

Houses of the Oireachtas

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F R E E M E N O F I R E L A N D.

G E N T L E M E N,

A REPORT having gone abroad that I should have been proposed as a Candidate for my native City of Dublin, by a most popular character, had not the worthy Alderman solemnly promised to ratify the Test approved of by himself in Convention, I think it even due to the idea of so flattering a distinction, thus publickly to announce my political creed, whose enforcement in

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the senate had been the invariable pride of my life. Directed solely, Gentlemen, by an imagination actuated by a warm and perhaps honest heart, I glory in the creation of my civil faith, equally unbiassed by imperfect precedent as insensible to the cold cavils of criticism, from whose impotent martyrdom the resolution of conscious integrity flies with disgust.

THINK not, Gentlemen, that Britain, stripped of her tyrannic powers, intends now calmly yielding us a fair discussion and unimpeded resolution in public affairs; the occult and more dangerous refinement of bribery and cajolment may, perhaps, soothe her pride for the compelled dereliction of mortified ambition: the places, posts, and pensions of this Kingdom, wielded in an *English* cabinet by an *English* minister!—the numerous *heads* of departments replete here with Britons!—hereditary *votes* and rank in the state daily dispensed to insulting strangers!—that simpering confidence
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with which those alien minions of a Viceroy, *ex officio*, quarter themselves in our court on every political squabble of our sister isle!—These are mortifying clogs on our boasted freedom; these are badges of former slavery—unconstitutional exertions of prerogative which *must be deprecated!* Mortifying filial distinctions, foreign from the parental justice of our now common sovereign. The insignificancy with which the first people of this realm are daily treated in Britain (a few *courtiers* excepted) compared with the hospitable, nay adulatory, reception shewn here to their merest individuals, should remind us, that proper exertions of and attention to public dignity insure respect *abroad* to every constituent of the state. An antient kingdom (whose connection with Britain gave her Monarch *decided* precedence at the Council of Constance) suspends her claim to the title, if having regained the solid essence, she defers securing the brilliant *appendages* of Empire. Will impartial reason assert that Irishmen are

not competent, from every principle of genius and loyalty, to fill *in general*, or perhaps exclusively, the principal, clerical, legal, and military posts of their *native* country?—Will the most complacent tenant of the Treasury-bench prove, by the magic of cunning quibble, the expediency of the influx of British woollens, while our manufacturers are starving in the streets?—Here, Gentlemen, I feel with mortification, I am not a senator. At the last Exchange Meeting the situation of those distressed men was so fatally proved, so pathetically expressed, by a merchant, whose sentiments and feelings stamp him a Citizen of the World, that the very eyes of the audience bore witness to their tender sympathy. Warmed with the thought I had hastened to the House with a motion instantly formed on the most absolutely expediency, that an embargo for at least a year should be laid on all woollens from whatever country the cause had inspired; the House could not have resisted those warm appeals to their compassion, their pride, their patriotism,

patriotism, their ultimate advantage, with which the case of famished fellow-subjects had so forcibly inspired me. When death stares us in the streets, are lenitives, are cautious proceedings to be adopted? Our poor are stigmatized with idleness and profligacy: I appeal warmly to the heart of sensibility, as here tenderly interested, should not the stigma in part revert on our legislature, that, from unfeeling temporising caution, can for a moment suspend that almost heavenly power in their hands of instantly correcting the morals, the occupations, the garbs, the very countenances of our oppressed commonalty. Whoever asserts that this sudden influx of certain employment might be attended with combinations and wanton idleness, pays an equal bad compliment to the prudence of patriotism, as to the gratitude of Irishmen:—The foresight that gives work to thousands will guard, by proper resolutions, against exorbitancies, may, perhaps, suggest the idea of trustees of the *woollen-board*.—The Manufacturers of the North are numerous,

merous, and naturally ambitious of gain, but, owing to the caution of trustees, insurrections or combinations are unheard of, and injustice in work, measure, or material rarely even inspected, from suspicion by the foreign merchant. Measure of employment acquire from industrious opportunity consequence, character, and permanency in the state;—despair, from uncertain or penurious labour, is the parent of sloth, ebriety, and emigration. In this unfavoured isle the Draper and Manufacturer hold no connection, independent of superior execution, the long credit arising from British wealth gives their sales a decided advantage. Shall we then pity or despise our oppressed infant struggles? The Commons Journals, those records of our long and unaccountable submission, confirm us in the expediency of a more equal and efficient representation. Men frequently responsible to and scrutinized by the people had not thus abused their delegated charge—had not sacrificed their interest to any earthly power—had not
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ventured to whisper a motion inimical to their political creators!

