

of propitiating the placemen and boroughmongers, whose power and influence would be abridged by a measure which, in a great degree, would take what was called "the management of the country" out of their hands. To Mr. Pitt lord Cornwallis wrote, "That every man in this most corrupt country should consider the important question before us in no other point of view than as it may be likely to promote his own private objects of ambition or avarice, will not surprise you."*

The debates in the parliament sitting at Westminster, and in the parliament sitting at Dublin, on the question of a Legislative Union, continuing as they did through two sessions, are necessarily too diffusive to admit of any satisfactory abstract. The national character is strongly expressed in the mode in which the measure was discussed on either side of the water. In the British House of Commons, Mr. Pitt is the calm and dignified exponent of a statesman's policy. In the Irish House of Commons, Mr. Grattan is the glowing impersonation of a patriot's impulses. In the British parliament there is an almost unanimous opinion of the necessity of the proposed Union; and those who differ from the majority abstain from invective. In the Irish parliament the supporters and opposers are more evenly balanced; and the personal hostility is displayed, not only in the bitterest denunciations, but in actual or threatened appeals to the last and worst argument, the duellist's pistol. When the king's message of the 22d of January was taken into consideration by the Commons at Westminster, the Amendment to the Address, moved by Mr. Sheridan, was negatived without a division. To the Address proposed in answer to the royal speech at Dublin, Mr. Ponsonby moved an Amendment, which was carried—after a debate which continued twenty-one hours—by a majority of five. It was to declare their intention of maintaining the right of the people of Ireland to a free and independent legislature, resident within the kingdom. This was decisive as to the immediate result in Ireland of the ministerial proposition. But Mr. Pitt was not to be deterred from advocating the measure in the assembly where he reigned paramount. On the 31st of January, the king's message was taken into further consideration. Mr. Pitt laid before the House the general nature and outline of the plan, which in his conscience he thought would tend in the strongest manner to insure the safety and happiness of both kingdoms. If the house should agree with him in opinion, he should propose, "that its determination should remain recorded as that by which the Parliament of Great Britain

* Cornwallis—"Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 8.

is ready to abide, leaving to the Legislature of Ireland to reject or to adopt it hereafter, upon a full consideration of the subject."* The Resolutions proposed by Mr. Pitt were discussed in both Houses during nearly three months, and then finally agreed to. On the 26th of April both Houses attended the king with their joint Address; and his majesty expressed the greatest satisfaction; declaring his intention of embracing the first favourable opportunity of communicating to the parliament of Ireland, the propositions laid before him, as the basis of a settlement to be established by mutual consent, and founded on a sense of mutual interest and affection.

These were lofty words. The settlement "to be established by mutual consent" was really accomplished by a system of which the "mutual interest and affection" was described by lord Cornwallis in a letter of the 8th of June: "My occupation is now of the most unpleasant nature, negotiating and jobbing with the most corrupt people under heaven. I despise and hate myself every hour for engaging in such dirty work; and am supported only by the reflection, that without a Union the British empire must be dissolved."† On the 29th of March, lord Cornwallis deprecated, in a letter to the duke of Portland, the introduction of the measure to the Irish Parliament until another session; "I am assured that the number of parliamentary converts is not by any means as yet so numerous as to render a second discussion safe." Lord Cornwallis had to work the system of "negotiating and jobbing," by promising an Irish Peerage, or a lift in that Peerage, or even an English Peerage, to a crowd of eager competitors for honours. The other specific for making converts was not yet in complete operation. Lord Castlereagh had the plan in his portfolio—borough proprietors to be compensated; the primary and secondary interests in counties to be compensated; fifty barristers in parliament, who always considered a seat as the road to preferment, to be compensated; the purchasers of seats to be compensated; individuals connected either by residence or property with Dublin, to be compensated. "Lord Castlereagh considered that 1,500,000*l.* would be required to effect all these compensations."‡ The sum actually paid to the boroughmongers alone was 1,260,000*l.* Fifteen thousand pounds were allotted to each borough; and "was apportioned amongst the various patrons." The greater number of these dealers in mock-representation had only two boroughs each. Ten distinguished persons

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxxiv. col. 256.

† Cornwallis—"Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 102.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

