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FIRST MEETING OF THE FREE (PRESBYTERIAN) ASSEMBLY.

Dr. WELSH having taken the chair, opened the proceedings by a very suitable and solemnizing prayer. He then rose and said—Reverend fathers and brethren, I presume our first duty, in the circumstances in which we are placed, unquestionably, is to constitute ourselves by the choice of a Moderator; and I feel assured that the eyes of every individual in this Assembly—the eyes of the whole Church and country, are directed to one individual, whom to name is to pronounce his panegyric. The extent of his labours, in connection with our present position, would justly entitle Dr. Chalmers—the mention of Dr. Chalmers' name here was received with extraordinary enthusiasm, the whole of the vast audience (upwards of 3000) rising, cheering for some minutes with the utmost enthusiasm, and the house presenting a perfect forest of hats and handkerchiefs—Dr. Welsh continued—would justly entitle that great man to hold the first place in this our meeting. His genius has been devoted to the service of his heavenly Master, and his is the high honour promised to those who, having laboured successfully in their Master's cause, and turned many to righteousness, are to "shine as the stars for ever and ever."

Dr. Welsh then left the chair, and it was taken by Dr. Chalmers.

Dr. CHALMERS then rose and said—Fathers and brethren, I deeply feel my inadequacy for the labours of the office which you have been pleased to confer upon me. I undertake it in fear, and in weakness, and in much trembling. But we have warrant, when urged by the feeling of insufficiency,—we have warrant for making a devout approach to Him, in whom alone strength and sufficiency are to be found. In the meantime, he begged to offer a few remarks, in order that they might have brought before them an outline of the principles they had adopted that day, and the course of conduct they would now have to pursue. The time was now gone by for lengthened argument, either on the one side or the other,—they had now approached the season of doing, and not the season of arguing, and therefore he would first state briefly the grounds on which they had separated from the Establishment, and then advert to the duties that would devolve on them in their new capacity, and how those duties might best be fulfilled. The Rev. Doctor then referred to the principles which the Civil Court decisions on the Church questions involved,—enumerating the different cases, and showing their various features, and contended that as the Legislature had refused to acknowledge the claim of right which the Church had put forth, founded as they were on express statutes and the Treaty of Union, no other resource was left for those who adhered to those claims but separation from the Establishment. He contended, that when the Church entered into connection with the State, she gave up no part of her liberty as a Church of Christ,—that liberty was not hers to give, and it was not only her privilege, but her bounden duty, to hold it good. Their ancestors had been true to that principle. For the maintenance of it they had suffered persecution and death, but, nevertheless, preserved it pure and entire, handing it down from one generation to another, from one century to another, by the union of their common faith and the blessing of their great King and Head. They held the principle, that, in things spiritual, the Church could never submit to the control of the Civil Government; and for nearly a century and a half, that principle had remained unchallenged,—and it was never till lately,—till within the last few years,—that the Church had suffered at the hands of the Civil Courts for proclaiming it. (Hear, hear.) For maintaining and defending their principles they were brought together there that day. (Applause.) It was well that they had been strengthened to do what they had done. God would not forsake them nor the families of the faithful, nor would he leave them now without his Spirit to guide them, and his strength to enable them to hold out to the end. But he would caution them to be careful how they used the hour of triumph. There was a certain triumph, like that of victory after conflict, which required to be carefully used. Apart from Christianity, the mental phenomena had often been realised. When the disciples of old were made partakers of the Divine grace, and the Divine will, and were able to overcome the world, Paul rejoiced; but let them never forget the deep humility which holy men of old mixed up with their joy and their mirth. (Hear, hear.) When was there more necessity, in the history of the Church, for humility, and acknowledgment of their own helplessness, than at the present hour? Never was such acknowledgment more called for,—never was humility more needed than now—and the translation they had been making needed peculiarly to be guarded by such sentiments as these— "Nevertheless, it is not I, but the grace of God that is in me." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." (Hear, hear.) In giving up their connection with the State, they were giving up a great temptation to sin; but without humility, and watchfulness, and prayer, there was danger now of being carried away in another way. Let principle have its perfect work. Let them have a care, lest they should be led away by the promise of allurements, or other inducements which might be held forth to them. (Hear, hear.) Let them beware of compromising their doctrines or articles of faith, or of ceasing to contend for the authority of Christ over the kings and governments of the earth. (Cheers.) The competent duty of kings and governments was to provide for the Christian instruction of the world,—but in maintaining that principle let them beware of any compromise with men in power, who, if they had not the authority, had at least the power of numbers on their side. (Hear.) The men who stood opposite to them in this secondary question, might, with all their hay and stubble, be resting on the like precarious foundation with themselves. They might be men with whom they might differ, and with whom they would agree to differ,—men with whom they could hold Christian communion, having one faith, one hope, one Lord, one baptism; but even for all that friendship and all that confidence, they ought not to violate the principles, or make surrender of the high grounds on which they had left them. (Applause.) There was another principle which they were not to give up for the sake of courting the present help of men, who, at best, had the power of numbers on their side. (Hear, hear.) "To be more plain, and more particular—Voluntaries are mistaken if they claim us as Voluntaries. (Cheers, and some distant sounds of disapprobation.) We hold it to be the duty of Governments to give of their substance and means for the maintenance of religion in the land. We pray that their eyes may be opened, that they may see it to be their duty to be the supporters of religion, and not the tyrants we have to fear. We pray that the time may come when "Kings shall be nursing fathers, and Queens shall be nursing mothers," and when there shall be "nothing to hurt nor to offend in all God's holy mountain." (Cheers.) We hold that every department of Government should be leavened with Christianity, and every functionary in it, from the highest to the lowest, should be under its influence. Though we quit the Establishment, it is right that it be understood that we go out on the Establishment principle. (Hear.) We are the advocates for a national recognition and national support of religion, and we are not Voluntaries." (Applause.) Again, they thus openly proclaimed their difference from those who, under the guise of principle, refused to acknowledge the