I GLORY in having warmly exerted myself in the *first* County Meeting for a *civil* petition. Will the legislature now doubt or cavil at the constitutional sense of the people? The weak tortured argument of *apprehending* the favours of their country, avails no more;—their garb is now unquestionable. That the proprietors of slavish boroughs, independent of the commonalty or *minority* of free chosen members, should presume to vote away the substance of unconsulted millions, is a solecism in politics—a mortifying contradiction in the terms and essence of our government—a satire on the elections of counties and constitutional towns:—That property influences elections I allow; the shires prove it:—That patriotism influences property I deny, and appeal to the boroughs: the first is a candid open patronage, subject to the discussion of thousands, and recommended with even cautionary respect to depend-
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ent freemen, who would spurn the object of repeated political transgression;—the latter, a dark presumptuous mandate of aristocracy originated in the ignorant infancy of state, qualifying perhaps a dozen dependents, to elect perhaps repeated duplicates of ministerial corruption, or assumed patriotism, as best suits the interest of their capricious lord. Thus are the Commons *unconnected* with the people!—The lower orders of mankind should be respected from selfish policy; the fatal dissipation of the age will more probably debase the affluent; the immediate descendant of our proudest character may casually relapse into the mass of the people; a liberal citizen personates in imagination every gradation of the state, and ardently wishes that no station, however low and humble, if honest, should be reduced from disemployment to penury, and the wretched inability to stem the temporary rigour of divine calamity. Would men delegated by the people, and proud to echo the sense of their constituents (their interested creators)

creators) have reprobated, as recently instanced, that excellent motion of my near relation respecting Absentees; that very motion, so complacently attended to when made by a *Secretary*, is it a regard to the country that actuates the House? No, it is the machinations of interest and party—a thousand dark evolutions that daily suspend the great obvious questions of expediency. Were millions to be annually spent in wantonness out of Britain by her ungrateful sons;—would her efficient legislature neglect stigmatizing such an outrage on society, temporary measures had been scouted, and the enormity instantly rectified. Let us assume private feelings in public considerations; from our infancy we learn, classically, to list the fame of Greek and Roman virtue: Shall their chaste language polish our style and imagination, and their sentiments not correct our hearts? Shall we, after ages of various and instructive history submitted to us with such recent

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cautionary additions, not profit by admonition? Settling our representation, toleration, and other great objects on that liberal ground of philanthropy—that nations of all sects shall concur in the establishment and preservation of our Utopian state; Britain this moment awfully instances the fatal effects of insatiate monopoly in commerce, raised to miraculous wealth and power on the broad, though doubtful basis of universal trade, and loaded by a debt, like her affluence, not temporary, she vainly hoped at this enlightened hour to preserve that commercial universality, so necessary to her pride and distresses, so intolerable and destructive to the existence and character of other nations: Ireland and America have removed the film; the East must be respected; other nations commence to feel the sweets of internal occupation, rivalling Britain in her staple exports. Let us, my Friends, by the excellence and cheapness of our work, effectually rival competition in public markets:

markets: Monopolies and mutual conventions are uncertain measures, liable daily to be infringed if injurious to either party.—Let us ultimately rely on internal resource and material industry, not vainly intangling ourselves to command or secure uncertain dependencies and connections. The British debt incurred in consequence of America's possession and loss evinces this.

THE case of Absentees, Gentlemen, has been so liberally discussed in an excellent letter, by another relation, that my observations may seem presumptuous. Of all stigmas on patriotism, this is the most insulting. Shall these lordly proprietors presume to draw the last mite from the leathern purse of slighted poverty, to be idly ingulfed in London dissipation?—Shall such a violent stop of circulation, deemed murder in the natural body, assume a more lenient appellation in the political one? They should be obligated, as in former days, to reside

or resign. The people thus subjected to the caprice of agents—to the mortifying gradations of intermediate lordlings, will eternally supply the British theatre, the liberality of British humour, with heterogeneous characters of native wildness, extravagance, and uncouthness: a smart tax on these worthy patriots might induce them to partial residence, and the consequent influx of refined amusements perhaps reconcile the *natives* to their natal air.