had forty-five seats amongst them. Lord Downshire had seven seats; lord Ely had six seats. These patriotic noblemen were fit patients for the infallible remedy for the cure of tender consciences. In July, 1799, Cornwallis writes to Dundas, "The language which lord Downshire has held respecting the Union has done great mischief. There cannot be a stronger argument for the measure than the overgrown parliamentary power of five or six of our pampered boroughmongers, who are become most formidable to government by their long possession of the entire patronage of the Crown in their respective districts." There were a few Tritons of the minnows to be dealt with, as well as these monsters of the deep. Of lord Castlereagh, the noble author of "Sketches of Statesmen" says, "The complaints made of his Irish administration were well grounded, as regarded the corruption of the parliament by which he accomplished the Union, though he had certainly no direct hand in the bribery practised."* Not till cabinets have been unlocked after sixty years of secrecy, is it safe to assert of any politician that he had not sought the most direct course to his purpose, in the belief that the end would justify the means. On the 2nd of January, 1799, lord Castlereagh wrote to Mr. Wickham of the English Treasury, "Already we feel the want, and indeed the absolute necessity, of the *primum mobile*. We cannot give that activity to the press which is necessary. We have good materials amongst the young barristers, but we cannot expect them to waste their time and starve into the bargain." "5000*l.* in bank notes by the first messenger" was a moderate demand. † At the end of the year the duke of Portland was requested to assist in the same way, and to the same extent. "The advantages have been important." ‡ The Irish Parliament met on the 15th of January, 1800. Something more direct than paying young barristers for leading articles had become necessary. Castlereagh, on the 27th of February, again calls upon the ministering angel of the Secret Service money to help him in his troubles: "I see no prospect of converts; the Opposition are steady to each other. I hope we shall be able to keep our friends true. A few votes might have a very injurious effect. We require *your assistance*, and you *must* be prepared to enable us to fulfil the expectations which it was impossible to avoid creating at the moment of difficulty." § It had become a contest of bribery on both sides. There was an "Opposition stock-purse," as lord Castlereagh describes the fund against which he was to struggle with

* "Statesmen," &c., by lord Brougham, 2nd series, p. 124.

† Cornwallis—"Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 27.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

the deeper purse at Whitehall. He writes to the duke of Portland in this critical time, "We have undoubted proofs, though not such as we can disclose, that they are enabled to offer as high as 5000*l.* for an individual vote, and I lament to state that there are individuals remaining amongst us that are likely to yield to this temptation."* But there were other modes, to which we have alluded, of strengthening the government than the coarse gratifications administered to those who had "an itching palm." During the administration of lord Cornwallis, twenty-nine Irish Peerages were created; of which seven only were unconnected with the question of Union. Six English Peerages were granted on account of Irish services; and there were nineteen promotions in the Irish Peerage, earned by similar assistance. †

At the opening of the Irish Parliament on the 15th of January, in the speech which the Lord-Lieutenant delivered from the throne, not a word was uttered on the subject of the Union. Lord Castlereagh stated that it was the intention of the government to make the Union the subject of a distinct communication to parliament. A vacancy had occurred for the close borough of Wicklow. On the day of the meeting of the Houses the writ was delivered to the Returning Officer, and Mr. Grattan was returned before midnight. An Amendment upon the Address had been debated through the night, and before it was concluded, at seven o'clock of the morning of the 16th, the new member for Wicklow, who was taken from a bed of sickness, was led into the House of Commons. Every member rose from his seat: Grattan was too feeble to stand. He delivered an oration that appeared like the prophetic utterance of a dying man, having asked permission to address the House without rising. It thus concluded: "The question is not now such as occupied you of old—not old Poynings, not peculation, not plunder, not an embargo, not a Catholic bill, not a Reform bill—it is your being,—it is more—it is your life to come." The great orator produced no permanent effect. There was a majority of forty-two in favour of a Union, when the House divided at ten o'clock on that morning. On the 5th of February, lord Castlereagh read a message from the Lord-Lieutenant, communicating the Resolutions of the parliament of Great Britain in the previous year. The question was debated from four o'clock in the afternoon of the 5th, to one o'clock in the afternoon of the 6th. During that time the streets of Dublin were the scene of a great riot, and the peace of the city was maintained only by troops of cavalry. The bitter personalities be-

* Cornwallis—"Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 182.

† See the list in Cornwallis's "Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 328.

tween Mr. Corry, the Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, and Mr. Grattan, gave rise to a duel, in which Mr. Corry was wounded. On the division of the 6th there was a majority of forty-three in favour of the Union.

The great question was virtually decided, as regarded the votes of the parliament of Ireland. In the parliament of Great Britain, Mr. Pitt, on the 2nd of April, laid on the table of the House of Commons, the joint Addresses to the king of the Lords and Commons of Ireland, with Resolutions containing the terms proposed by them for an entire Union of both kingdoms. In the House of Lords, a similar message was presented by lord Grenville. The first article of the proposed Union provided that the kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland should, upon the 1st of January, 1801, be united into one kingdom, by the name of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The United Kingdom was to be represented in one and the same parliament. In the United Parliament there were to be twenty-eight temporal Peers, elected for life by the Irish Peerage; and four spiritual Peers, taking their places in rotation. There were to be one hundred members of the Lower House; each county returning two, as well as the cities of Dublin and Cork. The university returned one, and thirty-one boroughs each returned one. Of these boroughs twenty-three remained close boroughs, till the Reform Bill of 1831. Those of the borough patrons who could return one member to the Imperial Parliament had no compensation for losing the power of returning two members. The Churches of England and Ireland were to be united. The proportion of Revenue to be levied was fixed at fifteen for Great Britain, and two for Ireland, for the succeeding twenty years. Countervailing duties upon imports to each country were fixed by a minute tariff, but some commercial restrictions were to be removed, in the confidence that, with the kingdoms really and solidly united "to increase the commercial wealth of one country is not to diminish that of the other." On the 21st of April, when Mr. Pitt explained the details of the measure, Mr. Grey moved an Address to his majesty, "praying that he will be graciously pleased to direct his ministers to suspend all proceedings on the Irish Union, till the sentiments of the people of Ireland on that measure can be ascertained." This motion was rejected by a majority of two hundred and six. There were other debates in both Houses. On the 8th of May a joint Address of the Lords and Commons to the king was determined on, signifying their approbation of the Resolutions, and congratulating his majesty upon the near prospect of the accomplishment of a work which, as the common father of his people, he