authority of the Church. With such men they could not have fellowship, and still less so with those who would lift up a menacing front against "the powers that be," and could carry themselves against the constituted authorities of the land with defiance and contumely. (Hear, hear, and applause.) If they refused to coalesce with the body on the great question of the power of the civil magistrate to interfere with the ecclesiastical affairs of the Church, still less should they coalesce with another body who refused to acknowledge the constituted authorities of the church, and least of all with men who chose to live amongst the elements of confusion, and delighted in turbulence and tumult. (Applause.) But he need not proclaim in the ears of that assembly the duty to guard against the lawless and revolutionary politics of those who spoke evil of dignities, and were given to change. (Hear, hear.) He knew it was not necessary to warn his brethren present against such men, and the danger of being in any way associated with such men; but it was necessary and right that they should take the earliest opportunity of stating their views as a warning to the world, because many might, in present circumstances, misconceive their object, when, in the character of a great home mission, like the apostles of old, they would be accused of "turning the world upside down." (Hear, hear.) They were for peace, law, and order—(Hear, hear)—not tumult, turbulence and confusion. (Hear, hear.) If suffered to prosecute their labours quietly and peaceably, they would soon prove themselves the best friends of social order, and social happiness and peace, and the aristocracy of the land would find it to be so; but if they were not permitted quietly and peaceably to work out the christian principles of the church of Christ, they would find that the aristocracy themselves would suffer loss. With men who were recklessly attempting to pull down the aristocracy they had no sympathy; with such men they could hold no copartnership. They would turn neither to the right hand nor to the left, but keep on the even tenor of their way, and leave the result to God. (Applause.) Why did he find his brethren in the church assembled there that day? Because they had chosen to obey God rather than man. Their God was the God of order, and not confusion; and if those who dwell in high places would let them alone, they would find it so. They should recognize them as the best conservators of the commonwealth. (Hear, hear.) Now the breakwater had been removed, and by those who were most interested in keeping it in its place. The breakwater of the Establishment had been removed, and what defence had that establishment now against the buffetings of sin, and Satan, and the world? It was based in the affections of the people of Scotland—these were taken away from the establishment of their fathers, and what was left? (Hear, hear.) They would do nothing more,—they would leave the establishment to its own defence. If on the blank constitution of the free church they were willing to inscribe "No Voluntarism," they might then hold it up to the demagogues and agitators of the land that they might read and learn, that while free, they were not anarchists. (Applause.) But they must be aware how they used that freedom—they must use it, and not abuse it; for though freedom might be emblazoned on the banner of the church, it might, after all, be but an empty name. (Hear, hear.) They must not seek for freedom in the applause of the multitude. Still more galling than the tyranny of the state was the tyranny of the multitude. (Hear, hear.) Let them manfully and christianly refuse all soft and selfish compliances with the mere dictates of men. Let them follow the example of the early christians, and make the bible, and the bible alone, the statute-book both of minister and people. Let them carry their principles into practice, as did the apostolic christians, when they "obeyed God rather than men." At one time they were the honoured few, but at other times they