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SPEECH OF THE GOVERNOR OF CONNECTICUT.

Gentlemen of the council,
Mr. Speaker—and gentlemen of the House of Representatives.

Since our last session, I have received from the gov. of the state of N. Carolina, a letter covering a resolution of the legislature of that state, proposing an amendment to the federal constitution, for the purpose of preventing the further importation of slaves into the United States.

Two resolutions of the legislature of the state of Kentucky, transmitted by the governor of that state, have also been received. One resolution proposing an amendment to the federal constitution, confining the judiciary power of the courts of the United States to certain cases therein mentioned. The other resolution disapproving a proposal made the last year by the state of Massachusetts for an amendment to the constitution of the United States respecting the mode of representation in the Congress of the United States.

I have also received a letter from the governor of the state of Massachusetts, inclosing a resolution of the legislature of that state, approving the amendment to the federal constitution, proposed in Dec. last, by the legislature of the state of N. Carolina.—The several letters and resolutions will now be communicated for your consideration.

When contemplating the general prosperity which, under the smiles of Divine Providence, exists throughout this state, the legislature will be disposed to contribute all in their power to its improvement and advancement. The agriculture of our state is an object of prime importance to its citizens, and as such has very properly received the attention and encouragement of the government; particularly as respects the articles of wool, flax, and hemp,—articles essential to our domestic and home manufactures. In the articles of beef and pork, which may be deemed our principal product, the people of the state are greatly benefited by the extra demands which are made for those articles, in consequence of the frequent wars, which at this period, are wonderfully prevalent among distant and foreign nations, with whom we have commercial connexions.—While our agricultural interests are thus benefitted by external as well as internal causes, the fishery, which is beginning to increase its importance in some of our towns, and which is likely to prove beneficial to the public, as well as to individual adventurers, may perhaps receive some governmental countenance. An exemption from poll tax and militia duty, for a limited time, to those who are actually employed as fishermen, if no expedient more proper is devised, may be worthy of legislative consideration.

The article of Butter is of growing importance to our farmers, and its exportation is yearly increasing. It would conduce to its reputation abroad, and prove a mean of procuring a more certain and encreased price, if an inspection, at the place of export, of all butter designed for exportation, should take place before it goes to its market.

Our state prison for several years past, has been in a course of valuable improvement, as regards some material objects. But still the prisoners are indiscriminately confined together. A separate lodgement of the prisoners, agreeably to their degree of atrocity, when not at labor, has always appeared to me, an important requisite in such an institution. An indiscriminate confinement exposes the young and inexperienced offender, who perhaps has heedlessly been overtaken by his crime, to the contaminating conversation of the more desperate and practised villain, who will delight to recount his adventures, and give his pernicious advice and instruction to the more tender proficient; and will endeavor to prepare and confirm his mind for the perpetration of more daring crimes, when his small time of punishment is expired. The salutary improvement alluded to, might be effected by confining the prisoner when placed below in their caverns, in two or three classes, assigned to as many separate apartments for the night, according to the degree of crime and punishment. The state of the caverns, would I should think, afford this accommodation, with but small additional expense; and in such situation, the less profligate would be secluded, during the night, from the dangerous company and intercourse of their more experienced fellow prisoners; while in the day time, and when at their labor, all improper conversation and practises, are by present regulation, prohibited and restrained.

It may be a subject worthy of legislative enquiry, whether the provisions in our statute laws respecting schools, are fully adequate to the purposes of their best improvement; or if so, whether there is sufficient attention paid to those provisions, to effect their intended objects? It is to be feared that in too many instances, the committees of districts, as also the persons chosen overseers, or visitors of the schools, are not only inattentive to the literary qualifications of the teachers, but are too neglectful of their religious and moral characters as schoolmasters and instructors. While the funds appropriated by the state for the support of our schools are so ample, it will be unfortunate indeed, should our towns, by their own negligence or misapplication of their monies, lose the benefit of so wise a calculation of the legislature. It is of incalculable importance to the good order, well being and happiness of the state, that the education of our children should be attended to, not only for the purposes of literary information, but also for instruction in the principles of religion and morality, agreeable to the wise institutions of our fathers. The early bias given to the young and tender mind in forming it to the principles of religion, virtue and good order, will probably stamp the character of the youth through life; while the neglect of these seasonable impressions will be unhappily experienced by the individuals themselves, and lamentably felt by the public, in their consequent conduct in society.

