

No. 9

DETACHED THOUGHTS

ON AN

UNION,

OFFERED,

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT,

TO THE

IRISH NATION.

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BY

A CITIZEN OF CORK.

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..... "Occidit, occidit"  
"Spes omnis; et fortuna nostri"  
"Nominis."

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THE

Houses of the Oireachtas

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## DETACHED THOUGHTS

ON AN

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**A**T a period like the present, when the sovereignty of our native land is menaced, when the national honour and national greatness of Ireland is on the point of being extinguished for ever, when we may be called upon to abdicate our independence, and to resign to a foreign legislature the inheritance of five hundred years; it needs but little apology from any man, be his situation in life ever so insignificant, or his talents ever so moderate, to deliver his opinion on so great a subject, in which the general interest of the community is so materially concerned. In the same proportion as the subject is momentous, so should its discussion be calm and moderate, equally avoiding the insidious sophistry of the courtier, and the the wild ungovernable enthusiasm of the republican.

THE subject of these few pages shall be an humble endeavour, in an undisguised statement of truth, to point out to Irishmen a few of the advantages which they now enjoy; and which, in the event of an Union with Great Britain, they must for ever forego.

AT this period, my fellow-countrymen, in Ireland behold a nation powerful from her insular situation, flourishing in her agriculture, unbounded in her own internal resources, every port in the habitable globe, save the East-Indies, open to her commerce, her progress in arts, science and manufactures daily increasing, possessing an independent seat of justice, from whose pure and unpoluted stream flows every private as well as public good. In fine, behold her holding a place among nations, and stamped an independent kingdom.—Need a country enjoying such advantages look up for a chance of their increase, to be purchased at the expense of a debasement of her honour, and an abandonment of her independence?

“ And in one hour, give up to infamy

“ The harvest of a thousand years of glory.”\*

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\* GUSTAVUS VASA.

I SHALL not attempt to deny, that notwithstanding these evident advantages enjoyed by this country, there are, nevertheless, appearances sufficient to create and justify apprehension. I will admit that there is a "Cankerworm in the Rose."

"..... Medio de fonte leporum

" Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat."

But has the contagion spread so universal, has the wound so gangrened, that no remedy short of amputation will be sufficient? Or is it even certain that by the adoption of such a remedy, desperate as it is, public security and domestic tranquillity will be erected on a foundation less uncertain and tottering than the present? The more splendid and specious any innovation appears, the more seriously does it demand investigation.

LET Irishmen ask themselves did the cabinet of England ever proffer to despised Ireland a single benefit, but from a hope of reaping a ten-fold advantage? "*Timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes.*"— They should remember the propositions of 1785, and *be cautious*: the virtue of the then existing parliament plucked the mask from the British Minister, and shewed the insidious plan in all its natural deformity; a plan openly professing to share  
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the commercial advantages of Great Britain with Ireland; but secretly calculated to rob the latter of all the advantages obtained by the determined virtue of the venerable Charlemont, at the head of the most respectable, respected, and independent body of men, that ever adorned any country. To another person is part of the glory of that period to be attributed, but as the tide of popular prejudice is so strongly directed against that character, and in submitting these few lines to the public, I disavow all party, I shall refrain from enumerating what I may conceive to be his virtues, what the services he has heretofore rendered to this country.

SHALL Ireland, then, whose independence was so nobly asserted in 1782, and protected in 1785, be sacrificed in 1799, and shall we, as we advance in civilization, lose our relish for independence?—What Union can we have with Great Britain, but an Union of debt and taxation? An Union ruinous to this country, subversive of its liberties, and destructive in its consequences! Or can Ireland treat on equal terms with any country, while that country names all her Ministers, and influences her Councils?

CAN a better argument be adduced against its expediency, than the period at which it is advanced?

ced? It is like asking a man naturally generous for a favour, in the moment of Intoxication. Is it fair? Is it generous in any administration, professing the good of Ireland, to bring forward a measure of such moment, at a time when the storm of rebellion is scarcely subsided, and the agitation of the public mind is yet too great to reflect coolly on the consequences that may attend its adoption, whilst the nation is still "*lashed on the one hand by the waves of democracy, on the other by the torrent of despotism?*" And whilst an army of forty thousand foreign troops are in the country ready to enforce the measure.

You will be told that the only means to avoid a repetition of the late horrors, is, by an incorporation with Great Britain, but I must own it does not strike my humble understanding, that any measure can tend to the advancement of peace, or be a surety against future rebellion, if it strikes at the root of national pride, and national dignity, opens an opportunity for the already disaffected to fan the half-stifled embers of sedition into a blaze, plunges into a listless apathy the moderate and opulent men of the country, and rouses into resistance every man who may conceive his interest injured by it. Surely the most violent partizan for a separation of the two countries, could not have proposed any thing more likely to effect it. Is

Is it to be supposed for a moment, that because Ireland, by such a measure, will be rendered, as wretched as she can be, and every hope of future benefits flowing from her own legislature be forever crushed, that acquiescent content will be its consequence?—No! 'Tis then I dread the torch of discord with all its horrid accompaniments will be again lighted up, then will the spirits of the now-desponding rebels be revived, again will they rally round the standard of insurrection, fortified with a double confidence, springing from a hope that the gallant yeomen, to whom they principally impute their recent failure, having no longer a constitution to guard, an independence to protect, will be lulled into a state of torpidity, from whence they will have little to fear.

