

liberty which at once became the heritage of the sister Church of England, but continued from the first bound to the chariot wheels of the State as a mere accessory to the policy of English party government, ruling a conquered and turbulent race. The retribution which came to English Government in Ireland towards the close of the eighteenth century was felt most acutely by the Church. The political expediency which hindered her from the due exercise of her spiritual functions bore its most bitter fruit during that time. The Bishops had been made the executors of a State policy, either of cruel coercion or of weak conciliation. At one time the nominees of the Whigs, at another of the Tories, they were the administrators of penal laws against both Roman Catholics and Protestant Nonconformists. The parishes were without pastors, and the churches without people.

• ACT OF UNION.

The century closed with the Rebellion of 1798, and the nineteenth century opened with the passing of the Act of Union, by which the Churches of England and Ireland were united. Although the Church of Ireland had hitherto been a separate Church, patronage, administered by the Crown, had been exercised in the interests of the two great parties in the State. Appointments were primarily made in order to maintain English political ends, and the Irish Episcopate had more care for party interests than for the feeding of the flock of God. The union of the Churches produced at once an assimilation of the laws governing them in spiritual matters; but it removed from the Church of Ireland any rights which she had exercised in the past as to Convocations or separate Parliamentary legislation, and gave her no voice or representation in the Convocations of the Church in England; while from the very outset the British Parliament dealt with the temporalities of the Church in Ireland, not for the spiritual benefit of the Church, but for what was thought to be the requirements and exigencies of the State. For seventy years this unequal union of the Churches continued, when at last the Church of Ireland obtained release from bondage to the State at the price of all her temporal possessions. Her freedom was purchased by the spoiling of her goods.