Notes and Documents

DAM SMITH AND FREE TRADE FOR IRELAND.

(Communicated by OSCAR BROWNING.)

THE following letter of Adam Smith to Henry Dundas, which is believed to be unpublished, is of special interest and value. It is printed from a copy in the Auckland papers now in my possession. The date 1 Nov. 1779 is that of a great crisis. The Irish parliament met on 12 Oct. and Grattan moved as an amendment to the address 'that it is not by temporary expedients but by a free export that the nation is now to be saved from impending ruin.' Flood pressed that the amendment should include to free trade; 'Ireland asked no more and would not be satisfied with less.' The amendment was carried without a division. The answer from England was given on the very date of this letter. It said that the king was sorry for the distresses of Ireland, was attentive to her interests, and was always ready to concur in measures which on mature consideration should be thought conducive to the general welfare of his subjects. This was studiously ambiguous and seriously increased the popular discontent. The Irish parliament passed a resolution that 'at this time it would be inexpedient to grant new taxes,' and next day granted the appropriated duties for six months only. The relief was not long in coming. On 18 Dec. 1779, Lord North moved a series of measures which were carried in the early part of 1780 and which set the trade of Ireland almost entirely free. The date of this letter shows that the English government were contemplating these measures at the time when they were supposed to be resisting them.

The circumstances under which this letter was written were these. William Eden, afterwards Lord Auckland, then a lord of trade and foreign plantations, had written to Dundas asking him his opinion about free trade with Ireland, and probably requesting him to obtain the judgment of Adam Smith on certain specified points. It is quite possible that Eden wrote this letter at the suggestion either of Lord Carlisle, who was first lord of trade and plantations, or of Lord North, who was prime minister and who was acquainted with Adam Smith. Adam Smith had resided in London for two years after the publication of the 'Wealth of Nations' in 1776, and had become acquainted with the leading statesmen of the day. Dundas's letters to Eden and to Adam Smith are subjoined. Adam Smith probably addressed Dundas as 'my dear lord,' because he was lord advocate of Scotland and keeper of the signet.

Henry Dundas to William Eden.

‘Melville, 30th Oct. 1779.

‘My Dr. Sir,—I received yours last night and have sent it this morning to Smith, when I see or hear from him you shall hear again from me upon the different parts of your letter. The enclosed is a copy of my letter to Smith which will show you what are my present general crude ideas upon the subject of Ireland.

‘Yours faithfully, HENRY DUNDAS.’

Henry Dundas to Adam Smith.

‘Melville, 30th Oct. 1779.

‘Dr. Sir,—I received the enclosed last night from Mr. Eden. The questions he puts would require a volume to answer them in place of a Letter. Think of it however and let me have your ideas upon it. For my own part I confess myself little alarmed about what others seem so much alarmed. I doubt much if a free trade to Ireland is so very much to be dreaded. There is trade enough in the world for the Industry both of Britain and Ireland, and if two or three places either in south or north Britain should suffer some damage, which by the bye will be very gradual, from the loss of their monopoly, that is a very small consideration in the general scale and policy of the Country. The only thing to be guarded against is the people in Ireland being able to undersell us in foreign mercates from the want of Taxes and the Cheapness of labour. But a wise Statesman will be able to regulate that by proper distribution of taxes upon the materials and Commodities of the respective Countrys. I believe an union would be the best if it can be accomplished, if not the Irish Parliament must be managed by the proper distribution of the Loaves and fishes, so that the Legislatures of the two Countrys may act in union together. In short, it has long appeared to me that the bearing down of Ireland, was in truth bearing down a substantial part of the Naval and Military strength of our own Country. Indeed it has often shocked me in the House of Commons for these two years past, when anything was hinted in favour of Ireland by its friends, of even giving them only the benefit of making the most of what their soil or climate afforded them, to hear it received as a sufficient answer, that a town in England or Scotland would be hurt by such an Indulgence. This kind of reasoning will no longer do. But I find in place of asking yours I am giving you my opinion, so adieu.

‘Yours sincerely, HENRY DUNDAS.’

‘My Dear Lord,—I am very happy to find that Your Lordship’s opinion concerning the consequences of granting a Free trade to Ireland coincides so perfectly with my own.

‘I cannot believe that the manufactures of G.B. can for a century to come suffer much from the Rivalship of those of Ireland, even though the Irish should be indulged in a free trade. Ireland has neither the skill, nor the stock which could enable Her to rival England, and tho’ both may be acquired in time, to acquire them compleatly will require the operation of little less than a Century. Ireland has neither coal nor

wood; the former seems to have been denied to her by nature; and tho' her Soil and Climate are perfectly suited for raising the Latter, yet to raise it to the same degree as in England will require more than a Century. I perfectly agree with your Lordship too that to Crush the Industry of so great and so fine a Province of the Empire, in order to favour the monopoly of some particular Towns in Scotland or England is equally injurious and impolitic. The general opulence and improvement of Ireland might certainly under proper management afford much greater Resources to Government than can ever be drawn from a few mercantile or manufacturing Towns.