When we reflect on the general prosperity and happiness, which for a long course of years, this state has experienced, resulting from the habitual good order so generally prevalent among our citizens, founded on their observance of the wise and wholesome civil regulations, as well as the religious and moral institutions which are inherited from our fathers, it would seem that, while our hearts are excited to lively gratitude and praise to the Great Author of all our mercies, we may also be encouraged in a confident hope, that, so long as we cleave to the God of our fathers, honor his service, acknowledge his superintending Providence, and practise his commands, we may still be favored with his kind protection and wise direction. Let us therefore cultivate the duties of religion and virtue;—let us cherish the pure practice of our ancient and venerable institutions;—let us steadily adhere to our long-tried and valuable civil regulations, and in the discharge of our peculiar duties as legislators and public administrators, let us encourage and recommend that spirit of harmony, peace and unity, which will serve to tranquilize the passions, and soften the asperities of political opinions; so that, although conflicting sentiments may exist among, we may not permit this circumstance to embitter our feelings, unhinge our social intercourse, or destroy our public or private happiness.

JONATHAN TRUMBULL.
Hartford—May session, 1805.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
MARCH 25.

CATHOLIC PETITION.

Mr. FOX rose and spoke to the following effect: "In the course of my parliamentary life I never rose to execute any duty with more satisfaction than I feel upon this occasion. Certainly I am happy in being the instrument to present a petition, which, whatever be its merits (upon which I shall make no observation at present) offers the most satisfactory proof that the great body of the Catholics of Ireland, whatever exceptions there may be, seek to remedy the grievances they feel by legal means; by an application to the Imperial Parliament; by a mode the most constitutional and respectful that could be devised." The hon. member, after having read some part of the petition, concluded with moving for leave to bring it up, which being granted, the petition was brought up, and read as follows:

To the Right Hon. and Hon. the Knights, Citizens and Burgesses of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, whose names are hereunto subscribed, on behalf of themselves, and of others his Majesty's subjects professing the Roman Catholic religion,

SHEWETH,

That your petitioners are steadfastly attached to the person, family, and government of their most gracious sovereign; that they are impressed with sentiments of affectionate gratitude for the benignant laws which have been enacted for meliorating their condition during his paternal reign; and that they contemplate, with rational and decided *predilection*, the admirable principles of the British constitution.

Your petitioners most humbly state, that they have solemnly and publicly taken the oaths prescribed by law to his majesty's Roman Catholic subjects; as tests of political and moral principles; and they confidently appeal to the sufferings which they have long endured, and the sacrifices which they still make, rather than violate their consciences, (by taking oaths of a religious or spiritual import contrary to their belief), as decisive proof of their profound and scrupulous reverence for the *sacred obligation* of an oath.

