
PART OF MR. O'CONNOR'S SPEECH IN THE IRISH
HOUSE OF COMMONS, IN FAVOUR OF THE BILL FOR
EMANCIPATING THE ROMAN CATHOLICS, 1795.

IF I were to judge from the dead silence with which my speech has been received, I should suspect that what I have said was not very palatable to some men in this House. But I have not risked connexions, endeared to me by every tie of blood and friendship, to support one set of men in preference to another. I have hazarded too much, by the part I have taken, to allow the breath of calumny to taint the objects I have had in view. Immutable principles, on which the happiness and liberty of my countrymen depend, convey to my mind the only substantial boon for which great sacrifices should be made.

And I here avow myself the zealous and earnest advocate for the most unqualified emancipation of my catholic countrymen; in the hope and conviction, that the monopoly of the rights and liberties of my country, which has hitherto effectually withstood the efforts of a part of the people, must yield to the unanimous will, to the decided interest, and to the general effort of a whole united people. It is from this conviction, and it is for that transcendently important object, that, while the noble Lord and the Right Honorable Secretary, are offering to risk their lives and fortunes in support of a system that militates against the liberty of my countrymen, I will risk every thing dear to me on earth.

It is for this great object I have, I fear, more than risked connexions dearer to me than life itself. But he must be a spiritless man, and this a spiritless nation, not to resent the baseness of a British Minister, who has raised our hopes in order to seduce a rival to share with him the disgrace of this accursed political crusade, and blast them afterwards, that he may degrade a competitor

to the station of a dependent. And, that he may destroy friendship which his nature never knew, he has sported with the feelings of a whole nation. Raising the cup with one hand to the parched lip of expectancy, he has dashed it to the earth with the other, in all the wantonness of insult, and with all the aggravation of contempt.

Does he imagine, that the people of this country, after he has tantalized them with the cheering hope of present alleviation, and of future prosperity, will tamely bear to be forced to a re-endurance of their former sufferings, and to a re-appointment of their former spoilers? Does he, from confidence of long success in debauching the human mind, exact from you, calling yourselves the representatives of the people of Ireland, to reject a bill, which has received the unanimous consent of your constituents? or does he mean to puzzle the versatile disposition of this House, on which he has made so many successful experiments already, by distracting you between obedience to his imperious mandates, and obedience to the will of the people you should represent?

Or does he flatter himself, that he shall now succeed, because he has succeeded in betraying his own country, into exchanging that peace, by which she might have retrieved her shattered finances, for a war, in which he has squandered twenty times a greater treasure, in the course of two years, than with all his famed economy, he had been able to save, in the course of ten? for a war in which the prime youth of the world have been offered up, victims to his ambition and his schemes, as boundless and presumptuous, as ill-concerted and ill-combined; for a war in which the plains of every nation in Europe have been crimsoned with oceans of blood; for a war in which his country has reaped nothing but disgrace, and which must ultimately prove her ruin?

Does he flatter himself, that he shall be enabled, Satan like, to end his political career by involving the whole empire in a civil war, from which nothing can

accrue, but a doleful and barren conquest to the victor ? I trust the people of England are too wise and too just to attempt to force measures upon us which they would themselves reject with disdain. I trust they have not themselves so soon forgotten the lesson they so recently learned from America, which should serve as a lasting example to nations, against employing force to subdue the spirit of a people, determined to be free !

But if they should be so weak, or so wicked, as to suffer themselves to be seduced by a man, to whose soul, duplicity and finesse are as congenial, as ingenuousness and fair dealing is a stranger, to become the instruments of supporting a few odious public characters in power and rapacity, against the interest and against the sense of a whole people ; if we are to be dragooned into measures against our will, by a nation that would lose her last life, and expend her last guinea, in resenting a similar insult, if offered to herself, I trust she will find in the people of this country a spirit in no wise inferior to her own.

You are at this moment at the most awful period of your lives. The Minister of England has committed you with your country ; and on this night your adoption or rejection of this bill, must determine, in the eyes of the Irish nation, which you represent, the Minister of England, or the people of Ireland ! And, although you are convinced, you do not represent the people of Ireland ; although you are convinced, every man of you, that you are self-created, it does not alter the nature of the contest ; it is still a contest between the Minister of England and the people of Ireland ; and the weakness of your title should only make you the more circumspect in the exercise of your power.

