

85  
T R A C T S

ON THE  
S U B J E C T

OF AN

U N I O N,

BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

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1799.

Houses of the Oireachtas

M O R E

T H O U G H T S,

&c. &c.

Houses of the Oireachtas

M O R E

T H O U G H T S

O N A N

U N I O N .

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PRINTED BY J. MOORE, 45, COLLEGE-GREEN.

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STRENGTH

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M O R E

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WHEN there has been so much said on the subject of an Union, and with such ability, it may seem presumptuous in a very obscure individual, to add to what has been already given to the public, on a point that has been examined in almost every possible shape; but loving my country with a degree of enthusiasm, I feel an impatience to add my mite to the treasures that are every day pouring out in her favour.

Amongst the pamphlets I have read on this important subject, none is more worthy of notice than the anonymous one, which seeming to speak in favour of the measures, argues more forcibly against it than all the rest: Every argument the writer uses, proves the direct contrary of what it appears to be his wish to establish; in particular,

particular, where he mentions the tranquillity Scotland has enjoyed ever since her union with England, the irony is too evident to be mistaken; for as no gentleman's education could permit him to be ignorant of the rebellion in that country, subsequent to that period, it is clear that he made a wilful misrepresentation, purposely to strengthen the cause his whole work is so well calculated to promote. Even Mr. Weld said less in its favour; with all his force of reason and splendor of oratory, he only shewed what could be urged on one side, while the anonymous gentleman proved how very little could be said by all the arts of sophistry on the other.

England and Ireland are at present in a state of enmity against each other: (If contempt and injury on one hand, and hatred and resentment on the other, are not marks of enmity, I relinquish my assertions.) Common life furnishes us with but too many melancholy instances of the consequences of an union contracted under such circumstances. Recrimination only tends to widen breaches, for which reason I will wave all examination into the causes whence the late unhappy events originated: Let the well-wishers of both countries endeavour to revive a spirit of friendliness  
between

between them ; Ireland may forgive, for she has been the injured party, at least so says Junius : “ The people of Ireland have been uniformly plundered and oppressed.” If England would for once be generous, and with a frank forgiveness of late errors, the less difficult as they have been severely punished, exert herself to promote the welfare of a country which is so much in her power, Ireland, open-hearted, credulous Ireland, would receive the boon, not merely with thankfulness, but rapture ; every nerve would be strained to express her gratitude. The experiment is surely worth trying because no evil could possibly result from it, and incalculable advantages to both would certainly follow.

If you pour a glass of generous wine into a large decanter full of water, the former entirely loses its spirit, its colour, its very name, while by the union that so effectually destroys *it*, the insipid element derives no acquisition of riches or strength : Equally certain it is, that by depriving of Ireland the means of obtaining wealth, and preserving consequence, England would cut off a source for supplying both to herself. Is it possible that so great and powerful a nation can be tainted with that mean and grovelling passion, Envy, so as not to endure that another,

too

too insignificant in comparison to rival her, should also prosper? Would not the honour redound upon herself, as well as most of the advantages, if such prosperity flourished under her auspices and protection? I wish I could impress those truths with the same force I feel them, but I fear that in the ears of prejudice an angel might speak in vain; how then can I hope that my feeble arguments, or those of thousands better than I, can have any effect! The policy of England towards us has never been liberal; I recollect that Puffendorf in treating of Ireland, says, "Cromwell had once a mind to have rooted out the whole nation, as being quite incorrigible, and past hopes of any amendment; in fine, he omitted nothing to plague them, so that they became a miserable people." It seems as if that plan had been adopted at this time; for if the multitude are deprived of the means of living, surely gradual extermination is the necessary consequence. I will enumerate a few instances to prove the truth of this position, though brevity is my chief aim; as I neither possess the graces of elegance, nor the strength of logical deductions, luxury is, morally speaking, a fault;

"Yet hence the poor are cloath'd, the hungry fed."

Persons ..

Persons of Fashion are attracted to the capital by the presence of a Court, and the residence of a Parliament; the Coachmaker provides their equipages, the Architect builds stately mansions for their reception, the Upholsterer furnishes these mansions with costly elegance, the Clothier, Taylor, Milliner, Mantuamaker, and a long train of *et cæteras*, owe the comforts of decent subsistence, nay the very bread they provide for their families, to the cheering sunshine of a Parliament residing amongst us; take that away, and the whole edifice of internal trade and manufactures, tumbles with a crash that will overwhelm all in one common ruin! This is no declamatory description, but a sober representation of incontrovertible facts. So linked together is the chain of national prosperity, that the Farmer must suffer equally with the Artisan and Manufacturer;—to mention only one instance, he supplies the food for the numerous horses requisite for the pleasures and equipages of the great and opulent; with him the proprietors of estates suffer; lands that now bring three, four, five, six pounds per acre, will scarcely be able to pay twenty shillings; what a pittance will then the income of the Noblemen and Gentry be reduced to! How inadequate to support the expences of such a

metropolis as London, which will of course be the residence of them all, as it already is of so great a part.