Your petitioners beg leave to represent that by *these* awful tests they *bind* themselves in the presence of the all-seeing Deity, whom all classes of christians adore, "to be faithful and bear true allegiance to their most gracious sovereign, king George the Third, and him to defend, to the utmost of their power, against all conspiracies and attempts whatsoever that shall be made against his person, crown, or dignity, to do their utmost endeavors to disclose and make known to his majesty, and his heirs, all treasons and traiterous conspiracies which may be formed against him or them, and faithfully to maintain, support, and defend to the utmost of their power the succession to the crown in his majesty's family against any persons whatsoever,"* that by those oaths "they renounce and abjure obedience and allegiance unto any other person claiming, or pretending a right to the crown of this realm; that they reject and detest, as unchristian and impious, to believe that it is lawful in any ways to injure any person or persons whatsoever, under pretence of their being heretics, and also that unchristian and impious principle, that no faith is to be kept with heretics; that it is no article of their faith, and that they renounce and reject, and abjure the opinion, that princes, excommunicated by the Pope and council, or by any authority whatsoever, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects, or by any person whatsoever; that they do not believe that the Pope of Rome, or any other foreign prince, prelate, state, or potentate, hath, or ought to have any temporal or civil jurisdiction, power, superiority, or pre-eminence within this realm; that they firmly believe that no act, in itself unjust, immoral, or wicked, can ever be justified or excused, by or under pretence or colour, that it was done for the good of the church, or in obedience to any ecclesiastical power whatsoever, and that it is not an article of the Catholic faith; neither are they thereby required to believe, or profess that the pope is infallible, or that they are bound to obey any order in its own nature immoral, though the pope, or any ecclesiastical power should issue or direct any such order; but, on the contrary they hold, that it would be sinful to pay any respect or obedience thereto; that they do not believe that any sin whatsoever committed by them can be forgiven at the mere will of any pope, or of any priest, or of any person or persons whatever, but that any person who receives absolution for the same, without a sincere sorrow for them, and a firm and sincere resolution to avoid future guilt, and to atone to God, is far from obtaining thereby any remission of his sins, incurs the additional guilt of violating a sacrament;" and by the same solemn obligation, "*they are bound and firmly pledged to defend to the utmost of their power, the settlement and arrangement of property in their country, as established by the laws now in being*; that they have disclaimed, disavowed, and solemnly abjured any intention to subvert the present church establishment, for the purpose of substituting a catholic establishment in its stead:" and that they have also solemnly sworn "that they will not exercise any privilege to which they are or may become entitled, to disturb or weaken the protestant religion, or protestant government in Ireland."

* *The oath is imposed by the statutes of 1773 and 1793, and must be taken and recited publicly in court to entitle a Catholic to any exemption from the old penal laws.*

Your petitioners most humbly beg leave to shew, that however painful it is to their feelings that it should still be thought necessary to exact such tests from them, (and from them alone of all his majesty's subjects) they can with perfect truth affirm, that the political and moral principles which are thereby asserted, are not only conformable to their opinions and habits, but are expressly inculcated by the religion which they profess; and your petitioners most humbly trust, that the religious doctrines which permit such tests to be taken, will be pronounced by this honorable house to be entitled to a toleration not merely partial but complete, under the happy constitution and government of this realm; and that his majesty's Roman Catholic subjects, holding those principles, will be considered as subjects, upon whose fidelity the state may repose the firmest reliance.

Your petitioners further most humbly shew, that twenty-six years have now elapsed, since their most gracious sovereign, and the honorable houses of parliament in Ireland, by their public and deliberate act, declared, that "from the uniform, peaceable, behavior of the Roman Catholics of Ireland, for a long series of years, it appears reasonable and expedient, to relax the disabilities and incapacities under which they labored, and it must tend not only to the cultivation and improvement of this kingdom, but to the prosperity and strength of all his majesty's dominions, that his majesty's subjects of all denominations should enjoy the blessings of a free constitution, and should be bound to each other by mutual interest and mutual affection—a declaration, founded upon unerring principles of justice and sound policy, which still remains to be carried into full effect;†" although your petitioners are impressed with a belief, that the apprehensions which retarded its beneficial operation, previous to the union, cannot exist in the parliament of the united kingdom.

For your petitioners most humbly shew, that by virtue of divers statutes, now in force, his majesty's Roman catholic subjects, who form so great a proportion of the population of Ireland, and contribute so largely to the resources of the state, do yet labor under many incapacities, restraints and privations, which affect them with peculiar severity in almost every station of life; that, more especially, they are denied the capacity of sitting or voting in either of the honorable houses of parliament, the manifold evils consequent upon which incapacity, they trust it is unnecessary to unfold or enumerate to this honorable house.

They are disabled from holding or exercising, unless by a special dispensation, any corporate office whatsoever in the cities and towns in which they reside; they are incapacitated and disqualified from holding or exercising the offices of sheriffs and sub sheriffs, and various offices of trust, honor, and emolument in the state, in his majesty's military and naval service, and in the administration of the law, in this their native land.

Your petitioners, declining to enter into the principal detail of the many incapacities and inconveniencies avowedly inflicted by those statutes upon his majesty's Roman catholic subjects, beg leave, however, most earnestly to solicit the attention of this honorable house to the humiliating and ignominious system of exclusion, reproach and suspicion, which those statutes generate and keep alive.