MANY arguments equally specious and equally liable to refutation, I am well aware will be advanced in its favour, to bias your judgments, and warp your understanding; you will be told, that in the event of an Union, your manners will be civilized—your establishments improved—your commerce extended—and your constitution purified;—but, in the name of Heaven! to accomplish so desirable an event, why resort to an Union? What can a British House of parliament do for Ireland, that Ireland cannot do for herself?

And



And if England even could bestow all these advantages upon this country, what will you have to guarantee her faith, or how redress the breach of it? The army and the navy are both at the command of England; and admitting that all the representatives returned by this country, to the British parliament, should oppose its infractions, how inadequate would they be to the purpose.

THE learned Author of a pamphlet on this subject, has told you, in support of the expediency of an Union, "That the Seven United Provinces  
 " being cruelly oppressed by the Spanish govern-  
 " ment, seperated from that goverument, in order  
 " to escape from tyranny, and to secure liberty  
 " and happiness, they acted according to right,  
 " in declaring and establishing their independ-  
 " dence." The inference to be naturally drawn from such an argument is almost too dangerous to be promulged;—it tells the Irish nation that their country has been the uniform victim of oppression, that the directing finger of the British minister has, with baneful influence, guided her cabinet, and corrupted her parliament, that England, instead of being an affectionate sister, is an oppressive and tyrannical neighbour, and that to rescue herself from such a situation, is not only justifiable, but

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a strict adherence to right!— This may be an argument for the assertion and maintenance of independence, but how it applies to the policy of an Union, I am really at a loss to discover.

HE next adduces the instance of the Sabines submitting to the Roman yoke, when no longer able to oppose its power, and thereby laying the foundation of Roman greatness. Are we to understand from thence, that we are no longer capable of protecting ourselves, or maintaining our situation against the power of the English government? And must British aggrandizement, be purchased by Irish degradation?

THE third example laid down as a guide to the decision of the Irish nation, is, the Heptarchy of England uniting into one common empire. Here, indeed, must the honest indignant pride of an Irishman break forth, when he hears, at the close of the eighteenth century, this great and flourishing island compared to Mercia, or to Essex, in the uncivilized age of barbarism.— A Mercian might have been advanced by becoming an Englishman, an Irishman must be degraded.

WALES and Scotland are afterwards brought forward as affording further instances of the good effects

effects of an incorporation with Great Britain.— How far it has improved Wales, Wales only can tell. And as for Scotland, the advantages she has gained, and the motives which urged England to the adoption of such a measure, may be well worth investigation. The immediate situation of Scotland, continental with England, rendered her a dangerous neighbour, if not made an intimate friend; her harbours might have been open for the reception of the enemies of England; and in case she at any time conceived her strength equal to a struggle, her former habits and connexions might have given England too much cause to dread, that her partiality for the house of Stuart, might have been cherished, and a reluctance, if not resistance, to the succession in the illustrious house of Hanover, been the natural consequence. Such a consideration must necessarily have made an Union with Scotland, a matter of serious national import to England.

How far the North Britons, as a people, have profited by it, remains yet to be argued. It is most certain that the royal predilection, at an early period of the present reign, conferred a large portion of public honour on, and placed an almost unlimited confidence in many of that nation: how they deserved such a distinction, or from what cause

cause it originated, it is not for me to enquire; but taking the nation in the aggregate, after an Union of ninety-one years with Great Britain, in what does she excel Ireland?

WHERE has Scotland extended her commerce? In what progress out of the ordinary track, have her *actual* residents advanced in improvement of manners? Has her barren and ungrateful soil been taught by an Union to pour forth her treasures to fill the granaries of her husbandmen? Has it enabled her to welcome, like this country, the yellow harvest, and gaze with admiration on her fields pregnant with nourishment so abundant, as after having scattered plenty among her own children, enables her to administer to the wants of others, to the annual amount of near a million. If she has not gained any of these advantages, for what has she bartered her independence? Little did she keep, and in six years was even that little encroached upon, her representatives strained every nerve in vain, to preserve inviolate the principles of their Union, of what avail their feeble voice could be in the parliament of Great Britain the result has clearly proved. Were every man of them a Murray, they would have pleaded their rights in vain against any measure which the minister of England wished to carry through the house.—A whole-  
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some lesson for this country.— When the cautious prudence of a Scotchman has been duped, what may the unsuspecting generosity of an Irishman expect?