'Till the Irish Parliament sends over the Heads of their proposed Bill it may, perhaps, be uncertain what they understand by a Free trade.

'They may, perhaps, understand by it no more than the power of exporting their own produce to the foreign Country where they can find the best mercate. Nothing can be more just and reasonable than this demand, nor can anything be more unjust and unreasonable than some of the restraints which their Industry in this respect at present labours under. They are prohibited, under the heaviest penalties, to export Glass to any Country. Wool they can export only to G.B. Woollen goods they can export only from certain Ports in their own Country and to certain Ports in G.B.

'They may mean to demand the power of importing such goods as they have occasion for, from any Country where they can find them cheapest, subject to no other duties & restraints than such as may be imposed by their own Parlia^t. This freedom, tho' in my opinion perfectly reasonable, will interfere a little with some of our paltry monopolies. Glass, Hops, Foreign Sugars, several sorts of East India goods, can at present be imported only from Great Britain.

'They may mean to demand a free trade to our American & African plantations, free from the restraints which the 18th of the present King imposed upon it, or at least from some of those restraints, such as, the prohibition of exporting thither their own woollen & Cotton manufactures, Glass, Hatts, Hops, Gunpowder &c. This freedom, tho' it would interfere with some of our monopolies, I am convinced, would do no harm to Great Britain. It would be reasonable indeed that whatever goods were exported from Ireland to those Plantations should be subject to the like duties as those of the same kind exported from England, in the terms of the 18th of the present King.

'They may mean to demand a free trade to Great Britain, their manufactures and produce when Imported into this Country being subjected to no other duties than the like manufactures and produce of our own. Nothing in my opinion, would be more highly advantageous to both Countries than this mutual freedom of trade. It would help to break down that absurd monopoly which we have most absurdly established against ourselves in favour of almost all the different Classes of our own manufacturers.

'Whatever the Irish mean to demand in this way, in the present situation of our affairs, I should think it madness not to grant it. Whatever they may demand, our manufacturers, unless the leading & principal men among them are properly dealt with beforehand, will probably

oppose it. That they may be so dealt with, I know from experience, and that it may be done at little expence and with no great trouble. I could even point out some persons, who, I think, are fit and likely to deal with them successfully for this purpose. I shall not say more upon this till I see you; which I shall do the first moment I can get out of this Town.

'I am much honoured by Mr. Eden's remembrance of me, I beg you will present my most respectfull Compliments to him and that you will believe me to be, My Dear Lord,

' Most faithfully yours,

' ADAM SMITH.

' Nov. 1st, 1779.'

THE SQUIRE PAPERS.

IN *Fraser's Magazine* for December 1847 there appeared an article by Carlyle, in which were printed thirty-five unpublished letters of Oliver Cromwell, which Carlyle regarded as 'of indubitable authenticity.' These letters were communicated to him by a private correspondent whose name he was not at liberty to reveal. The story of the destruction of the originals, and how there perished with them the remarkable 'Journal written by a supposed ancestor of his correspondent,' has been told once for all in Carlyle's own words. But although published with his 'explicit testimony to their authenticity,' the letters were regarded with suspicion at the time, and it was even hinted that they were forgeries, and that Carlyle had been made the victim of a glaring and palpable hoax. The question was reopened last year in the columns of the *Academy*, and I ventured to put forward some reasons for thinking that the arguments by which the genuineness of the letters was assailed were not so conclusive as they appeared in the eyes of those who employed them. Notwithstanding this, or perhaps in consequence of this, the charge of forgery has been repeated in no qualified terms; and those who, like myself, do not happen to acquiesce in this solution of the problem so readily as some very confident writers do are stigmatised as 'credulous.' There is a credulity even in incredulity, and it may be that the credulous persons are those who believe in the theory of forgery.

My object, however, at present is not to discuss, but to state as plainly and fairly as I can the problem which, in my opinion, has to be solved with regard to 'The Squire Papers.' For this purpose I have printed a series of documents in chronological order, beginning with the first letter in which Carlyle's unknown correspondent introduced himself to him, 29 Jan. 1847, and ending with the last letter written by him, 20 Nov. 1849. In their proper place are inserted some letters on the subject which passed between Carlyle and the late Mr. Edward Fitzgerald, and the accounts drawn up by Carlyle himself of the two interviews which he subsequently had with his correspondent. For the privilege of using the greater part of these documents, which are all originals, I am indebted to the kindness of Mrs. Alexander Carlyle; the others are in my own possession, having been given me by Mr. Fitzgerald. Taken together with the letters attributed to Cromwell, and the other papers printed by