land, and that laborious people.*

You are asked, first, why the mere passing of an Act of Parliament would be sure to procure effects like these. That Act of Parliament, be it remembered, would make a new government for Ireland; would give them law-makers of their own choosing, instead of sending 109 members in amongst the rest of the 658 English and Scotch members. I presume that it would give the Irish *good government*; and it is good government that makes a happy people. There is a famine to a greater or lesser extent every year. We have heard nothing publicly about any famine this last winter. A Catholic priest has written to me to say, that, during the last winter, great numbers of his poor parishioners were driven to live upon sea-weed; that he wrote to the absentee-proprietor, begging some little assistance from him for these poor creatures; that he not only got no assistance from him, but received a very insolent and abusive answer. He wrote also to the clerical tithe-owner, who takes six hundred a year out of the parish; and, like a true Levite, he gave him not one farthing. Now, I put it to any man of common sense, whether these ill-treated people are not acting *rationally*, in resolving to support that man who has made their ill-treatment known to the whole world and who has scorned to make a compromise with their enemies.

Of these ordinary *annual famines*, the English people hear nothing at all; but we have had, *since the union*, which was to make the Irish so happy, **THREE GRAND FAMINES**. And here is a spectacle such as this world never beheld, except in Ireland. What did we behold? Hundreds of thousands of living hogs, thousands upon thousands of sheep and oxen alive;

thousands upon thousands of barrels of beef, pork, and butter; thousands upon thousands of sides of bacon, and thousands upon thousands of hams; ship-loads and boat-loads coming daily and hourly from Ireland to feed the west of Scotland; to feed a million and a half of people in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and in Lancashire; to feed London and its vicinity, and to fill the country shops in the southern counties of England: we beheld this, while famine raged in Ireland amongst the raisers of this very food, to such an extent, that half the population of hundreds of parishes actually received the extreme unction as a preparation for death from starvation. Aye, and while this was the case, thirty thousand soldiers, ten thousand of them with fat horses, were kept in Ireland on full pay and full diet, IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE PEACE! While Ireland was sending us provisions to choke up our ports, the begging box was going forth from door to door in England, by royal edict, in order to raise the means of sending potatoes and oatmeal to the relief of these starving people, who had raised all this food by their labour! Talk of danger from a change indeed! Danger to the grinding absentees there might be, indeed; but, how is it possible for any government on earth to produce effects worse than these? Could a Parliament, with the devil for its speaker, produce effects more monstrous, more unnatural, more disgraceful, more cruel than these?

In answer to this, Mr SPRING RICE has his very neat tables of *exports* and *imports*; he tells us that these have gone on increasing since the union. It would seem that, in this gentleman's view of the matter, that the *people* and their happiness are objects pretty much beneath notice. Why, nobody will deny that the people of England, the working millions, are poorer, more miserable, more degraded than they ever were before; yet the exports and imports have gone on gradually increasing with their misery. The miseries of the people of England at this very moment threaten a dissolution of the Government; yet the exports and imports are seven times as great as they were when PITT began his fatal career. There is greater monopoly; greater riches in fewer hands; but what has this to do with the happiness of a people? Our exports and imports have prodigiously increased and are, perhaps, increasing at this moment; but the miseries of the

people have increased to a pitch that makes it impossible that this frame of Government can continue to be what it now is. I suppose that lords think sometimes, as well as other men; and, if ours do think; if they do look at the change in their own situation and prospects, which has taken place since the beginning of the French war, what would they give to be *back again* to the year 1792! Yet the exports and imports are seven-fold now to what they were then.

This, therefore, is the shallowest, the most childish, the most contemptible, of all the arguments in support of the union. The sole question is: 'Is Ireland happy?' If that question is answered in the negative, as it must be, 'Can a repeal of the union make it more unhappy than it is?' My opinion is, that it must make it less unhappy than it is; and, therefore, I am for the repeal.

In answer to the general charge against the Irish people of laziness, negligence, carelessness I want nothing but the sight of the droves of live provision, that that country sends forth. British North America lives out of the produce of Ireland: the navy is provisioned by Ireland: West Indies, East Indies, the places in the Mediterranean, all fed by Ireland; besides, observe, when our ports are open for corn, Ireland always sends four times as much as the whole world besides. And can all of this come without prodigious labour? Can it be a lazy people who thus feed all the world? And can that be a good Government, under whose laws and regulations this laborious people are living upon roots, or weeds, or half-stinking mussels? No. Every reasonable man in this world will exclaim, No; it cannot be a good Government. Ought this people to remain thus? No: every just man will indignantly exclaim; and as it is thus, under a legislature in which Ireland has but a handful of representatives; why not let her have a legislature chosen by herself, among her own native citizens, under laws made by whom it would be impossible for her to remain in her present state of degradation and suffering.

It is not to be believed that a legislature, consisting, as it must, principally of Catholics, would suffer their poor countrymen, and of the same religion too, to experience the calamities which the laborious people of Ireland now experience.

5. *It would remove the constant danger which England is in, during war, in consequence of the discontents of Ireland; and, particularly,*