For your petitioners most humbly shew, that in consequence of the hostile spirit thereby sanctioned, their hopes of enjoying even the privileges which, through the benignity of their most gracious sovereign, they have been incapacitated to enjoy, are nearly altogether frustrated, in so much, that they are in effect shut out from almost all the honors, dignities, and offices of trust and emolument in the state, from rank and distinction in his majesty's army and navy, and even from the lowest situations and franchises in the several cities and corporate towns throughout his majesty's dominions.

And your petitioners severely feel, that this unqualified interdiction of those of their communion from all municipal stations, from the franchises of all guilds and corporations, and from the patronage and benefits annexed to those situations,

† *This is the preamble of the Irish statute of 1778, when the relaxation commenced.*

is not an evil terminating in itself; for they beg leave to state, that by giving an advantage over those of their communion to others, by whom such situations are exclusively possessed, it establishes a species of qualified monopoly, universally operating in their disfavor, contrary to the spirit, and highly detrimental to the freedom of trade.

Your petitioners likewise severely feel that his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects, in consequence of their exclusion from the offices of sheriffs & sub-sheriffs, of the hostile spirit of those statutes, do not fully enjoy certain other inestimable privileges of the British Constitution, which the law has most jealously maintained and secured to their fellow subjects.

Your petitioners most humbly beg leave to solicit the attention of this honorable House to the distinction which has conceded the Elective, and denies the Representative franchise to one and the same class of his Majesty's subjects;—which detaches from property its proportion of its political power under a constitution, whose vital principle is the union of the one with the other; which closes every avenue of legalised ambition against those who must be presumed to have great credit and influence amongst the mass of the population of the country; which refuses to Peers of the Realm all share in the Legislative Representation, either actual or virtual, and renders the liberal profession of the law to Roman Catholics a mere object of pecuniary traffic, despoiled of its hopes and of its honors.

Your petitioners further most humbly shew, that the exclusion of so numerous and efficient a portion of his Majesty's subjects as the Roman Catholics of this Realm, from civil honors and offices, and from advancement in his Majesty's army and navy, actually impairs, in a very material degree, the most valuable resources of the British Empire, by impeding his Majesty's general service, stifling the most honorable and powerful incentives to military and civil merit, and unnecessarily restricting the exercise of that bright prerogative of the Crown, which encourage good subjects to promote the public welfare, and excites them to meritorious actions, by a well regulated distribution of public honors and rewards.

Your petitioners beg leave most humbly to submit, that those manifold incapacities, restraints and privations are absolutely repugnant to the liberal and comprehensive principles recognised by their most gracious sovereign and the Parliament of Ireland; that they are impolitic restraints upon his Majesty's royal prerogative, that they are hurtful and vexatious to the feelings of a loyal and generous people, and that the total abolition of them will be found not only compatible with, but highly conducive to the perfect security of every establishment, religious or political, now existing in this realm.

For, your petitioners must explicitly declare that they do not seek or wish, in the remotest degree, to injure or encroach upon "the rights, privileges, immunities, possessions or revenues appertaining to the bishops and clergy of the Protestant religion, as by law established, or to the churches committed to their charge, or to any of them."‡ The sole object of your petitioners being an equal participation, upon equal terms, with their fellow subjects, of the full benefits of the British laws and constitution.

Your petitioners beg leave most humbly to observe, that although they might well and justly insist upon the firm and unabated loyalty of his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects to their most gracious Sovereign, their profound respect to the legislature, & their dutiful submission to the laws, yet they most especially sue for all their humble claims and expectations of relief, upon the clear and manifest conduciveness of the measure which they solicit, to the general and permanent tranquility, strength and happiness of the British empire; and your petitioners, entertaining no doubt of its final accomplishment, from its evident justice and utility, do most solemnly assure this hon. House that their earnest solicitude for it at this peculiar crisis, arises principally from their anxious desire to extinguish all motives to disunion, and all means of exciting discontent.

For your petitioners most humbly state it as their decided opinion, that the enemies of the British empire, who meditate the subjugation of Ireland, have no hope of success, save in the disunion of its

‡ *This comprehends the very words of his majesty's coronation oath.*