were the objects of tumult and violence. Now they were sailing calmly and smoothly down the stream, and prosperously borne along upon its bosom;—now they were buffeting the adverse elements of a floating popularity. (Applause.) Nor were they to expect to fare better than the apostolic christians did. They were not to expect to escape. The world that hated the apostles would hate those who followed in the same path now. There was no repeal yet of what might be called a standing order in christianity, that "they that live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution." (Hear, hear); and now that a new light had been let in upon them, they were not to forget the adverse elements that they saw more clearly now of christianity, and imagine that they saw more clearly now to escape them than the early christians did. Let them arm themselves with a right mind. Let them be prepared with like sacrifices as were the christians of old—the loss of popularity,—themselves—their families,—their all,—rather than be supported merely by the power of numbers. (Hear.) Let them take care and not give up principle for the sake of popularity,—but continue as tried and faithful stewards, administering the affairs of the Church, not as pleasing men but as pleasing God. (Applause.) But while they thus quoted the examples of Paul and other apostolic christians, let them not forget that their history also afforded much that was fit to encourage them in the arduous work which they had before them. In the midst of the greatest trials, and difficulties and dangers, they were comforted, their hearts "being knit together in love." "Being of one accord" they were of "one mind," and thus they were enabled to rejoice in all their temptations, and in none more so than in the turbulence of their own disciples. Paul suffered much from that source, and yet none could speak of them more kindly, more affectionately, more friendly, than he did—not only of those who were within, but those who were without. The man who could work with his hands, and live on the meanest fare, was worthy to speak with authority; and it was for their encouragement and admonition in all ages, that such passages as he would read had a place in the Bible. (The Rev. Doctor then quoted a number of passages illustrative of the faithfulness of Apostolic preaching, and urged their consideration on the members.) How gracefully blended was this sturdy independence.—"Even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but as pleasing God,"—amongst all the turbulence of popular tumult,—with the severity of the admonition, "these things speak, and rebuke," &c., and all so kindly, so affectionately, and so faithfully applied! (Applause.) In affectionately, and must also be prepared to act, and his one great and general advice was, "let all your deliberations be mixed with charity." (Applause.) But he must not detain them, and would only say a few words more. One thing was greatly to be desired, and mightily to be prayed for,—let them lift their united and earnest cry for guidance and grace to the Church's counsellors, that they might be guided in difficulty and trouble, and at all times act in the spirit of their Master in heaven. (Applause.) Their way was beset with many temptations. He spoke not only of the heart-burings and jealousies that might break out among themselves,—for even Paul and Barnabas had those who were with-contendings,—but he spoke chiefly of those who were with-out, towards whom they must carry themselves with peculiar tenderness. They were especially called upon to walk with wisdom towards those who were without. The chief part of wisdom was meekness, and if they acted thus wisely, the zeal of their opponents would soon disappear. It would cool down,—and it was satisfactory to believe, that it arose not so much from the spirit of malice as from profound ignorance. (Applause, and a laugh.) Paul consoled himself in the midst of much opposition with this thought; and when Christ died, his last prayer was, "Father, forgive them, for