MR. FOX, that gigantic advocate for the universal liberty of mankind, the thunder of whose eloquence, and the integrity of whose heart, charms the most enlightened, and awes the most corrupt, asserted in the British house of parliament, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of May, 1782, (he himself then a servant of the crown) “That the British parliament was incompetent to bind Ireland, from the very nature of the British constitution, for with regard to Ireland, the parliament of Great Britain was ignorant, and tyrannic.” Will not this teach Irish legislators their own value, will it not tell them that it is an avowed axiom of an independent minister of Great Britain, that none can judge candidly for the interest of the Irish people, but an Irish parliament. Had that great man continued minister of England to this day, would he have sought to rob you of your independence? No!—He would have still asserted that bred under the British constitution, (and to whom would Britain surrender her rights?) You knew the value of freedom, and would part it only with your lives. Alas! he is dismissed from the councils of the crown; but to

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use the words of the immortal Junius, "It is not  
 " in England that such a man can be dishonoured  
 " by the frowns of a king, he was dismissed but  
 " could not be disgraced." Trust me, to him will  
 the Irish nation be yet indebted for a defence of  
 her rights, as a people, a defence exposing the fal-  
 lacy, the weakness and the sophistry of the strong-  
 est arguments for an Union, should our own par-  
 liament, forgetting our interests, and betraying  
 our rights, ever to permit it to become a Question.

It will be the peculiar policy of all the advo-  
 cates for an Union, to hold out to the different  
 sects of religious worship in this kingdom, that by  
 its conclusion each will be benefited. Indeed  
 you have been already told, that by it the ascendan-  
 cy of the protestant will be for ever secured, that  
 the dissenters, possessing an inconsiderable influ-  
 ence in the present representation will by that  
 means become a far more considerable body of the  
 people, and in the plan of an Union, an aperture  
 may be left for the future admission of the Catho-  
 lics to additional privileges.

THAT an exclusive protestant ascendancy would  
 be endeavoured to be kept up, I have never enter-  
 tained a doubt, from the first moment a question  
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of an Union was agitated, but in my idea that is but a poor argument to qualify it to the minds of a nation, three-fourths of whose inhabitants profess a different religion. It is true, it is insinuated, that an aperture for the future admission of catholics to additional privileges will be left open, as a compensation, but unfortunately that aperture is to be guarded by the vigilance of a British protestant parliament, who are to take due care, not imprudently to admit catholic pretensions. For my own part, I am free to say, that from the moment the incorporation of the two countries is completed, all catholic claims to extension of privilege are extinguished for ever.

As to the dissenting interest gaining a different ratio in the empire by an Union, it is probable that from the presbyterian religion being the principle one in Scotland, they may have to boast, that in the united empire their aggregate numbers may be increased, but in what will that increase advance their power or importance, separated as they are, inhabitants of a different country, and their influence in the representation confined to their respective islands.

FAR be it from me, in obtruding these loose thoughts upon the public, to presume that they  
contain

contain any thing, which has not already been so ably handled, as to leave it almost impossible to say any thing upon the subject, but the probable situation into which the country may be plunged, in case this pernicious measure should be persisted in, is sufficiently alarming to rouse the attention of the whole nation to the investigation of its every point. Its *prima facie* appearance, foreboding no benefit to this country, but on the contrary evidently teeming with misfortune, surely no subject can give a more serious ground for enquiry.

THE most learned body of men in the kingdom, and the most likely to be acquainted with the very essence of its laws and constitution, and who can best calculate the advantages and disadvantages attendant upon an Union, have assembled and come to a resolution, “That an Union at the present juncture is an innovation highly prejudicial to this country.” Let every county and city in the kingdom follow this example, demand from their respective sheriffs a meeting of their bailiwicks, then will the sense of the nation be collected, if it be found adverse to the proposition, and that in despite of them it will be hustled through the two houses of parliament, let them, with one accord, with dignified, but due respect, appeal to the father



ther of the people, let them send delegates to the throne, and seek from their Prince, a restoration of these rights, of which they have been defrauded by their parliament. Should that last effort fail, and they should in vain surround the throne with their complaints, it will most certainly then become the duty of the people to receive with patient acquiescence, an evil they cannot attempt to remedy, without shaking the very empire to its centre; but I most sincerely hope, that at the present crisis, so dangerous an experiment will not be made upon the patience and forbearance of the Irish nation.

OH! ye delegated guardians of the people's rights! I trust it will not come to this; and in the name of that country which has given you birth;—in the name of that constitution you are bound to protect;—in the name of that living God whom you adore;—I conjure you seriously to reflect, ere you pass that isthmus that for ever separates your country from freedom, or part that sacred inheritance committed to your care, and for the preservation of which you are responsible to succeeding generations. See what you surrender,—what you get in exchange.

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To your virtues does your country look up with anxious expectation and, I hope, I may say with confidence ;—justify that confidence ;—quit not the path of rectitude ;— let the overpowering eloquence and the firm integrity of the sons of Ireland now vindicate her rights, and with the force of electricity convince the English minister, that however, in partial instances, he may influence her parliament, yet when the general interest of the nation is at stake, and her independence is to be the price of the debasement of her legislature, they will repel such attacks with the indignation becoming the representatives of a free country.

FINIS.