If, however, the projected measure could be proved to be as adviseable, as it is evidently the reverse, Parliament has no right to annihilate itself. To talk of transferring the Legislature elsewhere is idle mockery; for it would not be transferred, but done away for ever. The Members receive a trust from their Constituents, which they are solemnly bound to render back into their hands, uninjured and entire. They are Agents and Representatives of the People, at least such they are supposed to be by the nature of the British Constitution, in which we participate; the best mode of government ever framed by man; uniting the several advantages of Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy, freed from the defects incidental to them, by the check each is upon the other. Possessing this noble Constitution, we are a free people, and that principally by the House of Commons. Hear the words of Montesquieu, who is esteemed an oracle in politicks. "As in a free state, every man who is esteemed to possess freedom of mind, ought to be governed by himself, it would be

“ be necessary that the people in a body, should  
 “ have the legislative power ; but as that is  
 “ impossible in extensive states, and would be  
 “ subject to many inconveniencies in small  
 “ ones, the People must act by their Repre-  
 “ sentatives, what they cannot do in their own  
 “ persons.”

This is an exact description of the Demo-  
 cratic part of our Constitution ; and if it be  
 so, surely the Commons can never have a right  
 to take any step contrary to the known will  
 of the People. That the present question is  
 more so than any other ever was, is notori-  
 ous ; and here I cannot avoid saying, though I  
 would industriously keep clear of any invidi-  
 ous reflection, that the present Parliament has  
 less right than any other ever had ; for in ge-  
 neral there was not even the appearance of an  
 Election ; most of those who had formerly voted,  
 declined it then, to avoid sanctioning measures  
 they might not approve, and apprehended were  
 in contemplation. By refusing to vote, they  
 reserved a right of remonstrating in future,  
 against the conduct of such as might betray  
 their dearest interests, by declaring they were  
 not their Representatives, nor chosen as such  
 by them. I will rest the truths of this with

the Members themselves: If they will assert upon the honour of a Gentleman, that they believe themselves duly chosen by the free Electors, I will give up the point at once.

Supposing the Commons immaculate, and their intentions the purest and most sincere for the welfare of their Constituents, what security can they have, that any promises of advantage to Ireland, held out as lures by Government on the promise of an Union, would be adhered to? I say positively none; the Minister would have the shadow of our Parliament immediately under his own eye and controul, in the English House; any plan of expedience would authorize him in his own opinion (theirs would attend his nod) to revoke promises given only to serve the purpose of the moment; his work to bring them over would be easy, comparatively to what it is in the existing state of things. Government patronage, even with all the resources that have been devised, is an incommodious and expensive business here, where so many are to be influenced, and I am convinced this is the grand motive for the scheme supposed to be in agitation, to bring forward which, no crisis could be chosen more unfavourable to the reputation of British honour or generosity, than the present,

sent, when our country is filled with the troops of England, sent over on the pretence of quelling a rebellion that had been crushed before their arrival, which was delayed till the danger was over, all which danger had been sustained by the Irish Militia and Yeomanry. The English Militia have never had occasion to draw a trigger, nor were any of the other British forces ever called into action, except at Ballinamuck; nor was that in consequence of the Irish rebellion, but the French invasion. No—our own hardy soldiers bore the burden and heat of the day—they flocked to the Royal Standard with ardour, and made a much greater effort than merely hazarding their own lives, which every military man is called upon to do; for they opposed their own countrymen with an eagerness, which in the opinion of many did them but little honour, and with how much danger to themselves, the numbers that fell in the different battles can testify. This was a conflict with the feelings of nature, more severe than can be experienced in combats with a foreign foe. Even here their loyalty signalized itself; and for that they are likely to be rewarded, by being involved in one indiscriminate ruin with the culpable, if any should be styled so, after the amnesty held out

out so opportunely by Lord Cornwallis, and so generally accepted; the word, Amnesty, must mean nothing, or it signifies unqualified, perfect forgiveness of past crimes.

I have purposely avoided touching on the topick of Reform, or any other that might excite farther irritations at this critical period: Those grievances have been made too ensnaring a use of by ill-judging men, to be admitted into my plan, which is merely to avert the mighty and impending evil of an Union, which would be fraught with horrors I shudder to think of! All ranks and conditions are averse to it; and the will of a whole People becomes formidable, be that people never so insignificant: Look back into history, at the struggles, the successful struggles, made by the Hollanders and Swifs in defence of their liberty. Look still farther back at the Carthaginians, when, after being induced to give up their arms, (our Parliament is our arms) they were impelled to the fury of desperation, on finding the use that was to be made of that relinquishment: Their very women gave their hair to make bow-strings. The blood that has been shed the last fatal summer, would be but a dew-drop in comparison to the deluges that would fall on this devoted

devoted land! Total and sudden extermination must ensue; nor would wait the gradual process I hinted at before: Whereas, on the contrary, a frank and cordial reconciliation, unclogged with hateful conditions, would bring about the only eligible, desirable UNION, one of hearts. Once convinced that the execrable union of Legislatures was given up for ever, and that Ireland was in future to be treated with that candor, so congenial to the character of her own susceptible-hearted sons, the glory of England would be our pride. Brethren, under the kindred tie of one common parent, we should reciprocally love like brethren; England, looking with a benevolent pleasure on the plant fostered and cherished by her care, Irish Prosperity; and Ireland, paying the willing tribute of gratitude and assistance, for that protection she would so sensibly feel!

THE END.

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the proposed bill for the relief of the Irish Catholics, and in reply to inform you that the same has been referred to the committee on the subject, and that they are now engaged in a careful examination of the same. I have also the honor to inform you that the committee have the honor to inform you that the same has been referred to the committee on the subject, and that they are now engaged in a careful examination of the same.

Houses of the Oireachtas