they know not what they do." (Hear, hear, hear.) The Rev. Dr. concluded by an affectionate appeal that earnest prayer might be made to God on behalf of his Church in the present trying time of her history, "until peace be within her walls, and prosperity within her palaces." The Rev. Doctor sat down amid long continued applause.

Mr. FITZGERALD was then appointed Clerk. Dr. Candlish and others proposed measures for organising the new church. Six Committees were appointed to provide "interim supplies of ordinances"—means of education for the students for the ministry—a church polity—to prepare an address to the adhering people, and letters to be addressed to corresponding churches at home and abroad.

Dr. CANDLISH proposed, that, in order to give ministers and elders, members of Assembly, an opportunity of signing the protest, and others an opportunity of signing the adherence to the protest, the documents should lie at the office of the Provisional Committee, 7, St. David Street, from seven o'clock in the morning till the meeting of the Assembly. (Agreed.)

Dr. SMYTH said, it appeared that a mistake prevailed as to the signatures, some believing that 193 were all that had signed.

Dr. MACFARLAN said the 193 were only those who were members of Assembly; the total number of ministers who had signed the protest and concurrence, was, he believed, 420. The Assembly then adjourned.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, MAY 30.

IRISH ARMS BILL.
(Adjourned Debate.)

Mr. S. O'BRIEN could not vindicate the past conduct of England to Ireland; and there were two points on which he blamed the present Ministers—their omission to provide a registration bill, and their encouragement, by the spirit duty, to illicit distillation. Much bitter complaint had been uttered, that precise equality was not maintained between England and Ireland; but were the characters and circumstances of the two nations the same? Why, one of the objections to this very bill was, that magistrates of one party in Ireland would convert its enactments to party purposes. But where were the magistrates who would convert an act of Parliament to party purposes in England? Mr. SMITH had insisted on the defeat of justice from the want of protection to witnesses giving evidence, and to jurors pronouncing verdicts, against the perpetrators of outrage; but when had it happened in England that a witness or a juror had been murdered for the share he had taken in the administration of justice? Where there was so wide a difference in the nature of the two societies, it was impossible that they should be governed exactly alike. He intended to propose some amendments to this bill, but he approved its general principle. There were in every village a few turbulent fellows, who would not be content without arms; but the people in general were peaceably disposed, and had no dislike to a law which protected person and property. On them it would fall with a father's weight, while upon the violent and tumultuous it would come, as it ought to come, with the weight of an iron hand. The father of a quiet family did not wish to be dragged from his bed and forced into the ranks of a marauding party; and the young woman who had saved a little pittance was anxious to be secure against attack and abduction. He spoke, not as a partisan, but as a magistrate of Ireland, anxious for the security and peace of his country.

Mr. C. BULLER said, that though many members near him had assented to measures resembling the present, when they were to be administered by a Government possessing the confidence of the Irish people, they were under no obligation of sanctioning a bill to be administered by a Government whose principles that people detested. As to the suggestions of Mr. S. O'BRIEN, about the father of the family and the young woman attacked by a gang, the effect of the bill would be just this—that the assailants would still have arms themselves, but would find their victims unarmed. As to repeal, he was decidedly adverse to it; but if the mind of Ireland was diseased on that subject, it was not to be cured in this way, but by the redress of her grievances. There was in Europe a nation whose physical condition was so bad as hers; and that was the opinion which all Europe entertained, as was proved by its literature, both permanent and periodical. The Poor Law reports, as compared with the testimony of ARTHUR YOUNG, established that, while all other nations had been advancing in their comforts, the food of the Irish, their potatoes, had been deteriorating, both in quantity and in quality. What leaders had they to keep them within the law? In many places there were no residents within the law? But there was a church imposed upon the people by force. You kept up your ascendancy only by arms, and by arms bills. The present Government had adopted the Orange party; for he could find no difference between the Orange and the Tory party; and what must be the feelings of the Irish people to see promoted to the bench men known to them mainly by their religious bigotry and national animosity which they had evinced in Parliament? He was not personally acquainted with Ireland, but he had seen in Canada feelings of not less heat instantly allayed by a conciliatory policy. There a Ministry had been appointed, consisting of men of all politics; while in Ireland you appointed a Ministry from the ranks of your own minority alone. Now, put yourselves in the position of an Irish Catholic, placed under that minority, and so placed, not because Ireland had changed hers; and then wonder, if you can, that he should wish for a bloody war—bloody even if successful—and a popular peace. That choice it was now for Sir R. PEEL to make; and in making it to consider how posterity would view his acts; what fame they would award to him when he should plead, as the two great measures of his Irish policy—the duty on spirits and the Arms Bill.