Fortunately, the views of the British Minister have been detected ; fortunately, the people of this country see him in his true colours. Like the desperate gamester, who has lost his all, in the wildest schemes of aggrandizement, he looks round for some dupe to supply him with the further means of future projects ; and in the

crafty subtleness of his soul, he fondly imagines, he has found that easy dupe in the credulity of the Irish nation. After he has exhausted his own country in a crusade against that phantom, political opinion, he flatters himself he shall be enabled to resuscitate her at the expense of yours.

As you value the peace and happiness of your country; as you value the rights and liberties of the soil that has given you birth; and if you are not lost to every sense of feeling for your own consequence and importance as men, I call on you this night to make your stand. I call on you to rally round the independence of your country, whose existence has been so artfully assailed. Believe me, the British Minister will leave you in the lurch, when he sees that the people of this nation are too much in earnest to be tricked out of their rights, or the independence of their country.

What a display of legislation have we had on this night? Artificers who neither know the foundation on which they work, the instruments they ought to use, nor the materials required! Is it on the narrow basis of monopoly and exclusion you would erect a temple to the growing liberty of your country? If you will legislate; know, that on the broad basis of immutable justice only, you can raise a lasting, beauteous temple to the liberty of your island; whose ample base shall lodge, and whose roof shall shelter her united family from the rankling inclemency of rejection and exclusion. Know, that reason is that silken thread by which the lawgiver leads his people; and above all, know, that in the knowledge of the temper of the public mind, consists the skill and the wisdom of the legislator.

Do not imagine that the minds of your countrymen have been stationary, while that of all Europe has been rapidly progressive; for you must be blind not to perceive, that the whole European mind has undergone a revolution, neither confined to this nor to that country; but as general as the great causes which have given it birth, and still continue to feed its growth. In vain do

these men, who subsist but on the abuses of the government under which they live, flatter themselves, that what we have seen these last six years is but the fever of the moment, which will pass away as soon as the patient has been let blood enough.

As well may they attempt to alter the course of nature, without altering her laws. If they would effect a counter revolution in the European mind, they must destroy commerce and its effects ; they must abolish every trace of the mariner's compass ; they must consign every book to the flames ; they must obliterate every vestige of the invention of the press ; they must destroy the conduit of intelligence, by destroying the institution of the post office. Then, and not till then, they and their abuses may live on, in all the security which ignorance, superstition, and want of concert in the people can bestow.

But while I would overwhelm with despair those men who have been nursed in the lap of venality and prostitution ; who have been educated in contempt and ridicule of a love for their country ; and who have grown grey in scoffing at every thing like public spirit, let me congratulate every true friend to mankind, that that commerce, which has begotten so much independence, will continue to beget more ; and let me congratulate every friend to the human species, that the press, which has sent such a mass of information into the world, will continue, with accelerated rapidity, to pour forth its treasures so beneficial to mankind.

It is to these great causes we are indebted, that the combination of priests and despots, which so long tyrannized over the civil and political liberty of Europe, has been dissolved. It is to these great causes we are indebted, that no priest, be his religion what it may, dares preach the doctrine which inculcates the necessity of sacrificing every right and every blessing this world can afford, as the only mean of obtaining eternal happiness in the life to come.

This was the doctrine by which the despotism of Europe was so long supported; this was the doctrine by which the political popery of Europe was supported; but the doctrine and the despotism may now sleep in the same grave, until the trumpet of ignorance, superstition, and bigotry, shall sound their resurrection.

SCENE FROM THE TRAGEDY OF TAMERLANE.

Enter OMAR and TAMERLANE.

Omar. **H**ONOR and fame
 [Bow'ing.] Forever wait the Emperor; may our
 Prophet

Give him ten thousand thousand days of life,
 And every day like this. The captive sultan,
 Fierce in his bonds, and at his fate repining,
 Attends your sacred will.

Tamerlane. Let him approach.

[*Enter BAJAZET and other Turkish Prisoners in chains
 with a guard.*]

When I survey the ruins of this field,
 The wild destruction, which thy fierce ambition
 Has dealt among mankind; (so many widows
 And helpless orphans has thy battle made,
 That half our eastern world this day are mourners;)
 Well may I, in behalf of heaven and earth,
 Demand from thee atonement for this wrong.

Baj. Make thy demand of those that own thy
 power;

Know I am still beyond it; and though fortune
 Has stript me of the train and pomp of greatness,
 That outside of a king; yet still my soul,
 Fix'd high, and of itself alone dependent,
 Is ever free and royal; and even now,
 As at the head of battle, does defy thee.
 I know what power the chance of war has given,
 And dare thee to the use on't. This vile speeching,
 This after-game of words, is what most irks me;