had declared to be so near his heart. In the Irish parliament the subsequent proceedings gave occasion for brilliant displays of oratory. Grattan fought the battle to the last. Whatever we may now think of his prophecies of ruin to Ireland,—especially of those which are based upon antiquated notions of commercial protection—we cannot refuse our admiration of an eloquence inspired by real patriotism. On the motion of the 26th of May, that the Bill be committed, he thus concluded his speech: "Identification is a solid and imperial maxim, necessary for the preservation of freedom, necessary for that of empire; but, without union of hearts—with a separate government, and without a separate Parliament, identification is extinction, is dishonour, is conquest—not identification. Yet I do not give up the country. I see her in a swoon, but she is not dead—though in her tomb she lies helpless and motionless, still there is on her lips a spirit of life, and on her cheek a glow of beauty:—

"Thou art not conquer'd; beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there."

While a plank of the vessel sticks together, I will not leave her. Let the courtier present his flimsy sail, and carry the light bark of his faith with every new breath of wind—I will remain anchored here—with fidelity to the fortunes of my country, faithful to her freedom, faithful to her fall." *

It is impossible not to feel a deep sympathy with the great assertors of Irish nationality at this eventful period—with such as Grattan, Ponsonby, Plunkett, Bushe. The patriotic party of Ireland had not seen half a century of parliamentary existence. It first successfully asserted itself in 1753. In thirty years after, it established the legislative independence of the country, under the leader who now declared himself "faithful to her fall." But it is as impossible not to acknowledge that the Settlement of 1782 was a very imperfect measure. "It leaves," said Mr. Pitt, "the two countries with separate and independent legislatures, connected only with this tie, that the third estate in both countries is the same—that the executive government is the same—that the crown exercises its power of assenting to Irish Acts of Parliament, under the Great Seal of Great Britain, and by the advice of British ministers." Mr. Pitt then asked, whether this is a sufficient tie to unite the two countries in time of peace; whether in time of war it is sufficient to consolidate their strength against a common

* "Grattan's Speeches," vol. iv. p. 21.

enemy; to guard against local jealousies; to give to both nations an increase of strength and prosperity.† But the English minister gave very precise indications of more especial benefits which he anticipated from a Union, as regarded questions of contending sects or parties. "Until the kingdoms are united, any attempts to make regulations here for the internal state of Ireland must be a violation of her independence." He looked to the dangers of Ireland "in the hostile divisions of its sects; in the animosities existing between ancient settlers and original inhabitants; in the ignorance and want of civilization which marks that country more than almost any other country in Europe." He maintained that a complete Union was the only remedy: "Everyone, I say, who reflects upon these circumstances must agree with me in thinking, that there is no cure but in the formation of a general imperial legislature, free alike from terror and from resentment, removed from the danger and agitation, uninfluenced by the prejudices and un-inflamed by the passions, of that distracted country." †

The Union Bill passed the Irish House of Commons at ten o'clock on the night of the 7th of June. Sir Jonah Barrington describes the scene with great pomp of words. Lord Castlereagh, "tame, cold-blooded," moving the third reading; the Speaker, Foster, "looking steadily around on the last agony of the expiring parliament;" putting the question "as many as are of opinion that this Bill do pass say Aye;" and then, "with an eye averted from the object which he hated," proclaiming, with a subdued voice, "the Ayes have it." "The fatal sentence was now pronounced—for an instant he stood statue-like, flung the Bill upon the table, and sunk into his chair with an exhausted spirit." ‡ A more sober narrative relates that when the House adjourned, the Speaker walked to his own residence, followed by forty-one members, uncovered and in deep silence; bowed to the crowd before he entered his doors; and "then the whole assemblage dispersed, without uttering a word." § The Legislative Union of Great Britain and Ireland was completed in both parliaments; and the king, on closing the session at Westminster on the 29th of July, said, "This great measure, on which my wishes have been long earnestly bent, I shall ever consider as the happiest event of my reign."

The halcyon time was far distant. Cornwallis saw the danger

* "Parliamentary History," vol. xxxiv. col. 263.

† *Ibid.* vol. xxxiv. cols. 263 and 270.

‡ "Historic Memoirs of Ireland," vol. ii. p. 369.

§ Cornwallis—"Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 251.

that would infallibly attend a continued attempt to govern Ireland upon principles of exclusion: "This country could not be saved without the Union, but you must not take it for granted that it will be saved by it. Much care and management will be necessary; and if the British government place their confidence in an Irish faction, all will be ruined." *

* Cornwallis—"Correspondence," vol. iii. p. 249.