Mr. SHAW said he would support the second reading of the bill, convinced that a measure of that nature was necessary to the peace of Ireland; but he would not pledge himself to its details, which could be more properly discussed in committee. The noble lord (John Russell), the member for London, said he could not object to that stage passing. He therefore, there could be no doubt of that stage passing. He was sorry to be obliged to say, that he considered the present condition of Ireland most unsatisfactory—he might, he feared, truly add, alarming. In his recollection—and he spoke the experience of much older men when he said in theirs—the general mass of the population were never so violently agitated, and all other classes so depressed and dejected (hear); each thus operating upon the other, as both re-acted and effect. (Hear, hear.) Various had been the reasons assigned on different sides for this state of things. He believed it arose from a combination of causes not yet adverted to, at all events, in that house. (Hear.) There was first, the general depression of agricultural interests, affecting even to an extent beyond what they did in England every grade of society from the highest to the lowest in Ireland (hear), greatly, though he admitted not entirely, caused by the enactments of last year respecting the corn law and the tariff—still more by the panic which succeeded them; and then, he must say, in some degree stimulated by the Canada Corn Bill then before the house, the importance of which he believed had been exaggerated; but still it was a further

concession in the direction against the agricultural interest (hear); and he could not help thinking that it was most imprudent and unwise so soon again to stir an exciting question which had been considered as settled. (Hear.) Next there was the temperance movement. Now, he could not allude to that without joining with the hon. member (Mr. Buller) in bearing testimony to the great benefit which in itself it had conferred on Ireland (hear), and to the sincerity and honesty of the motives with which he was persuaded it had been promoted by the Rev. Mr. Mathew. (Hear, hear.) Within the jurisdiction over which he (Mr. Shaw) presided, he was convinced crime had been reduced one-third within the last few years, owing to the change in the habits of the people from intoxication to sobriety (hear, hear); but, alas! in that unhappy country, even the blessing of temperance was turned to a curse (hear, hear); the bands, the symbols, and the organization, he had no doubt, Mr. Mathew himself now deplored, as having been originally indiscreet, though, perhaps, well meant; it was certain, however, that they had since been turned by designing persons into a nucleus of most extensive and alarming organization for other and far different purposes. (Hear, hear.) There was then the removal of the Whigs from office, which necessarily took off the drag which, as regarded their adherents and expectants, they had put upon the repeal movement, by making all participation in it a ban to any share of their patronage. (Hear, hear.) He must now come to what was to him a more painful part of the subject. The party, which for shortness he might call Protestant, although containing within it many Roman Catholics—that was the Conservative party in Ireland—had undoubtedly up to a very recent period been apathetic and almost indifferent to the present agitation, to a degree most unusual, and, indeed, unprecedented amongst them. The Conservative party of Ireland, whether rightly or erroneously, were under the impression that that imaginary danger cunningly presented to English prejudice had imposed upon the Irish Government, and where their Irish supporters in every part of the country felt that they deserved confidence, they thought that they were treated with distrust and suspicion. This produced the natural result that such conduct would upon generous minds,—they shrunk into themselves, and in their turn became distant and reserved. (Hear, hear.) They looked on with wonder and amazement at the blindness and ignorance of the Government to the progress of the present agitation, but they would not step uninvited beyond the limits of their own peculiar duties—they would not intrude opinions that were not sought, and were probably apprehensive that if they did they would be unheeded, and bring upon them the imputation of ultra politicians and being the