THIS matter, I hope, will be more considerately revived in a *free* Parliament: the argument of absolute power over property is nugatory and invalid;—the most trifling acts, when multiplied, may affect the state, and become the object of state cognizance.

LET an enlightened foreigner, Gentlemen, but enter the streets of this great capital—view the pavements—feel, or even hear the excesses nightly committed;

ted ; that enormous revenge of houghing the military ; those incentives to every passionate vice, the brandy-shops, legally tolerated, I blush to think on his consequent conclusions ; they might bear hard on the very essence of our natures, attributing falsely to innate vice and sloth, the baleful effects of relaxed police and apathy of patriotism. That the sentiments, morals, and even genius of a nation, keep pace with education and sound policy, is a truth of historical notoriety. This clime, now so pregnant with exotics for the scoff of British derision, in former ages, according to the venerable Bede, was resorted to by England and foreign nations to experience the most flattering and refined hospitality, eleemosinary instruction, and support. This singular instance should caution the temerity of national prejudice.

I HAVE, Gentlemen, too great a reversionary stake in various parts of this isle, a heart too conscious of integrity, to
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suspect the imputation of innovation, private pique, or disloyalty. Debarred from the opportunity of publicly enforcing my weak, though sincere wishes for my country, I ventured thus to explain myself; and request, before I conclude, your attention to the following particulars—TOLERATION and PARLIAMMENTARY CONDUCT.

SUCH is the variety of our religions, differing so essentially in form and modes of faith, that unless the most liberal indulgence and reciprocal charity pervades each sect, it will be nugatory to expect that general confidence and essential harmony so necessary to the existence and efficacy of a free Empire. This salutary truth seemed reserved for the mutual discussion and proof of two seemingly characters of antipathy:—A Protestant Prelate and Catholic *Regular*; separated by every circumstance of rank, education, and faith that envious prejudice could devise—they still approximated

mated in benevolence, the Regular contending against Papal interference in politics;—the noble Prelate asserting our reform in toleration and constitution, with a spirit exemplary to Irishmen.

THESE, Gentlemen, are features that distinguish our age, and shall render this epoch a studied æra in future history.—Religions tend all to benevolence and just freedom, when not perverted by bigoted zeal. Let the legislation, vested in our sect, prove our efficient charity, and cheerfully dispense to our dissenting friends that benign indulgence—the inseparable character of true faith.

THAT titles and high posts of confidence in the state may be honourably acquired and possessed by a virtuous citizen, is a doubted truth of moral tendency worthy to be briefly discussed.

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THE possible idea of intimately connecting the rights and services of prince and people should be ever enforced as a necessary political axiom. Ministerial perfection may be defined—the honest representation to sovereignty of the people’s resources and oppressions, and a rigid inflexibility in spurning the mean allurements of temporary indulgence, if incompatible with the uniform progress of public utility. It seems almost inexplicable to an ingenuous heart how the effective powers of eloquence are daily suspended in the senate! Should the interest of partial system or party—should unqualified assent to any session-arrangement, perhaps undigested and insincere—should, in brief, any pre-concerted measures for a moment bias a man of liberal and inexpedient principle? The smiles of an attached country, the complacent progress of general improvement, promoted by the exertion or resignation of a virtuous minister, serve to mark the delicacy of a situation whose conspicuous motions so materially

terially affect the imitation of inferior departments. A man of this description will make a strict attention to the liberties and commercial resources of the people the invariable ground on which to treat with Government, and enter on the arduous task of supplies. The idea of Minister and Citizen should not be separated: no state-silence or caution can preclude such a senator from frequently condescending to appeal from the helm to the public, his general constituents. —The adulation of sovereignty cannot tempt him from virtuous resignation, who makes the proper temperature of freedom and prerogative the sole basis of his services. These ideas, I fear, may seem too refined and Utopian for actual enforcement, that the general candour so requisite in commerce and every temporary arrangement of private life, should not pervade the spirit of public and permanent measures, is a mortifying reflection. If confidence is the criterion of conciliation, how pure, how respected,

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how impartial should be his sentiments, who ventures on the great talk of securing public harmony—of blending the seeming opposite views of our triple legislation: in fine, ambition, as generally construed, should inevitably exclude its professor from the confidence of a free state.

