

was delivered. Parliament had been elected without the slightest reason to believe it would resolve that its functions were to be fused and mixed with those of another Legislature, namely, the Irish Parliament; and Mr. SHERIDAN slightly hinted it as an objection to the competency of Parliament. Mr. PITT met that objection at the outset in the following manner. Mr. PITT said:—"The first objection is what I heard alluded to by the honorable gentleman opposite to me, when His Majesty's message was brought down, namely, that the Parliament of Ireland is incompetent to entertain and discuss the question, or rather, to act upon the measure proposed without having previously obtained the consent of the people of Ireland, their constituents. This point, sir, is of so much importance that I think I ought not to suffer the opportunity to pass without illustrating more fully what I mean. If this principle of the incompetency of Parliament to the decision of the measure be admitted, or if it be contended that Parliament has no legitimate authority to discuss and decide upon it, you will be driven to the necessity of recognizing a principle the most dangerous that ever was adopted in any civilized state, I mean the principle that Parliament cannot adopt any measure, new in its nature and of great importance, without appealing to the constituent and delegating authority for direction. If that doctrine be true, look to what an extent it will carry you. If such an argument could be set up and maintained, you acted without any legitimate authority when you created the representation of the Principality of Wales or of either of the counties palatine of England. Every law that Parliament ever made, without that appeal, either as to its own frame and constitution, as to the qualification of the electors or the elected, as to the great and fundamental point of the succession to the Crown, was a breach of treaty and an act of usurpation." Then, Mr. PITT asked, if they turned to Ireland herself, what would they say to the Protestant Parliament that destroyed the exclusive Protestant franchise, and admitted the Roman Catholics to vote without any fresh appeal? Mr. PITT went on:—

"What must be said by those who have at any time been friends to any plan of parliamentary reform, and particularly such as have been most recently brought forward, either in Great Britain or Ireland? Whatever may have been thought of the propriety of the measure, I never heard any doubt of the competency of Parliament to consider and discuss it. Yet I defy any man to maintain the principle of those plans without contending that, as a member of Parliament, he possesses a right to concur in disfranchising those who sent him to Parliament, and to select others, by whom he was not elected, in their stead. I am sure that no sufficient distinction, in point of principle, can be successfully maintained for a single moment; nor should I deem it necessary to dwell on this point in the manner that I do, were I not convinced that it is connected in part with all those false and dangerous notions on the

subject of Government which have lately become too prevalent in the world." Mr. PITT contended, therefore, that Parliament had a right to alter the succession to the Throne, to incorporate with itself another legislature, to disfranchise its constituents, or associate others with them. Why, is it possible for a Minister now to advise the Crown to dissolve Parliament on the ground that it is incompetent to entertain the question what this country shall do with the Corn Law? There could not be a more dangerous example, a more purely democratic precedent, if I may so say, than that this Parliament should be dissolved, on ground of its incompetency to decide any question of this nature. I am open to the charge, therefore, if it be one, that I did advise Her Majesty to permit this measure to be brought forward in the present Parliament.

The principle which I hold is so firmly established, that at the time of the flight of JAMES II. in 1688, the English Parliament, that is to say two branches of it only, declared the succession vacant and gave the Throne to a new dynasty.

HON. MR. DORION—Hear! hear!

HON. MR. CAUCHON—I wish to be well understood. I do not cite this example as an authority, because the Parliament was incomplete without its third legislative branch, but only for the purpose of shewing to what length the Parliament of Great Britain has carried the exercise of its great prerogative. During the illness of GEORGE III., as it had been impossible to foresee that such a misfortune would happen, and as without the action of the Sovereign, neither the administration of the government, which is conducted in the name of the king, nor legislation, which is only effectual after receiving the assent of the three branches of the legislature, were possible; under these unforeseen circumstances, the two Houses, at the suggestion of the Ministers created a mechanism to act during the illness of the king, and all that was done under its operation became law, and was regarded as such by the whole British nation and all those charged with the execution of the laws of Parliament. But setting aside these extraordinary circumstances, which demanded extraordinary remedies, we assert that Parliament in its integrity has power to alter the Constitution and even the succession to the Throne. As to us, we do not propose to go so far; we simply ask the Imperial Parliament to give us a new Constitution, and even that Parliament will only with our consent make use of that power which it has a right to exercise without our consent. (Hear, hear.) Let it be ob-