advocates of unnecessary coercion. (Hear, hear.) It could not be disguised either that throughout all parties in Ireland there existed a prevailing opinion that there was a want of vigour and independent power of action in the executive Government of Ireland. They were, however, at length, all aroused and alarmed. The Government itself had awoke to the real state and danger of the country, and it was equally the duty, the interest, and, he trusted, the inclination of all who valued the security of person and property in Ireland, to aid in allaying that agitation which was spreading as a flame through that country. (Hear, hear.) In his (Mr. Shaw's) opinion there was no danger of an outbreak so long as the leaders were not checked, he could not say. Mr. O'Connell—for he (Mr. Shaw) would speak of him in his capacity of Irish agitator rather than as a member of that house, the functions of which office he seemed to have renounced—Mr. O'Connell, in one of his last speeches, speaking of physical force, exclaimed,—"I know a trick worth two of that—what I want is to organize the entire of Ireland by what he (Mr. O'Connell) called "means purely constitutional." In the same paper, a leading one of that party, and one conducted with great ability—the Nation—there was a programme of their intentions, and an intimation of the means by which they were to be effected:—"No! Irishmen! ourselves, ourselves alone. Go on organising—contribute to the repeal treasury—not suddenly to make a show for your county or parish, but gradually and regularly. Work heaven and earth to conciliate the Protestants, and to show your armed brethren in red and green coats that Ireland is wo-begone, and will smite, will be mighty, and worth serving. Meet by myriads, meet with your temperance music—the badge of your new virtue—meet in order, and separate in order. Obey your leaders, learn all the elements of success, distrust and watch, and be fearless of England; organise, observe the law, agitate, and be patient." Ah! but how long would they meet in order and separate in order, if they met in myriads, with military music, obeying their leaders, and bearing the elements of war? Dr. Johnson it was, he believed, that said—"I don't care who makes the laws, if I could but write the ballads;" and what were the ballads circulated by their most widely circulated print. There was one in the next column to what he had read:—

"The music's read, the morning's bright,
"Step together—left, right—left, right;
"We carry no gun,
"Yet devil a one
"But knows how to march in Tip'rary, O!
"By twelves and sixties on we go,
"Rank'd four deep in close order, O!
"For order's the way
"To carry the day—
"March steadily, men of Tip'rary, O!
"We'll get Repeal in a year or so,
"If we're active and true to each other, O!
"Then the rents will be low,
"And the taxes also,
"And Ireland will be a great nation, O!"

If there was any doubt of that, here was another he (Mr. Shaw) had copied that morning from the last number of the same paper:—

"The Saxon and the Dane
"Our immortal hills profane,
"May destruction seize the twain,
"Says the Shan Van Vocht.
"And what are we to do?
"To nerve our hearts anew,
"And to treat the hiring crew
"To a touch of Brian Boru,
"Says the Shan Van Vocht.
"They came across the wave
"But to plunder and enslave,
"And should find a robber's grave,
"Says the Shan Van Vocht."

As to repeal of the union, talked of as a practical measure, it was a mere delusion. In Ireland no one was duped by it, except the unfortunate ignorant beings who were collected by masses in its name. He (Mr. Shaw) was astonished when in the first instance the declarations of Her Majesty's Ministers were directed against that, as if it were the real danger. As well might the wily incendiary, after he had applied the torch, and the conflagration was spreading through the premises, attempt to persuade the owner that the danger he had to provide against was from some distant thunder-storm or earthquake. The real danger in the present instance is, that the whole country is being organized in passive resistance to the laws; but repeal is only the pretext for collecting the masses together (cheers); and what are the objects set forth, as if to be carried by repeal, but really to be dreaded without it, if this systematic organization be not stopped? What is fixity of tenure, as described by Mr. O'Connell? No rent without 21 years' leases—then that rent to be fixed