OUR advances of late, Gentlemen, in every gradation of liberal improvement equally please and astonish. That singular union of Volunteer power and moderation unnoticed, as unknown in former annals, that blended Roman virtue and Attic purity, which mark the style and spirit of our remotest addresses, are pleasing prefaces to future successes.—Our isle, so antient in records, so novel in reformation, demands public justice, lingering for ages in obscurity. Though situated the mart of the world, she may instantly rise to just consequence among nations, if we *now* boldly pursue the spi-
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rit of perfect liberation ; our long commercial oppressions should *steel* us against false sympathy.

THE obvious necessity of recommending strict attention to the *literal spirit* of Reform seems absolutely expedient ; the majority of the legislation are too interested in its defeat to be suspected of satisfaction ; enamoured of their present independence, will they tamely sign our emancipation ? A congress, general as possible, into the mass of which the House dissolved might incorporate, seems alone competent to resolutions so awful and final ; but this is hinted with cautious diffidence.

As the Writer has thus presumed, Gentlemen, to trouble you with his sentiments, he hopes for that candour and indulgence so necessary to the indifference of his style and arrangement. The justice of the cause calls not for the aid

of genius: the ideas, however clothed, are congenial with public virtue, and the warmth of zeal, perhaps, not disgusting to the honest indignation of patriotism. If the most loyal attachment to Britain consist *solely* with the *ultimate* advantage of Ireland; if a zealous ambition to serve one's country with the chastest disinterestedness, are pardonable professions of anticipation in an untried Citizen, I here most solemnly pledge myself to my country for their immutable observance; and humbly hope a determination to offer my poor services, at the next *independent* vacancy, will not seem presumptuous in the Nephew of William Molyneux.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient

humble Servant,

DUBLIN, March, 1784.

CAPEL MOLYNEUX.

P. S. SINCE this Publication went to Press the probable fate of a motion, big with a salutary succession of others, calls aloud for just animadversion. In numerous addresses we have insisted on our right to the long suspended claim of perfect freedom; but what have we gained, but the simple *non-interference* of Britain's legislation, not even without presumptuous infringements in the very moment of solemn abdication? but if not interference, British *effectual influence* pervades our incompetent senate. With that kingdom the ultimate advantage of empire is not the *secondary* object of ministry, but OUR consequence and dignity, if incompatible with her most distempered fancy, is hourly sacrificed, Gentlemen, in that House, falsely ycleped the Palladium of Liberty, in the very face of a people whose impending determination of Reform should recommend other measures. Simple mortifications will scarcely cau-
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tion the weak incurable ambition of Britain's fallen decline!—Will future ages believe that the spirit of our renovated constitution, at this instant, submits to the rejection of most obvious motions, not even clashing with *the supremacy* of British interest? An officer of great state responsibility is requested to attend his duty in the country of his department:—Is this a request of wanton tendency?—Is the idea of indignation at the suspicion of an enormous pension, to be granted for his giving up this post of long insulted neglect, rather than breathe in ministerial confidence this *tainted* air, not congenial to every feeling heart? If any Irishman, in a *private assembly*, will lay his hand to his heart and say, “This insult in the face of nations is no longer tolerable,” I shall confess my indignation the fever of distempered fancy!

I SHALL presume to quote an apposite family-precedent:—My direct ancestor,

cestor, Sir Thomas Molyneux, was appointed by Queen Elizabeth Chancellor of the Exchequer, when the influx of Britons was, perhaps, a *necessary measure*; but that wise Princess, to my knowledge, enforced his residence; for he discharged punctually the duties of office for twenty years to his death, from 1576 to 1596. Many succeeding officers have likewise done their duty, and shall we *now* brook such a disrespectful contempt of office in any department?—It is our duty, Gentlemen, whose names indicate British origin, to efface traces of lingering antient nationality. Long cherished in the fostering arms of this isle, and raised on the inclement fortune of the original natives, Gratitude should, if possible, increase the feelings of our tender connection, straining every nerve to raise their fallen fortunes by opportunities of industry, condemning illiberal distinction of name or sect, and blending, in happy temperature, the cool correctness of our antient British wisdom, with our present inherent

inherent sentiments of Irish candour and liberality. We must, at *this moment*, with honest tenderness and sincerity put an end to the lingering hopes of Britain's unconstitutional interference.—Let us *now* do justice to our rising consequence in empire and in history; this æra will be criticised by present and future genius.—Let posterity read with emulation our tenor of conduct in this awful crisis, that in future ages even the tongue of charmed infancy may, with rapture, list *their* names, whose *consistent and steady virtue* secured, on immoveable ground, the national consequence and freedom of their native country.

F I N I S.